



*Boston University Academy Model United Nations Conference X*

*Saturday, January 29th to Sunday, January 30th, 2022*

*Boston University Academy*

*Boston, MA*

# **JCC: Suez Canal**

**UN Security Council**

## **Background Guide**

## ***Introduction from the Chair and Vice-Chair:***

Hello, delegates!

My name is Arya Manda, I am a junior at Boston University Academy, and I will be your Chair for BUAMUN X. Abhi Lingareddy '22 will be my vice-chair. The committee will be modeled on the UN Security Council from the Suez Canal Crisis.

I joined BUAMUN because I thought it would be a great opportunity to extend my MUN experience beyond participating in a conference as a delegate. Being a delegate can be very fun and interesting. It allows you to imagine what it would be like to be an actual delegate in the United Nations. My first conference was TUMUN. I was nervous to have to speak in front of tons of people, but after the first 10-15 minutes I found the crisis I was in extremely interesting and began to participate in it a lot more. Model UN conferences can be nerve-racking, but the more engaged you become with the debate, the more fun it becomes.

To prepare for this conference you should read through this background guide and take a look at some of the sources used for your research. Because this is a joint-crisis committee, delegates will not only be interacting with other delegates within the same committee but also with other delegates from the other committee-JCC: Suez Canal: Egypt.

Because there are two committees, the flow of debate will depend not only on your interaction with each other but also with the second committee. As with most crises, we will suspend parliamentary procedure, be in a constant moderated caucus, and pass directives. For those of you who have never done a crisis before (or done Model UN before) fear not; we will go over all of this in detail and in non-MUN rhetoric at the beginning of our first committee session.

This may be confusing, so if you have any questions feel free to reach out to Abhi or me. Also, I've attached a couple of sources at the end of this document to help you begin your research. Good luck with your research, and I look forward to seeing what kind of crisis arcs and debates you all create!

Sincerely,

Arya Manda  
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## ***Position Paper Guidelines:***

**This committee requires 1 position paper.** It is on the topic of the Suez Canal Crisis. The absence of at least one position paper will disqualify you (the delegate) from receiving an award. The quality, depth, and clarity of your position paper will influence award decisions. Each position paper should be 1-3 pages and double spaced. This includes citations which are preferably in the format of footnotes. To insert a footnote, simply click *Insert > Footnote*. Note: a footnote goes after the period. Position papers should follow a general outline with three paragraphs. This is only a suggestion, as long as the paper fits the aforementioned specifications, the number of paragraphs will not be taken into consideration.

### **Possible position paper outline:**

- 1) Introduction to your delegation and the topic as a whole
- 2) The position of your delegation
- 3) Your delegations proposed solutions

Furthermore, the position paper must be titled in the following format:

**Delegation:** Arya Manda and Abhi Lingareddy

**School:** Boston University Academy

**Committee:** UN Security Council- USA

**Position:** Dwight D. Eisenhower (this should be the person you represent)

## ***General Overview:***

The opening of the Suez canal is a long-term wish to ease the trade between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea: the isthmus is indeed a bridge between Asia and Africa. It also gives strategic importance to Egypt in terms of trade relations. The idea of such an opening was in fact a very long-lasting project that only the technological innovations of the nineteenth century made possible. Even since Antiquity, both seas were connected through a system of canals. During the Byzantine and Muslim periods, Egypt was experiencing a period of prosperity, and it was known as the “country of trade.” Since the eighth century, trade has been intense between Asian and African countries through this particular area. In 1574, Venice submitted the first-ever project to open the Suez Canal. The project was denied because of its costs, and it remained forgotten until Napoleon Bonaparte put together an expedition in Egypt in 1798, to counter the English ambitions in the area and open a new way to the Indies. Engineers studied the system of the Pharaohs and decided to construct a lock canal.

The project was abandoned once again in 1801. In 1846, the Suez Canal Study Society was founded in Paris by French, Austrian and British engineers. It had at this time two goals: verify the scientific means for the construction of such a canal and attract businessmen and politicians towards the project. This study group rectified the conclusions of the French expedition and concluded that a regular canal is indeed possible.

The Viceroy of Egypt gave his agreement to the project in 1854 and an international meeting was put together in the fall of 1855, with engineers from seven countries. On the 5th of January 1856, the Viceroy of Egypt approved the final draft of an agreement that would create a company responsible for all matters around the Suez Canal for 99 years, after which the Egyptian government would take on the property of the Canal. The Suez Canal was, between the 1850's and the 1880s, a central point in the French-British diplomatic rivalry. Accessing the China Sea and trading with the Empire of Japan was a huge stake in those times, and the importance of Ottoman diplomacy in Europe was also a central point. The caliph denied his agreement to the project: the French diplomat, Ferdinand de Lesseps, created the Suez Canal Universal Navy Company anyway in 1858. De Lesseps was the first director of the board of the company until 1894. The construction of the Suez Canal started on the 25th of April 1859. The engineers had to build a 161 kilometers long and 8 meters depth canal. After 1863, a more firm direction of construction and the early beginnings of mechanization fastened the project. But the political difficulties were still present and with the death of the Viceroy of Egypt, the caliph's agreement was more than needed to continue the construction.

The caliph finally agreed to the construction of the Suez Canal in 1866, after the intervention of the French emperor, Napoleon III. But with the construction of the canal also came the development of all cities involved in the process, among them Suez, Port-Said or

Ismailia. On the 17th of November 1869, the Suez Canal was effectively declared navigable. But in 1882, the British forces intervened in Egypt and took effective control of the Suez Canal after an insurrection against the Egyptian government. In this year an informal protectorate of the British government was started over Egypt. In 1886, after numerous concerns being voiced by French diplomats, the Constantinople Convention is signed under four main principles: freedom of passage for trade ships, freedom of passage of military ships if they do not debark on the Egyptian ground, the territory of the Canal considered as neutral and the right for the Egyptian government to intervene in case of a threat to its territory. Bombay is twenty days away from London! The introduction of steam navigation changed drastically the stakes and possibilities around trade and globalization. In 1909, the Suez Canal Company proposed a modification to the original contract with Egypt to further its responsibility on the Suez Canal after 1968, when it was supposed to go to the Egyptian government. The project faced wide opposition from the Egyptian political parties and started a crisis about national sovereignty in the country. It led to the assassination of Prime Minister Boutros Ghali in 1910 and a new occupation by British troops after this event. With the First World War starting in August 1914, the Suez Canal became of prime importance to the British Navy. It officially became a British condominium.

The Canal was during the War a prime objective for all forces in the Mediterranean Sea: it became the “British Canal”. In 1936, London started to negotiate on the basis of the example of Iraq to further the independence of Egypt, with changes over the control of interior policy and the permanent installation of British forces in the Suez Canal. At the same time, secret negotiations were taking place to represent the interests of the Egyptian government in the benefits of the Suez Canal Company.

In 1937, an agreement was signed that gave 0.03% of the Suez Canal Company benefits to the Egyptian nation. With the Second World War, the British control over the Suez Canal became once again very strong: the coalition ensured total control over the navigation in its area. But the defeat of France in June 1940 created a loop that the British government ended in October by declaring its total control over the Suez Canal Company. With the intervention of American forces in 1942, the conflict in North Africa ended in the fall of 1943. But with the end of the war came other conflictual matters: the fact that the Company ran without a French leadership reinforced the will of the nationalist party to ask for a Suez Canal Company run by both British and Egyptian representatives. After the war, the renewed interest for the oil of the Middle East continued to thrive in the Suez Canal. In order to get the refined oil in Europe, most of the oil was going through the Suez Canal rather than in pipelines. With numerous works and changes to the Suez Canal's capacity, the frequency and attraction of the Canal grew rapidly and multiplied the benefits of the Suez Canal Company. But with its growing capacity, the Egyptian government still only got 2% of the overall benefits of the Suez Canal Company. A general strike started in the Suez Canal Company in December 1951 that would lead afterward to the

nationalization of the Suez Canal. The nationalization of the Suez Canal occurred in a favorable context to the rise of a third voice, opposed to the logic of blocks and the colonial powers

After the Egyptian defeat against Israel in 1948, Gamal Abdel Nasser, a young military man, deplored the disorganization of the Egyptian army. His country had to free itself from 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 Egyptian independence. Thus, he created in 1952 the Free Officers committee, whose first objective was to “liquidate colonialism and the Egyptian traitors that back Sciences Po Rennes International Model United Nations”. Gamal Abdel Nasser built a strong ideology based on a union of the Arab people called pan-Arabism. Nasser wanted to renew the Arab world, newly independent from Europe. Thus, the “Free officers” program was composed of 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 XXth century, ensured 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 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 was not yet considered, or at least not publicly. This first blow to the British presence in the Middle East occurred in a context favorable to the emergence of a third voice. The 1955 Bandung Conference In 1955, the first African Asian international conference was 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 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.

**Suez Canal nationalization** Between the United States and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics At the dawn of the Cold War, the United States administration developed the containment policy, in order to limit the expansion of communism, sustained by the Union of the Socialist and Soviet Republics. By signing international military agreements with Europe (the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949) or with South East Asia (the South East Asia Treaty in 1954), the United States government was willing to circle the USSR. The United States applied their ideology in the Middle East with the adoption of the Baghdad Pact (later called the Middle East Treaty) by Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom in 1955, which was debated a few months later in Bandung. However, Nasser, for whom this defense pact is associated with Western imperialism, rejected it. He considered that “the idea of a Pact leads to division of the Arab world, isolates Egypt and puts the Arab unity in danger”.

Despite this will for independence, Nasser still needed financial support from the West to build a major project for his country: the Aswan Dam. This project, initiated by the British, was particularly expensive, and thus required international funding. The World Bank accepted to fund half of it, but Egypt still needed support from the United Kingdom and the United States, which eventually agreed to grant a 70 million dollar loan each. The United States’ decision was explained by John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower’s Secretary of State, himself: “if we cannot offer him weapons, we will offer him prosperity”. Nevertheless, due to very harsh refunding conditions, the Egyptian president began to seek other solutions and asked the USSR to finance its project. Thus, the establishment of a pro-British government in Sudan prevented Nasser from concluding agreements with his historical ally. However, Nasser continuously competed with the British’s will to maintain the Middle East under their influence.

First, by refusing to sign the Baghdad treaty and concluding a pact with Syria and Yemen as said above, but also by spreading anti-imperialist ideas through the Arabs Voice (the National Egyptian radio) in the region. Indeed, his program had a large echo in the Middle East, particularly in Bahrain, in Yemen, or in Jordan, where the popular classes succeeded in forcing the King to dismiss the British officer in place. Therefore, the United Kingdom’s government is progressively losing control in the region, at the benefit of Egypt, but also the United States, which has substituted the British presence for the past 5 years. Eventually, the nationalization was felt, as the last occasion to Sciences Po Rennes International Model United Nations intervene put an end to Nasser’s ambitions and build back the historical British’s sphere of influence. France played a very particular role in this context. In 1956, France still saw the region as a competition zone with the United Kingdom, as showed its opposition to the Baghdad Pact. If this material help was significant, it was the political and public support that definitely

convinced the French government to see Nasser as an enemy, as the United States and the United Kingdom did. Therefore, when the international Aswan dam financial support was eventually suspended on July 19th, France considered it as a huge failure for Nasser.

Nevertheless, the Egyptian leader announced seven days later the nationalization of the Suez Canal in order to finance the Aswan dam building. This nationalization triggered, several weeks later, an international intervention planned by both France, the United Kingdom, and supported by Israel. Westerners Reactions Westerners believed that Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal was linked with the bright future Nasser had foreseen for his own country: if the latter shall win, contagion could spread in the other countries still under Westerners influence. France would like to avoid worsening the situation in Algeria; the United Kingdom fears the uprising in Iraq and Jordan. For both countries, Nasser could turn into a new Hitler. In France, the whole political class rather agreed on sentencing Nasser.

The text was much too broad to solve the problem and this entirely satisfied Nasser and both USSR and the US as well. Eventually, all these negotiations had enabled the Egyptians to save time and both French and British considered that all peaceful alternatives now had been exhausted. Nasser had been able to take advantage of this episode by organizing militarily and receiving supplies from the USSR. The French-British military intervention Four days after the nationalization, French and British secretly gathered for negotiations so as to organize a military operation.

Nasser had concentrated troops around Suez and was therefore surprised by an attack in the Sinai Peninsula. In the afternoon of Tuesday, October 30, Anthony Eden, British prime minister, officially announced his will to intervene at the House of Commons, which gave a vote of confidence by 270 in favor and 218 against. At the same time, Guy Mollet obtained 368 votes in favor and only 182 against. Victory is perceived to be quite near, but politics and diplomacy took precedence over the conflict. A resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire, the withdrawal of Egyptian and Israeli troops on their own borders as defined in 1949, and the restoration of freedom of movement over the Canal was there adopted by 64 votes in favor and 5 against and 6 abstentions. The text also urges the state not to provide weapons or any military equipment in the area. Another meeting of the United Nations General Assembly was held on the 3rd of November, at the request of Egypt to take actions against military aggression from French-English troops. The cease-fire should have entered into force from the 5th of November, but this was not taken into account at all. The same day, another resolution for the establishment of a UN army in the Middle East was also adopted. Personal letters exchanged between French, English, Israeli, American, and Soviet leaders kept an extra level of tension. The Franco-British position became less and less comfortable and even increasingly unsustainable. On the 6th, a last economic pressure from the United States of America towards the United Kingdom, plus the Sciences Po Rennes International Model United Nations threat from India to withdraw from the Commonwealth and Anthony Eden eventually bowed. Guy Mollet followed. The members of the

Security Council will therefore have to find a settlement upon a possible retreat of the French and British troops from the Egyptian soil, in accordance with the respect of the principle of territorial integrity.

### **Questions to Consider:**

- Who should have control over the Suez Canal? Does Egypt have the right to control the canal as it goes through Egypt?
- What international rules did Britain, France, and Israel break that would require a UN intervention?
- What can be done to make sure no conflicts happen again in the future?
- What needs to be done to make sure each side ends up in peace?

### **Bloc Positions – UN Security Council:**

#### **I. Robert A. Eden (Committee Leader)**

Robert Anthony Eden was the prime minister of The United Kingdom from 1955 to 1957. Before the Suez Canal was nationalized, it was run by the Suez Canal Company which the British government had purchased 40% of the share and was a major investor. PM Eden was angered by the nationalization of the Suez Canal as it meant that the smooth supply of oil to Europe would be jeopardized and could be harmful to the European economy. Immediately after receiving the news about the canal, PM Eden created an Egypt Committee within the cabinet to help monitor the crisis and make recommendations. Prime Minister Eden considered military action as soon as he received news of the nationalization of the canal. It was the French prime minister and minister of foreign affairs who ultimately convinced Prime Minister Eden that war was preferable compared to negotiations. Despite the disapproval from many of his cabinet members, PM Eden still went forward with his decision for war. He secretly agreed with France and Israel to take back the canal.

#### **II. Dwight D. Eisenhower**

Dwight D. Eisenhower was the president of the United States of America from 1953 to 1961. He was horrified by the prospect of any form of military action that could be sparked by the nationalization of the Suez Canal. Eisenhower argued that the military endeavors of France, Britain, and Israel in regards to the situation with the canal were wrong as the nations were not backed by the majority of the world making it almost impossible for a stable settlement. Eisenhower did not see Nasser as a major threat to oil supplies of ships in the Suez Canal. His focus was on making sure the West did not lose its influence in the Middle East, and on trying to gain a peaceful situation. Eisenhower was eventually able to get France, Britain, and Israel to cease their violence.

### **III. John Foster Dulles**

John Foster Dulles was the Secretary of State under President Eisenhower from 1953 to 1959. He was dispatched by Eisenhower to try to defuse the crisis by trying to come to an agreement with Britain and France through negotiations, public statements, deliberations, and conferences with the UN.

### **IV. Anthony Nutting**

Anthony Nutting was the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs from 1954 to 1956. He negotiated the final steps of a treaty between Egypt and Britain for the removal of British troops from the canal. He resigned from his position when he heard of the deceitful agreement PM Eden had made with France and Israel to retake the canal.

### **V. Guy Mollet**

Guy Mollet was the prime minister of France from 1956 to 1957. Nasser's nationalization of the Suez canal provoked deep anger in France where it was regarded not just as a breach of international law, but also as a direct attack on the country's prestige and economic interests. The Suez Canal Company which had built the canal in the 1860s was a French company and it had gotten rights to run the canal for 99 years. PM Mollet saw the nationalization of the company as an act of warfare. He was much more of a driving force for war than Britain was. Due to Egyptian President Nasser's support of Algeria's National Liberation Front, Mollet saw Nasser as a man who was bent on ethnic supremacy for the Arabs and the elimination of the Jews. France was fighting in the Algerian War during the time of the Suez Canal crisis, and Mollet was determined to crush the rebellion. He, however, requested a ceasefire for negotiations with Algerian Nationalists.

### **VI. Christian Pineau**

Christian Pineau was the Minister of Foreign Affairs for France from 1956 to 1958. He was responsible for handling the Suez crisis and supported Mollet in his affairs. Pineau's manner was quite sporadic and he often got on the nerves of the other members of the Security Council.

### **VII. Nikita Khrushchev**

Nikita Khrushchev was the Premier of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964. He was eager to exploit Arab nationalism and gain a foothold in the Middle East, so he approved the supply of arms from Czechoslovakia to the Egyptian government. He railed against the British-French-Israeli invasion and threatened to rain down nuclear missiles on Western Europe if the countries did not withdraw their troops from the canal.

### **VIII. Kliment Voroshilov**

Kliment Voroshilov was the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet from 1953 to 1960. He worked with Khrushchev to try to extend soviet influence to the Middle East during the crisis.

### **IX. Mao Zedong**

Mao Zedong served as the Chairman of the CCP from 1949 to 1976. He supported Egypt in its desire to control the Suez Canal. He is the President of The People's Republic of China. Other members of the Security Council are uncertain about Zedong's opinions.

### **X. Zhou Enlai**

Zhou Enlai was the 1st Premier of the People's Republic of China. He also served as the Chinese foreign minister from 1949 to 1958. China used its state response to strengthen Egypt-China chairs.

### **XI. Sir Robert Menzies**

Sir Robert Menzies was the prime minister of Australia from 1949 to 1966. He supported the British-French-Israeli attack on the Suez Canal. He strengthened military ties with the United States and Europe and helped the industry grow in Australia. He also often supported the global expansion of resources and held a strong alliance with the European countries and the US.

### **XII. David Ben-Gurion**

David Ben-Gurion was the first prime minister of Israel from 1955 to 1963. In 1956, he joined Britain and France with their invasion of Egypt. He was known for his charismatic personality and is often revered as the "Father of the Nation." He is very vocal and is the leader in policies in Israel.

### **XIII. Moshe Dayan**

Moshe Dayan was the military leader of Israel during the Suez Crisis. He, like Ben-Gurion, feared for the national security of Israel when the arms deal between Russia and Egypt occurred. He wanted a war with Egypt and was able to convince Ben-Gurion to later go to war with Egypt. Once Egypt nationalized the canal, they closed off the Straits of Tiran which blockaded Israeli shipping. This blockade was one reason why Dayan pushed for war with Egypt.

## **Cited Works & Further Research:**

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