THE SUEZ CRISIS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR 
THE EVOLUTION OF THE POST-WAR ERA

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ABSTRACT
The Suez Crisis which happened 60 years ago (1956), has been regarded as one of the most important event in the international relations world. The crisis which was triggered by the nationalization of the Suez Canal by the President of Egypt Gamal Abdul Nasser in July 1956, still interested to study until today. The crisis not only stimulated the political world violently, but also gave many implications, politically and militarily, to the international world. The Suez Crisis also has signed the emergence of the new superpower namely the United Stated and the Soviet Union in the Middle East. Before that, the superpowers in the Middle East are Britain and France. This article will assess the background of the Suez crisis as well as its significance in the evolution of the post-war era. Specifically, the following questions will guide trajectory of this essay: what was the significance of the Suez Crisis in the evolution of the post-war era? In attempt to answer these questions, this essay is divided into three sections. The first section examines the historical background of the Suez Crisis. The second section assesses the international world's responses toward the Suez Crisis. The third section analyses the impact of the Suez Crisis on the world order.

Keywords: Suez Crisis, Gamal Abdul Nasser, United Stated, Soviet Union, Britain and France, Nationalization, International Relations, World Order

Introduction

ABSTRAK

Kata Kunci: Krisis Suez, Gamal Abdul Nasser, Amerika Serikat dan Uni Soviet, Inggris, Perancis, Nasionalisasi, Hubungan Internasional, Tatanan Dunia
The Suez Crisis which happened 60 years ago (1956), has been regarded as one of the most important event in the international relations world. The crisis which was triggered by the nationalization of the Suez Canal by the President of Egypt Gamal Abdul Nasser in July 1956, still interested to study until today. The crisis not only stimulated the political world violently, but also gave many implications, politically and militarily, to the international world. The Suez Crisis also has signed the emergence of the new superpower namely the United Stated and the Soviet Union in the Middle East.

Before that, the superpowers in the Middle East are Britain and France. This article will assess the background of the Suez crisis as well as its significance in the evolution of the post-war era. Specifically, the following questions will guide trajectory of this essay: what was the significance of the Suez Crisis in the evolution of the post-war era? In attempt to answer these questions, this essay is divided into three sections. The first section examines the historical background of the Suez Crisis. The second section assesses the international world’s responses toward the Suez Crisis. The third section analyses the impact of the Suez Crisis on the world order.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SUEZ CRISIS

It has been argued that the construction of the Suez Canal is about the relations between the colonial power (Britain) and its colony (Egypt). By receiving the receipt of the canal concession in 1854, the Suez Company became the most important European firms which operating in the Middle East. The Suez Canal also can be seen as a symbol of foreign exploitation and economic imperialism, and can be told that was such a state within the state. In fact, the problem grew to be more complex when the British occupied Egypt in 1882. This is because the occupation had remained unwilling and negative perception from many of the Egyptian.

Therefore, although the British virtuously accepted Egypt as an independent state in 1922, actually Britain reserved the big problem about the defense of the Canal. Britain faced the difficult situations to negotiate future of the Suez Canal. Eventually, they successfully signed the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance on August 26, 1936. This treaty had been authorized the British to remain its troops in Egyptian territory within 20 years.
and ensuring cooperation with Egyptian forces in protecting the Canal.\(^6\)

However, the Second World War made the accord between the British and Egypt confronted very difficult challenges. At that era, Egyptian nationalism put in appearance and pushed the British to give more concessions from the Canal. And from November 1945 through 1946, the Egyptian government insisted the Suez Canal’s company to review the 1935-37 treaty.\(^7\) Meanwhile, the coup of army officers had successfully overthrown King Farouk on 23 July 1952. This event resulted in a bad situation for the British to improve the Suez Canal’s accord. The new regime in Cairo which headed by Gamal Abdul Nasser had determined to widen a form of Arabic nationalism which contained a mobilizing anti-British feeling all over the Middle East.\(^8\) As a consequence, this condition not only made the British felt threatened with Egypt, but also feared about the decreasing of its influences in the Middle East areas.

**INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TOWARD THE SUEZ CRISIS**

It should be noted that the peak conflict between Britain and Egypt which caused the Suez Crisis, made in 1954. At that time, Egyptian nationalists pressured Britain to remove its last troops by June 18, 1956 and removing all of its imperialist domination from Egypt. After this moment, the relationships between these two countries increased in tensions and never normal again.\(^9\) At the same time, Nasser actively persuaded the United States and Western countries to give aids for the big project of building the Aswan High Dam. Previously, the Anglo-American agreed to give funding for Nasser to build the dam. Unfortunately, they suddenly rejected his proposal because Nasser has made cooperation with the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.\(^10\)

Because of this humiliation, Nasser responded with a dramatic act of defiance by declaring the nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956. For most Egyptian people and Arab countries, this nationalization noted as the symbol of Egyptian independence in front of Western exploitation.\(^11\)

On the contrary, Britain felt angry with Nasser’s action to nationalize the Suez Canal. Britain thought that its government has made real effort to modernize the region, gave many concessions, and agreed to review the accord, but Egypt denied all.\(^12\) The United Kingdom also considered that Egypt has insulted and betrayed the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement of the Suez Canal Base of 1954. In this agreement, the United Kingdom pursued a gradual withdrawal from Egypt as its choice for postwar policy. Hence, for the

\(^{6}\) D. Carton, p. 12. Also see, R.O Matthews, p. 81.

\(^{7}\) J. Georges-Picot, p. 8.

\(^{8}\) D. Carlton, pp. 12-13.
United Kingdom, the nationalization of the Suez Canal was the biggest hostility of Nasser toward the British government.\(^{13}\)

Meanwhile, the French actually has serious problem with Egypt because often felt threatened with the Nasser’s actions which supported fully the Algerian resistance toward France.\(^{14}\) As a result, France made alliance with Britain and Israel to attack Egypt not long after Nasser has nationalized the Suez Canal. In this regard, the reason why Israel also joined the war against Nasser is that Egypt was the old enemy of Israel and it could block its ambition to conquer Palestine and other Arab lands such as Aqaba.\(^{15}\)

In order to prevent a serious conflict as the impact of nationalization of the Suez Canal, international communities actually had held international conference on summer 1956. The conference in London, resulted the proposal for an international operating authority about the Suez Canal. Unfortunately, this proposal has failed to overcome the crisis because Nasser refused to compromise with Britain and France. Nasser tended to use the moment of nationalization as “declaration of independence” from imperialism.\(^{16}\) Due to Nasser’s negative reaction toward the international proposal, Britain, France, and Israel arranged a secret agreement for joint military action against Nasser. The agreement which was known later as the Protocol of Sevres, was signed on 24 October 1956.\(^{17}\)

Furthermore, the Protocol of Sevres was activated on October 29, 1956, with an Israeli attack into Sinai. Then, the British air force also began to attack Egypt by heavy bombing raids on military targets in the area near Cairo and along the canal zone on October 31, 1956. At the same time, Israeli bombarded the east bank of canal.\(^{18}\) Besides that, an Anglo-France paratroops also dropped on Port Sa’id on November 5, and on the following days the continued their military attack toward Suez City.\(^{19}\) By the serious military attack toward Egypt, it can be seen that Britain actually has broken its postwar policy which consider a diplomatic solution rather than military solution. Indeed, the Suez Crisis seemed as a serious indication that could trigger the war after the Second World War.

Regarding the tripartite invasion toward Egypt, we could see that world opinion was overwhelmingly hostile. Both of the United States and the Soviet Union condemned the tripartite attack.\(^{20}\) Interestingly, although the

\(^{13}\) R.O. Matthews, p. 82

\(^{14}\) R.O. Matthews, p. 82.


\(^{16}\) W.L. Cleveland and M. Bunton, pp. 311-312. Also see R. O. Matthews, p. 91.


\(^{18}\) W.L. Cleveland and M. Bunton, pp. 312.


\(^{20}\) W.L. Cleveland and M. Bunton, pp. 312.
United States was the close ally of the British-France-Israel, the Eisenhower government does not support this attack. In contrast, Eisenhower was angry with the decision of the three countries to attack Egypt, while the United States still strive to formulate a peaceful settlement about the Suez Crisis. Consequently, the United States chose to support the United Nations rather than favored the British and French. Then, the UN General Assembly decided to create a UN Emergency Force to supervise the cease-fire between the tripartite and Egypt. In fact, under the United States pressure and UN initiatives, Britain and France withdrew from Egypt in December. Meanwhile, Israel finally also evacuated its troops from Sinai in March 1957.

THE SUEZ CRISIS AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR THE WORLD ORDER

It is important to note that the Suez Crisis has given positive impact and good credit for Gamal Abdul Nasser in front of his people and Arab countries. He emerged as the new Pan-Arab Hero who has high bravely to challenge the imperialist power. In contrast, the collusion behind the invasion of three countries toward Egypt resulted the decreasing of their image within the Arab world. Ironically, after the Suez Crisis, many of British and France people who lived in Egypt were expelled and their properties were confiscated. In this respect, Israel also certainly associated as the agent of Western powers which has to prevent its power. Certainly, the Suez Crisis directly triggered the Yom Kippur war between Israel and the Arab World in 1973. Besides that, the crisis also influenced the long conflict in the Arab regions. In addition, the Suez Crisis has signed the end of the British’s influences as the Great Power in the Middle East region. By this event, the century of Anglo-French domination of the Arab World was finally close. Not long after this crisis, British also lose his colony in Iraq and France conceded Algeria’s independence in 1962.

It has been asserted that the Suez Crisis had very important consequences for many countries around the world. In fact, the Suez Crisis actually not only the war between Egypt vis a vis the tripartite countries, but also the power competition of the superpowers. On the one side, the United States and the Soviet Union tried to use this event to proliferate their influence in the Middle East. On the other side, the British and France attempted to make a hard effort to remain their position in the region. As consequence, the favor of the new superpowers toward Egypt is the part of their strategies to gain sympathy from the Middle East countries and as their instrument to strengthen their power. Indeed, we could see from the outcome of the Suez Crisis.

22 P. Mansfield, p. 257. Also see W.L. Cleveland and M. Bunton, pp. 312.
23 W.L. Cleveland and M. Bunton, pp. 312-313.
24 P. Mansfield, p. 257.
sis that the United States and the Soviet Union solidified their pre-eminence in the global balance of power.  

Because of the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union after the Second World War, both of the countries employed the Suez Crisis to add their greater degree of involvement in the Middle East regions. For the Americans, they used this event to widen Eisenhower Doctrine which contained providing additional economic and military assistance to nations to secure the influence of International Communism. On the contrary, the Soviet Union also supported aggressively many of nations and movements in the Middle East to avoid the influence of imperialist and capitalist power (the United States). As a result, many countries used this event to widen and to save their interests in the Middle East and to change the world order. Thus, the crisis has emerged as the sign of competition between the superpowers in the Middle East countries and the change of the world order. As a consequence, although the Suez Crisis has been stopped successfully, it caused many conflict and the war in the following era. From the above explanations, it can be argued that the Suez Crisis has very significant position for the evolution of the post-war era. 

CONCLUSION

This article has discussed the Suez Crisis and its implication for the evolution of the post-war era. It has suggested that the background of the Suez Crisis previously was the conflict between Britain and Egypt in terms if the operating of the Suez Canal. However, the crisis became greater because the involvement of many countries and it contained many interests in Middle East countries. After 1956, we also could see the declining influence the European as the superpowers which were replaced by the emerging of the United Stated and the Soviet Union. And after that, the bipolar order then constituted as the world order system.

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26 B. McCauley, p. 794.
27 D. Carlton, pp. 101-102.
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