The Eisenhower Administration and Allied Relations During the
Suez Canal Crisis of 1956

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THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION AND ALLIED RELATIONS DURING
THE SUEZ CANAL CRISIS OF 1956

by

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B.A. May 1993, Old Dominion University

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ABSTRACT


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The Suez Canal Crisis of 1956 illustrated a potentially harmful dichotomy in Dwight D. Eisenhower's foreign policy goals. Eisenhower relied on the support of America's major allies, the British and the French to resist Communist influence throughout the world. In addition, Eisenhower felt it necessary to "win over" the developing nations of the world by supporting their anti-colonialist struggles and trying to bring the rising tide of nationalism into line with American policy. These two goals came into conflict during the Suez Crisis. By using various governmental sources as well as the memoirs of key figures in the governments of both the United States and its major allies, this study documents this rift between the United States, Great Britain and France, while noting the inability of the United States to win compensating gains in its relations with the developing nations of the Middle East.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I.</strong> INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II.</strong> PRELUDE TO A CRISIS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III.</strong> THE SUEZ CANAL CRISIS</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV.</strong> THE UNITED NATIONS DEBATES</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V.</strong> CONCLUSION</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIBLIOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VITA</strong></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</strong></td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIA........Central Intelligence Agency
NATO........North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC.........National Security Council
SCUA........Suez Canal Users Association
UN..........United Nations
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Eisenhower administration, like other Cold War administrations, sought to halt the spread of international communism during its tenure. The administration structured its foreign policy to contain communism through a variety of means which would not only be effective in practice but cost effective as well. These means included strong support for the European allies of the United States and the development of Third World countries into bastions of Democracy. In the Middle East and elsewhere, however, these instruments conflicted with each other and posed a potential threat to America's ultimate objective of limiting the growth of communist influence.

The nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egyptian President Gamal Ab'del Nasser on 26 July 1956 created a world wide crisis which illustrated this apparent contradiction in the foreign policy of the Eisenhower administration. The British and French governments reacted to the nationalization of the Canal by disdaining Nasser's action and considering various means, including force, to

The journal consulted for this thesis was Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.
reassert international control of the Canal Zone. Following numerous failed attempts at negotiation, the British, French and Israeli governments resorted to force in an attempt to regain control of the Suez Canal from the Egyptian government.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower considered the British and French two of his government's most important allies. One noted Eisenhower scholar called the Atlantic Alliance "the issue closest to his heart." Yet Eisenhower opposed, as have most United States presidents, the traditional colonial influences held by the Western Europeans over the less developed countries. In this particular instance he also opposed his allies' use of force. Because of the Suez Canal Crisis the anti-colonialist stance of the Eisenhower administration became a fault line between the United States and its allies. Although the Eisenhower administration made extensive use of the allies in the overall scheme of United States policy and in the containment of Communism, Eisenhower compromised this most important European partnership by following a strategy in Suez which eventually alienated the British and French. The United States did so in part because of its resolve to build friendly nations in the Third World, the Arab world in this case. Yet, in addition to creating friction between the United States and

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its allies, the Eisenhower administration's actions during the Suez Crisis did nothing to increase its standing with the Arab world, and in the end facilitated Soviet advances into the Middle East.

The objectives and subsequent results of the Eisenhower administration's foreign policy are chronicled in a large body of scholarly work. The history of the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956 and subsequent allied relations has primarily been written, whatever the perspective, as a chronicle of mistakes by and/or misconceptions of all the parties to the conflict. These mistakes and misconceptions include the Eisenhower administration's views on the use of force, the allies' understanding of the administration's policy, the economic diplomacy involved, and whether President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles clearly enunciated the position of the administration. Most recently, the Suez Canal Crisis and its effects on allied relations have been chronicled in examinations of United States-Soviet relations, in addition to various studies which condemned many of the administration's actions concerning the Third World.

Townsend Hoopes, who is a journalist not a historian, recounts the Suez Crisis in his assessment of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, The Devil and John Foster Dulles. Hoopes's account of Dulles's involvement in foreign policy is dated and was published before a majority of the
documentary evidence became available. Hoopes contends that Dulles was the driving force behind the foreign policy of the Eisenhower administration, and is less than laudatory of his overall performance. His assessment of Dulles's actions during the Suez Crisis is no exception. Hoopes lays the blame on Dulles for helping create the crisis by his withdrawal of funding for Egypt's Aswan Dam project, which he characterizes as an immense miscalculation.² Hoopes discusses the ambiguity of Dulles's position on the seizure of the canal, which he feels contributed to the later strain on allied relations.³ While Hoopes lays much of the responsibility for United States action during the Suez Crisis on John Foster Dulles instead of on the president himself (who was in actuality the controlling partner in their relationship), he does fault Eisenhower for not insisting that Dulles present his position in a more forceful manner.⁴

For the purpose of this study, whether or not John Foster Dulles was the driving force behind the policies which led directly or indirectly to the Suez Crisis is irrelevant. Rather, the significance of Hoopes's assessment of the situation is the recognition of the ambiguity on the

³Ibid., 349.
⁴Ibid., 393.
part of the Eisenhower administration (thereby encompassing both Dulles and Eisenhower) in expressing their stance on the nationalization of the Suez Canal and subsequent allied reaction.

William Roger Louis presents a more evenhanded look at Dulles's role in Eisenhower's administration as well as his part in the Suez Canal crisis and the resulting tensions with Britain and France. Unlike Hoopes's view which portrays Dulles as the driving factor behind United States foreign policy, Louis sees the relationship between Eisenhower and Dulles as much more of a partnership, with the president in control. Louis states that Eisenhower and Dulles agreed in both "principle and detail" during the Suez Crisis, with Eisenhower setting the policy and Dulles executing it. Louis describes the dilemma facing Dulles and Eisenhower as how to remain on good terms with the British and French governments and still oppose their traditional colonialism. In his discussion of the administration's policy toward the Middle East and the allies, Louis points out the various misunderstandings and miscues by all parties involved and reveals how complex the various policy goals were when intertwined with one another.

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Some scholars have credited the ambiguity of the statements coming out of the State Department during the crisis to a difference in opinion between Dulles and Eisenhower, contrary to Louis's assessment that the two were of like mind over how the threat of force on the part of the Allies should be handled. Frederick W. Marks in his book *Power and Peace: The Diplomacy of John Foster Dulles* posits that Dulles, while publicly supporting Eisenhower's position, personally would have preferred the British and French expedition to have been successful, and indeed tried to persuade Eisenhower to be more conciliatory towards the allies.⁶ Hoopes also makes mention of this possibility in his work, citing a conversation between Dulles and British diplomats following the crisis in which the secretary of state made such insinuations.⁷

Not all accounts of the Eisenhower administration's actions during the crisis are critical. Some accounts are laudatory of the efforts made by both President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles. Blanche W. Cook states in her book *The Declassified Eisenhower* that Eisenhower acted boldly by preventing the British and French from reasserting their


⁷Hoopes, *Devil*, 381.
colonial domination over the Middle East. One biography of Secretary Dulles, which is admittedly severely dated (having been published in 1959), credits Dulles with greatly enhancing the prestige of the United States with the Third World by siding against the allies. It portrays him as a great peacemaker, delaying war over the canal twice, and bringing about a quick cessation of hostilities once they began.

Other authors have noted that the Eisenhower administration's view of the Middle East as crucial to Western security also played an important role in its actions during the Suez Crisis. George Lenczowski states in American Presidents and The Middle East that Eisenhower viewed the Middle East as the "arena of great confrontations" between communism and democracy, emerging nations and colonialism, as well as the Arabs and Israelis. According to Lenczowski, Eisenhower viewed all of these conflicts in light of the United States-Soviet struggle. Thus, the refusal on the part of Eisenhower to support the allied actions during the crisis was not made in an attempt to undermine the Anglo-French position, but to prevent

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Soviet advances in the Middle East. This attempt to bring Egypt into "the fold" did not work out as Eisenhower desired. At least one scholar maintains that rather than the intended effect, the Eisenhower administration's position on the Suez Crisis led Nasser into a closer relationship with the Soviet Union.

In Confronting The Third World: United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1980 Gabriel Kolko takes a different approach to the Eisenhower administration's position in the Middle East. Kolko maintains that United States-Soviet relations are less important to a study of Middle East policy during the Eisenhower period than are Anglo-American relations. This he credits to the relatively negligible influence of Marxism in the Middle East due to various socio-economic reasons. This is of some importance to this study as Anglo-American relations are also its focal point. Kolko points to misunderstandings between the United States and its allies as an integral part of the crisis that arose over the invasion of the Suez Canal Zone by joint British, French and Israeli forces in the fall of 1956. Kolko states that

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10 George Lenczowski, American Presidents and the Middle East (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 46.


due to the Eisenhower administration's tentative position during the Suez Crisis the British were not aware of precisely what United States policy was. According to Kolko, this in turn led the British and French to misread the United States position on the use of force.\footnote{Ibid., 82.}

Kolko's opinion that Anglo-American relations are of predominate importance to the study of United States policy towards the Middle East is shared by other scholars, but on different grounds. William Stivers exemplifies this in his article "Eisenhower and the Middle East." Stivers maintains correctly that President Eisenhower had Eurocentric priorities in the development of his foreign policy. Stivers characterizes the Eisenhower administration's objectives in the Middle East as "contradictory and delusive," due to United States interest in the Middle East being subservient to a larger European interest.\footnote{William Stivers, "Eisenhower and the Middle East," in Reevaluating Eisenhower: American Foreign Policy in the Fifties, ed. Richard A. Melanson and David Mayers (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 193.} Stivers also states that the administration's actions during the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956 are not an anomaly.\footnote{Ibid., 209.} He bases this on various documents that show the administration's general sympathy for the plight of the British and French during the Suez Crisis. Stivers credits Eisenhower with
acting in an attempt to prevent the allies from further damaging their declining power in the Middle East. In his overall assessment of President Eisenhower's policies in the Middle East, Stivers gives credit to the president for his short term successes but rates him generally unfavorably, due to his failure to take advantage of the increased influence which the United States was afforded during the 1950's to promote stability in the area. Stivers blames this failure in part on the Eurocentric focus of the administration.\textsuperscript{16}

In his article "Suez Revisited" Anthony Adamthwaite examines the British role in the creation of the Suez Crisis. In his assessment of Suez, Adamthwaite cites the inability of the British Cabinet to come to a consensus on what action should be taken in the case of Suez. This is attributed to several things, including a paradox similar to that which the Eisenhower administration faced. Adamthwaite characterizes the conflict as being between the wish to promote democracy and an attempt to maintain old imperial interests.\textsuperscript{17} Adamthwaite also opines that for the British the crisis began much earlier than the nationalization of the canal. Rather, it began in March of 1956 when British Prime Minister Eden decided that Nasser was another

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 213-215.

\textsuperscript{17}Anthony Adamthwaite, "Suez Revisited," \textit{International Affairs} 64/3 (Summer 1988): 454.
Mussolini that must be deposed, which made the Eisenhower administration's position more tenuous in seeking a peaceful solution to the Suez Crisis.  

One of the most recent works on the Suez Canal Crisis is *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis* by Diane Kunz. Kunz focuses on the economic diplomacy pursued by the United States against Great Britain, France, Israel and Egypt during the Suez Crisis and the varying effectiveness of such policies. Kunz notes in her introduction that the economic diplomacy employed during the Suez Crisis provides an excellent case study of miscalculations on the part of all involved. Most important to this study is her assessment that the United States government made the error of not taking a direct approach in outlining its position against the use of military force. Kunz credits this lack of a forceful enunciation of the Eisenhower administration's stance against military action to an attempt to not alienate the allies. Kunz also notes that the United States government never brought its full economic force against Egypt in an attempt to gain favor with the Nasser government. Kunz's assessment of the Suez Crisis of 1956 is an astute look at how the economic might of the United

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18Ibid., 453.

States was used, or not used, in an attempt to further foreign policy objectives.

Another recent study of the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956 is Cole Kingseed's *Eisenhower and The Suez Canal Crisis of 1956*. It is primarily an examination of presidential decision making using the Suez crisis as a basis for studying Eisenhower's effectiveness in developing foreign policy. In Kingseed's assessment of the crisis itself he cites his personal belief that Eisenhower made the correct decision in not supporting the use of force by the British and French. However, he also makes the observation that Eisenhower failed to inform the European allies of how strongly he was opposed to the use of force as a resolution to the crisis.20 Here again, as in many of the previous works mentioned, the author raises the question of whether the United States' European allies had a clear understanding of what the Eisenhower administration's policy was regarding the crisis and the use of force.

Two of the most recent works on the United States, Great Britain, and Egypt are Nigel John Ashton's *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955-1956*, and Peter L. Hahn's *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-

1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War. Although both studies go beyond the focus of this study by examining United States policy well before (in Hahn's work) and well after (in Ashton's) the Suez Crisis, both are directly relevant. Ashton viewed the paradox of the conflict between the British and United States governments over Suez as residing in the fact that despite the differences between the two on various issues such as Suez, the Palestinian mandate and the Mossadegh regime in Iran, they could work together closely when it was in their perceived best interest. For Ashton the conflict surrounding the Suez Crisis concerned the differing perceptions of the situation throughout. Ashton notes that by March of 1956 the British determined that Nasser was their primary enemy in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{21} The United States, on the other hand, although realizing that Nasser would in all likelihood never be the ally they desired, did not give up on relations with him due to his influence in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{22} Ashton noted that there were some basic misconceptions on the part of the British as to the actual stance of the United States on Nasser and possibly on Eisenhower's position of control in the formulation of


\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., 76-77.
foreign policy. Ashton concluded that although the Suez Crisis represented a low point in Anglo-American relations, in fact very little changed in either American or British policies in the Middle East other than that the British were more careful to seek American support for future initiatives.\(^{23}\)

Hahn's work analyzed American policy towards Egypt from 1945 through 1956. Hahn related that the United States sought to promote stability in the Middle East in order to preserve Western interests in the area and thereby deny the Soviet Union access. He correctly points out the United States often "pursued conflicting objectives," which in turn forced it to prioritize its interests.\(^{24}\) He also noted that the failure of the Eisenhower administration to support the British at Suez was a departure from previous form which was aimed at maintaining a strong relationship between the United States and Great Britain.\(^{25}\)

In another article on the Suez Crisis, Geoffrey Warner cited that the United States policy was not motivated as much "by a visceral dislike of European 'colonialism' and a corresponding sympathy with Arab nationalism as by the

\(^{23}\)Ibid., 212-213.


\(^{25}\)Ibid., 243.
perceived imperatives of the Cold War." In his article Warner notes that the split with the allies was a matter of not wishing to lose the Middle East, not one of avidly opposing traditional colonialism or supporting of Nasser's actions.

All these assessments of the Eisenhower administration's handling of the nationalization of the Suez Canal and ensuing conflict have certain merits as well as shortcomings. One shortcoming is the failure to consider how the administration's actions during the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956 conformed to its overall foreign policy objectives as enunciated in National Security Council (NSC) 162/2, often referred to as "The New Look." In very general terms, this document set forth a plan for controlling the spread of world communism. Two very important provisions of this containment were the support of and from the United States allies, and support for the developing nations of the world in order to turn them to the side of democracy. In the case of the Suez Canal Crisis the Eisenhower administration was pursuing this dual policy, the two sides

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of which ran in opposition to one another. The desire on
the part of the administration to bring Nasser into the
proverbial "fold" of democracy, and thus prevent Soviet
expansion into the Middle East, contradicted the support the
United States traditionally gave the British and French.
The reason such conflict was displayed vividly in the Suez
Crisis of 1956 can be found in the anti-colonialist position
that the administration held. Any support for Nasser, who
was an extreme nationalist, posed a threat to the
traditional European domination of the Middle East. The
need on the part of the Eisenhower administration to align
these objectives caused them to engage in a series of
ambiguous statements and actions which in actuality served
to complicate matters further. In these two objectives can
be found the root of the ambiguity as described by Hoopes in
his book on John Foster Dulles. In addition, the potential
disagreement over which policy should take precedence may
account for both Hoopes's and Marks's implications that
Dulles was far more sympathetic to the notion of supporting
the Allies than was Eisenhower.

This study will examine in detail how the dual
objectives of the Eisenhower administration's foreign policy
worked in the Suez Crisis. It will discuss how the policies
involving the Arab world and those involving the European
allies came into conflict with one another. In doing so it
will show that the Eisenhower administration compromised the
major goal of its foreign policy as set forth in NSC 162/2 due to its desire to gain favor with the developing nations in the Middle East.
CHAPTER II
PRELUDE TO A CRISIS

In order to examine how the various commitments of the Eisenhower administration conflicted with one another during the Suez Crisis of 1956, the policies of the administration must first be defined. The most comprehensive statement of the Eisenhower administration's foreign policy was NSC 162/2, approved by President Eisenhower on 30 October 1953. This document focused on methods to contain the spread of communism and ways to respond to various forms of Soviet aggression without bankrupting the American economy. Throughout its entirety the document stressed the need for strong allied support for United States policy. In addition, the concerns of the administration with Third World nationalism and anti-colonialism were also expressed.

NSC 162/2 began with an outline of the basic problems and threats to maintaining the security of the United States. Meeting the Soviet threat to the security of the United States was the primary function of the administration's policy. NSC documents pursuant to NSC 162/2 echoed the themes set forth there while updating the policy stance of the United States. The documents continually maintained that the basic threat to the security of the United States and its allies was the "hostile
policies" of the Soviet bloc.\(^1\) Included in this threat were "Soviet control of the international communist apparatus and other means of subversion or division of the free world."\(^2\) The concern over the potential division of the free world is of particular interest to this study.

NSC 162/2 made the United States commitment to and dependence on its allies quite clear. It stated: "The United States cannot, however, meet its defense needs, even at exorbitant cost, without the support of allies." In addition, NSC 162/2 also recognized the need of the United States to have the armed forces and economic resources of the other non-communist states on its side in order to maintain the ability of the United States to wage war without "undermining its fundamental institutions."\(^3\)

The potential for division between the United States and its allies was an important concern addressed in NSC 162/2. The National Security Council noted that the Soviet Union would rely heavily on subversion to weaken free world alliances, and furthermore would seek to exploit any differences it could create. It also stated that by


\(^2\)NSC Documents, NSC 162/2, 1.

\(^3\)Ibid., 8.
continuing to strengthen its alliances, the United States could potentially force the Soviet Union into a position of forced negotiation.⁴ In his memoirs Eisenhower personally recounted his concern over the state of allied relations, noting the attempts made by the Soviet Union to create mistrust and suspicion among members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).⁵

With the need for cohesion among the allies clearly addressed, NSC 162/2 focused on factors which could lead to a potential breakdown of relations between the United States and its allies. NSC 162/2 stated that the strength of the coalition between the United States and its allies depended on the strength of the United States as the leader of the coalition and the assumption of each member of the coalition of its proper responsibilities.⁶ The document cited a number of factors which could weaken the coalition of free nations, many of which became evident in the Suez Crisis of 1956. One of these factors was that many of the NATO members had an increasing sense of independence from United States guidance. In addition, "allied opinion, especially in Europe, has become less willing to follow U.S.

⁴Ibid., 7.


⁶NSC Documents, NSC 162/2, 11.
leadership." In addition to the increasing independence of the allies, the issue of colonialism and allied relations concerned the Eisenhower administration. The NSC noted that colonialism weakened the European allies and left many former colonies in "a state of ferment." Attempts by the United States to resolve colonial issues usually created stress between the allies and dissatisfaction on all sides.

As a solution to the potential weakness of the coalition of free nations the Eisenhower administration posed several defenses. The United States needed to maintain a strong security posture in order to reassure its allies of its ability to meet Soviet aggression. NSC 162/2 stated that the allies of the United States must be "genuinely convinced" that the posture of the United States was actually one of collective security. NSC 5602/1 also addressed the need to convince the United States allies, particularly its NATO allies, that the United States designed its policy to serve their security as well as its own. NSC 5602/1 however, added to NSC 162/2 in that it called for the United States and its allies to "reject the concept of preventive war or acts intended to provoke war."

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7Ibid., 12.

8Ibid.

The Eisenhower administration intended its policies to maintain the cooperation of the allies while seeking to build friendship with the uncommitted areas of the world.\(^\text{10}\) The primary concern of the United States allies during the 1950's in the Middle East was access to oil. The Eisenhower administration recognized the need to protect the access of its European allies to Middle East Oil. Eisenhower mentioned in his memoirs his concern about this issue as early as 1953, when the British attempted to come to terms with Egypt over their military presence at Suez.\(^\text{11}\) In addition, NSC 162/2 addressed this concern in two contexts. First, in order to enable the "free world nations" to become more self-sufficient the Eisenhower administration felt the necessity to help stimulate "freer access to markets and raw materials." Secondly, the basic foreign policy statement noted the need for access by both the United States and its allies to the resources of the Middle East, particularly oil. The means by which the United States intended to secure this freedom of access was through building strong allies in the area to produce stability.\(^\text{12}\)

Although NSC 162/2 called for nuclear sufficiency and allied support to resist the spread of international

\(^{10}\text{NSC Documents, NSC 162/2, 20.}\)

\(^{11}\text{Eisenhower, Mandate, 150.}\)

\(^{12}\text{NSC Documents, NSC 162/2, 20-21.}\)
communism, the administration knew that other policies had to be used as well. In the less developed areas of the world for example, the United States had at its disposal a number of means by which to achieve the desired ends, which included not only preventing the spread of communism but establishing governments friendly to the Western World. Among these means were to take "all feasible diplomatic, political, economic and covert measures," to counter Soviet advances.  

However, such a policy proved difficult to achieve. The United States supported one regional security agreement, the Baghdad Pact, but did not actually join it. This occurred, according to Secretary Dulles, because of the United States belief that the British used it as a means to further their own ends in the Near East, rather than as an effective counter to Soviet expansion into the area.  

By 1956 then, the United States had been unable to establish any semblance of stability in the Arab world. In addition, the problems caused by a disruption of oil supplies to the NATO allies became abundantly clear in the aftermath of the invasion of the Canal Zone.

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\(^{13}\)Ibid., 25.

The Eisenhower administration also saw the Third World as important in and of itself. The Third World (or less developed countries) presented a challenge to the Eisenhower administration, as many of them sided neither with the United States nor the Soviet Union in the overall world picture. NSC 162/2 addressed these uncommitted areas of the world as vital to United States interest, but as a potentially decisive factor in the struggle against (or for) the spread of communism. The NSC made note of the rising nationalism and the anti-colonialism prevalent in many of the uncommitted areas. This, along with the instability of many of the governments in power, demonstrated the need to take "constructive political and other measures" to create a sense of mutual interest. How these political and other measures played out varied considerably, depending upon the circumstances involved. One such circumstance involved the tendency of Third World nations to embrace non-alignment.

During the mid-1950s the increasing trend toward neutralism became of concern to the administration. The emergence of these neutral states as powers in international politics began in 1955 with the Bandung Conference. The Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, Francis Wilcox, noted the unease of the United

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15 NSC Documents, NSC 162/2, 13.
16 Ibid., 14.
States about these nations in a memorandum to Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., the American Representative to the United Nations. The memorandum stated that the division in the United Nations between Communist and free world nations was no longer dominant. He went further to state that on numerous issues the Western European allies were opposed by uncommitted nations (rather than by the Soviet Union) who, according to the memorandum, now had the balance of votes in the UN and an "inclination to defeat...initiatives of a cold war character." It also noted that the Soviets were in a far better position than were the Western Powers to court favor with these neutral nations, and were redefining their relationships and tactics to exploit this. Due to the increasing power of the non-aligned bloc of nations in the UN, the United States had less freedom to maneuver and this too would play a role in the Suez Crisis.

In the fall of 1954 the National Security Council released NSC 5433/1 which further outlined the administration's policy towards Europe, but which restated the administration's basic policy as well. Among the objectives outlined was the prevention of Soviet expansion by retaining "the major Western European nations as

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17 Francis Wilcox, Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs to the Representative at the United Nations Henry Cabot Lodge, 7 May 1956, FRUS, 1955-1957, 11:74-75.
allies." NSC 5433/1 also addressed the growing tensions between the United States and its European allies, stressing the need to "reverse the divisive trends in Western Europe" by developing economic strength and cohesion, which in turn would increase the will of Western Europe to "resist Communist subversion and neutralism." The unwillingness of the United States to continue unilateral support for the French military campaign in Indochina, and disagreements over the European Defense Community and German rearmament in 1953 and 1954 played a major role in the creation of these tensions between the United States and its allies. NSC 5433/1 also noted here that the Soviet Union was taking serious initiatives at dividing the "Western Alliance."19

The Middle East proved to be one of the most difficult areas in which to implement the Eisenhower administration's policies of building allies among the developing nations, as its history prior to the Suez Crisis indicates. The administration's first position paper on the Middle East was NSC 155/1, which it approved on 14 July 1953. NSC 155/1 noted the strategic importance of the Middle East and the declining influence of the Western powers in the area. It set forth a series of objectives (which included protection of the United States and its allies' rights in the area) and

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18NSC Documents, NSC 5433/1, 1.

19Ibid., 3.
courses of action to be taken which the administration would outline further in NSC 5428. This later policy statement, completed in July 1954, recognized that the current conditions in the Middle East were "inimical to Western interests," and that the prestige of the Western powers had declined markedly in the recent past. It discussed how the British and French were viewed in an extremely unfavorable light by the nations in the Near East, and that some of this affected the United States position as an ally of both. This being duly noted, NSC 5428 also recognized the considerable influence the allies (particularly the British) still held in the Middle East, and called for the United States to "act in concert with the United Kingdom to the greatest extent practicable" to help retain stability. NSC 5428 also set forth a series of objectives and courses of action to be followed in the administration's dealings with the Middle East. The objectives included the maintenance of the availability of the region's natural resources (oil) to the United States and its allies, the establishment of stable governments capable of withstanding communist aggression, a diplomatic settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute, and the reversal of anti-American sentiment and recognition of the countries in

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the area. The courses of action outlined in the document varied from limited military assistance to the countries of the Near East to socio-economic programs. For the purposes of this study the most significant course outlined was to act in concert with the United Kingdom and "to guide revolutionary and nationalistic pressures...into orderly channels not antagonistic to the West."22

One of the first tests of the administration's policy in the Middle East revolved around negotiations with Egypt and the Nasser government over potential financing of the Aswan High Dam. President Nasser wanted to build a dam in upper Egypt to provide much needed power to the Nile delta area and to aid with irrigation. The Aswan High Dam was to be financed by the governments of the United States, Great Britain, and the World Bank. The offer of aid totaling $400 million was made in December of 1955 but was not immediately accepted by the Nasser government.23

The Nasser government chose to delay its acceptance of the funding in favor of negotiating with the Soviet Union (who would eventually help fund the Dam) and then attempted to play the United States against the Soviets for the better deal. In addition to drawing closer to the Soviet government, Nasser also concluded an arms deal with

22Ibid., 9:528-529.
23Lenczowski, Presidents, 40.
Czechoslovakia, which was a Soviet satellite. Finally, the government of Egypt officially recognized the People's Republic of China, an act clearly in opposition to the Eisenhower administration's position. President Eisenhower mentioned all of these factors in his memoirs when discussing the decision not to fund the Aswan project. Eisenhower noted the potential difficulty in obtaining the funding for the dam from Congress due to the recent interactions the Nasser government had with the Soviets.\textsuperscript{24}

In March of 1956 the Director of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs released a memorandum summarizing the lines the United States had followed in its policies toward the Near East for the previous three years. These included political actions, such as an unsuccessful attempt to solve the Arab-Israeli dispute; economic issues, which included financing of such projects as the Aswan Dam; and military concerns, such as the previously noted Baghdad Pact.\textsuperscript{25} The memorandum noted that the United States had looked to Egypt under Nasser to take leadership in the Near East, but that he proved himself unreliable due to his failure to move towards a settlement with Egypt, his objection to various


\textsuperscript{25}Fraser Wilkins, Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs, 14 March 1956, \textit{FRUS, 1955-57 15:352}. 
United States initiatives (including some of the requirements set forth for the financing of the Aswan Dam project), and most notably his arms deal with the Czechoslovakians. The memorandum expressed doubts as to the potential for ever working productively with the Nasser government.²⁶

In July 1956 Nasser decided to accept the United States offer for aid with the Aswan Dam. By this time however, the Eisenhower administration had reconsidered its initial offer to fund the Aswan Dam and rescinded it. In a press release the State Department stated the decision to withdraw the offer of funding for the Aswan Dam was based on "developments within the succeeding 7 months" that were not favorable to the success of the project.²⁷ Though the State Department release does not specifically mention the reasons for the withdrawal of aid, it is clear through Eisenhower's memoirs what the concerns of the administration were. In addition to the concerns over Nasser increasing his relations with the Soviets and their satellites (the Czechs), there was concern over the ability of the Egyptian economy to withstand the strain the financing of the Dam would place upon it, especially with the price of Nasser's

²⁶Ibid., 15:353.

²⁷Department of State, "Aswan High Dam," 19 July 1956, U.S., Department of State, Department of State Bulletin, 30 July 1956, 35:188. (Hereafter cited as DSB, with date, volume and page).
recent arms deal.\textsuperscript{28} When the United States withdrew its offer to finance the dam project the British and World Bank followed suit, leaving Nasser in a difficult position.

Nasser's reaction to the refusal of the United States and Britain to fund the Aswan Dam was the nationalization of the Suez Canal, the act which precipitated the Suez Canal Crisis.

In effect, the United States used its refusal to fund the Aswan High Dam project as a sanction against the Egyptian government for making overtures towards the Soviet bloc. However, the Eisenhower administration did not approach the resulting nationalization of the Suez Canal as an extension of the Aswan issue. Instead, the United States perceived it to be one which pitted traditional European colonialism against an emerging country's nationalist interest. The Eisenhower administration was willing to use economics in this case, first as an incentive and then as a sanction, but was not prepared for the result of its policy, which was a crisis in the United States-allied relations.

\textsuperscript{28}Eisenhower, \textit{Waging Peace}, 30-31.
CHAPTER III

THE SUEZ CANAL CRISIS

The Suez Canal Crisis of 1956 had precisely the right combination of participants and actions to display the potential conflict between the Eisenhower administration's reliance on its European allies and its concern with nationalism and anti-colonialism in the developing nations of the Middle East. From the outset of the crisis the administration's uncertainty about which strategy it should emphasize created an ambiguity which would eventually strain the relationship between the United States and its closest allies, the British and the French.

Upon the announcement of the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egyptian President Nasser, the ambiguity of overall United States policy on Suez began to appear. The Eisenhower administration's initial response to the nationalization was one of disapproval. What the administration wanted in response, however, was unclear. As Secretary Dulles stated in a radio/television address on 3 August 1956, the question was not one of whether something should be done about the actions of Nasser but rather what should be done. Dulles went on to react in the negative to the potential use of force, but did not completely rule out military action in the "unlikely" event that negotiations on
the matter should fail, stating: "We have given no commitments at any time as to what the United States might do in that unhappy contingency."\(^1\)

While the Eisenhower administration voiced optimism over the prospects for a non-military settlement of the Suez Crisis, the allies seemed somewhat less than convinced. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden in his memoirs cited a telegram to Eisenhower which clearly stated that the British had every intention of using force, if necessary, to protect their interest in the canal zone and elsewhere in the Middle East lest their, as well as American, influence dwindle.\(^2\) This statement, however, by no means eliminated the potential of a peaceful solution. British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Selwyn Lloyd noted that the initial reaction of the British, French and Americans was a rejection of the nationalization and a series of potential remedies to the crisis, force being a final resort.\(^3\) American Under Secretary of State Herbert Hoover, Jr. echoed feelings similar to those of Prime Minister Eden in a conversation with President Eisenhower. Although Hoover was not in favor of using force, he felt that the United States


should "move strongly" in the Middle East in order to prevent the Western position there from being challenged.\(^4\)

Despite their skepticism, the British and French agreed to follow the United States lead for the time being, and pursue a diplomatic resolution to the situation. On 2 August 1956 the governments of the United States, Great Britain and France issued a tripartite statement reasserting the international nature of the canal and condemning the Egyptian action.\(^5\) However, from this point forward the contradictions in the administration's policies became increasingly evident.

The British, French and Americans called a conference in London of the major canal users and the signatories of the 1888 Constantinople Treaty which established the international nature of the Suez Canal. Eden, in a letter to President Eisenhower, expressed his hopes that a settlement would come out of the conference, but stated that force was still a possible result.\(^6\) When the conference began in August, Secretary of State Dulles gave a speech

\(^4\)Andrew J. Goodpaster, Memorandum of Conference With the President, 27 July 1956, 5 p.m., \textit{FRUS}, 1955-1957, 16:11-12.

\(^5\)Department of State, Text of Tripartite Agreement, \textit{DSB}, 3 August 1956, 35: 262-263.

restating his earlier conviction that the question was not whether something should be done about the Suez Crisis, but rather what should be done. Secretary Dulles did not, however, rule out any alternatives. He merely suggested a set of four principles which should underlie any plan for a resolution. These included first, that the canal should be operated efficiently as a free waterway in accordance with the Suez Canal convention of 1888. Secondly, the operation of the canal should be divorced from national politics, from whatever source. Thirdly, there should be a recognition of Egypt's rights and interests in the canal. Finally, a provision for the compensation of the Universal Suez Canal Company, who had heretofore run the canal, should be made. 

Dulles's private statements were no clearer. In a conversation with Soviet Foreign Minister Dimitri Shepilov, Secretary Dulles noted the administration's commitment to avoiding the use of force if at all possible. Dulles, while still not advocating the use of force, stated that while the United States may disagree with British and French policy in the long run, should they "become engaged" they could "count on U.S. moral support and possibly more than moral support." At a dinner party at the American ambassadors

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residence, the conversation turned to force and how much support it would enjoy in the United States and United Kingdom. Secretary Dulles was present, but nowhere in the conversation was there an outright objection by the United States delegation to the use of force. The president did no better. On 8 September 1956 Eisenhower sent a letter to Prime Minister Eden in which he again stressed the notion that no forcible action should be taken without all other measures being exhausted. However, he then conceded the fact that "eventually there may be no escape from the use of force." The failure of the Eisenhower administration to make abundantly clear its position on the use of force served to complicate matters as the crisis wore on.

At the first London Conference on the Suez Canal Crisis, eighteen of the twenty-two nations present agreed to a proposal to set up an international board to administer the Canal, while recognizing the Egyptians' special interest in the Canal. Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies presented the Conference's proposals to General Nasser in early September, 1956. Nasser rejected the proposals of the Conference on the grounds that the proposition infringed on

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Egyptian sovereignty, while noting the threats of hostilities from the British and French, and various economic sanctions taken against Egypt. Nasser's rejection of the proposals made by the London Conference put the United States in a position to support its allies in pressuring Nasser further. Instead, Secretary Dulles made another ambiguous statement at a press conference. In this statement Dulles said that the United States would not attempt to shoot its way through the Canal if denied free passage, even though he noted it may well be the right of the United States to do so.

Dulles made this comment publicly, while two weeks previously he had a conversation with Eden in which he stated that if the British were to resort to force, they should consider how it would play out in the United Nations. In this conversation Dulles recommended that the British try to put the primary responsibility for hostilities on Egypt. Here again the United States position on the use of force to resolve the Suez Crisis was not clear. Was the position of the administration that expressed by Dulles in

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13Department of State, "Transcript of Secretary Dulles' News Conference," DSB, 24 September 1956, 35:479.

his conversations and correspondence with the allied governments, or was it the public statements against the use of force?

The ambiguity with which the Eisenhower administration approached the issue of force may have been intended to placate the British and French, while still advising them of the "untimeliness" of the use of force. However, the opposite effect may well have been achieved by allowing the allies to feel that they could at least count on the moral support of the United States, if not actual military assistance.

Yet, the administration also had larger issues in mind. The driving force behind the Eisenhower administration's hesitation to support the British and French in their planning for military intervention was the goals it wished to achieve in the remainder of its foreign policy, especially that which concerned the third world. On 5 September 1956 the State Department issued a statement on the probable reprisals of British/French military action in the Suez Crisis. This document clearly demonstrates the dilemma in which the Eisenhower administration found itself. According to this document, if the British and French intervened militarily the likelihood of a swift victory was probable. In the event of a quick victory, the State Department felt that the Soviets would have limited opportunity to become heavily involved in the conflict. The
Soviets would, however, be able to make significant gains in their relations with Arab nations by playing the role of "a friend of nationalism." The potential for the Soviets to exploit a break in allied solidarity over the Suez issue was also mentioned, but the State Department believed that a quick defeat of Egypt would lessen the potential for a major diplomatic break between the West and the Middle East. However, an invasion would provoke anti-Western sentiment and the prolonged occupation which would be required, after military action, would further incense Arab "nationalist and anti-colonialist" sentiment.¹⁵

The most significant part of this document dealt specifically with the "effect on the U.S. position" of allied action. If the United States openly supported the British and French in a military action in the Middle East, even without the designation of troops, it would incur nearly the same risk as the combatants themselves. The potential perception of the United States as a friend of imperialism and colonialism concerned the administration greatly because of the anti-American backlash that could occur. The condemnation of the British and French also carried with it serious consequences. Among these was, most importantly, the potential that "considerable strain would be imposed, at least temporarily, on US relations with its

principal allies." In addition, the report noted that many other nations could perceive any United States condemnation of Britain and France as insincere or an election year lack of resolve. The Eisenhower administration apparently recognized the situation it was in, especially in the likely eventuality of the use of force by the British and French. It thus became imperative that the United States convince the allies that force was unacceptable, yet the United States never gave a clear condemnation of force.

The result of Nasser's refusal to accept the terms set forth by the first London Conference, and the subsequent British rejection of the Egyptian counter-proposal for further negotiations in Egypt, led to a second round of negotiations in London among the eighteen signatories of the first conference's plan. Unfortunately, the Second London Conference in September, 1956 proved to be as ineffective as the first, and resulted only in the creation of the Suez Canal Users Association (SCUA), a plan put forth primarily by Secretary Dulles. The tenets of this plan were similar to the solutions proposed during the first conference, and adhered to the four basic principles Dulles had enunciated at its opening.17

16Ibid.
Initially, the French government supported the Users Association Plan, feeling that it preserved Western solidarity. The British were more divided on the issue.\(^\text{16}\) According to Selwyn Lloyd, the reasons the British agreed to the SCUA proposal were because it would maintain United States support; it would (or so they thought) deny Nasser up to eighty percent of the dues from the canal; and it might cause Egypt to obstruct the canal, thereby giving them a stronger case before the United Nations and for the use of force if need be.\(^\text{19}\) Throughout the crisis the British, French and Americans discussed how the crisis might be played out in the United Nations Security Council. The United States expressed concern over the effectiveness of an appeal to the United Nations. These concerns were expressed to Prime Minister Eden by Walworth Barbour, Minister-Counselor of the Embassy in the United Kingdom. He noted that the Soviet Union would veto any constructive resolutions and that resolutions might be presented by members such as Yugoslavia calling for restraint on both sides, which would delay Security Council action by fostering new debates. Although the British acquiesced in the SCUA plan, they and the French did take their grievance


\(^{19}\)Lloyd, \textit{Suez}, 132-133.
over the legality of the nationalization of the canal to the UN Security Council without further American consultation.\footnote{Walworth Barbour, Telegram From the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State, 28 August 1956, \textit{FRUS,} 1955-1957, 16:312-313.}

The United States voiced support for the British and French appeal to the Security Council, although concerned about its potential outcome. United States Representative to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., made a statement in the Security Council to the effect that the United States welcomed the British and French initiative, and praised them for doing all in accordance with the UN charter to preserve the peace.\footnote{Lodge, "Inscription of Suez Items on Security Council Agenda," 26 September 1956, \textit{DSB,} 8 October 1956, 35:560-561.} It would be in the Security Council, however, that the developing rifts between the United States and its Western allies became public, as the following chapter will demonstrate.

The Users Association took up the issue of how tolls would be paid through it at the same time as the UN deliberations commenced. A relatively major dispute arose in SCUA over whether or not American-owned ships flying the United States flag and American ships not flying the United States flag would be compelled to pay their tolls to the SCUA or to Egypt through SCUA. The British felt the Eisenhower administration had led them to believe that the funds being paid the Users Association would be withheld
from the Nasser government. The United States, meanwhile, maintained that it had no legal power to force American ships not to pay tolls to the Egyptian government. Rather, they could only require that such payments be made through the SCUA to the Egyptian government. This understandably made the SCUA much less valuable to the British and French interests, since it was of little inconvenience to Nasser's government. Additionally, it had no real military backing to it, due to Dulles's previous statement that the United States would not resort to the use of force to ensure free passage through the Canal.

On 29 October 1956, Israel attacked Egypt (an act which was prearranged in association with the British and French). At this point the tense relations among the allies became abundantly clear. The United States and the Soviet Union both entered resolutions in the United Nations calling for an immediate cease fire between the Israelis and Egyptians. Both measures were vetoed by the British and French. The British and French then issued a 12-hour ultimatum for a cessation of hostilities, which the Israelis accepted but which Egypt rejected. The New York Times commented on the split of the allies, stating that "the division between the

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United States and its two principal allies was dramatically advertised to the world by their veto of the United States resolution. The seriousness of the division became increasingly clear as President Eisenhower protested the British and French ultimatum, as well as calling for them to refrain from committing troops to the conflict, a warning the British and French chose to ignore.

Allied leaders and others also raised questions over the apparent contradiction in the Administration's policies. Henry Hodson, editor of The Sunday Times of London, wrote an article for the New York Times Magazine in which he assessed the causes of the strain among the allies. Hodson likened the importance of the Suez Canal for Britain to the significance the United States placed on the Panama Canal. He also suggested that the United Kingdom was under the illusion that American policy was "activist and interventionist," when in actuality it was "passivist and conciliatory." Hodson also chided the Eisenhower administration for its belief that the British based their foreign policy on "colonial" interests. Hodson quoted one of Vice-President Richard Nixon's speeches on Suez, in which Nixon proclaimed that the United States had finally aligned itself with "anti-colonial powers." Hodson then asked the

\[24\] New York Times, 31 October 1956, 1,16.

\[25\] NYT, 31 October 1956, 1,15.
American public to "reflect on who the so-called anti-colonial powers are — beginning with Soviet Russia — and to consider whether such a commitment is not, in the end, the road to suicide."²⁶

In his memoirs, Eden criticized the Eisenhower administration as well for its "anti-colonial" stand, and noted that the United States point of view on "trusteeship" differed from that of Great Britain. Eden stated that the United States had no problem expending large sums of money to develop a country, and gain much in the process, while not taking responsibility for the administration of its government. This he contrasted with the British model of the past decades in which they aided the growth of colonial governments as well.²⁷ The points brought up by Hodson and Eden were valid, but not exhaustive, ways of looking at the dichotomy of the Eisenhower administration's position.

The rift between the British, French, and the United States over the Suez Canal Crisis was quite serious. The commitments of the Eisenhower administration to both its allies and to nurturing good relations with the developing nations of the world, in conjunction with a firm anti-colonialist sentiment, appeared irreconcilable and placed America's overall containment policy in jeopardy.


²⁷Eden, Full Circle, 557-559.
Throughout the crisis British and French intentions remained clear until the two weeks leading up to the Israeli invasion. From the outset, the British and French expressed their willingness to use force in the event that negotiations failed. Their objectives were both to preserve Western influence in the Middle East and to maintain free passage through the Suez Canal in accordance with the Constantinople Convention of 1888. The Eisenhower administration did not make its goals clear, other than that it preferred a peaceful solution. The United States did not make it decisively clear that it would not tolerate the use of force by the British and French to resolve the Suez Crisis, thereby leaving open a window for the allied actions. The reason behind the ambiguous stance taken by the Eisenhower administration was an attempt to, in Dulles's words, "walk the tightrope" between the allies and the newly developing world. The dual goals of the Eisenhower administration in the case of the Suez Canal Crisis were a major factor in the strained relations between the United States and its allies.
CHAPTER IV
THE UNITED NATIONS DEBATES

The debates in the United Nations throughout the Suez Crisis provide an excellent indicator of how strained relations between the United States and its allies became because of the contradictions in America's policy. From the beginning of the United Nations involvement in the Suez Canal Crisis the delegates from the United States and those of Britain and France took opposite positions on most issues of substance. This included both potential solutions to the crisis and resolutions calling for the cessation of hostilities between the Egyptians, Israelis and joint Anglo-French forces. This directly contradicted the position set forth in NSC 162/2 which called for the United States to act as the leader of the coalition of free nations. As the debates in the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly continued, the differences between the allies and the United States became increasingly clear, with the role of the non-aligned nations also becoming more evident.

On 12 September 1956 the British reported to the Security Council that Egypt's nationalization of the canal and refusal to negotiate on the terms set forth in the two eighteen-power proposals created a situation which endangered free passage through the canal and thereby
presented a threat to peace. The Soviet Union also delivered a message to the Security Council on the same day which declared that the military preparations being undertaken by the British and French, with the support of the United States, were not in accord with the United Nations Charter but rather were, along with the User's Association proposed by Dulles, an affront to Egyptian sovereignty and through a "slippery slope," a threat to Soviet security.¹ The Soviet message to the Security Council is of importance because it shows the Soviet impression that the United States, at very least, was behind the British and French position on military intervention even if not actively involved. This was the same impression, mistaken or not, that the British and French were receiving to this point.

The Eisenhower administration was unsure of the motives behind the Anglo-French turn to the United Nations. The administration hoped that this was an honest attempt to use the United Nations to solve the crisis through diplomacy; however, the fear was that it was merely a veiled attempt to buy time and/or UN backing for military action. These concerns were enunciated to the British and French by Secretary Dulles in a meeting on 5 October 1956. In this

meeting Dulles stated that there was an apparent misunderstanding between the United States, Great Britain and France over the purpose of the Anglo-French appeal to the United Nations. Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd responded that the British were seeking a peaceful solution to the conflict; however, he noted that if the United Nations failed to act quickly to resolve the situation, force would be the next choice due to the unlikelihood of economic pressures producing quick results. The Foreign Minister of France, Christian Pineau, responded in a more hostile tone. He stated that "the time has come to show our cards," noting that French public opinion was shifting towards an anti-American stance. In addition, Pineau noted that due to the emerging differences between the French and the Americans the "question of the existence of NATO is raised." Pineau stated that the potential break-up of NATO "would be the greatest Soviet victory," and so he suggested that all misunderstandings be cleared between the allies. He then proceeded to enunciate what he felt were the major differences between the powers. First, he stated that the United States did not realize the significance of the Suez Canal to the British and French, and indeed of the entire Middle East and its effect on Anglo/French influence worldwide. Pineau went further in noting the French government's concerns, stating that the "temporizing tactics of the US alarm us," and that they would "play the game in
the Security Council" but would not be bogged down in procedure. He also asked the United States to give the French freedom of action if negotiations in the United Nations failed.²

Secretary Dulles had an opportunity at this point to state clearly the Eisenhower administration's position against the use of force to resolve the Suez Crisis. Instead, although he was more forceful than previously, he began his response by stating that the "U.S. would not want to say that the circumstances might not arise where the only alternative would be the use of force." Dulles followed up this statement with his belief that, although sometimes force must be used regardless of a potentially unsatisfactory outcome, he did not believe that the use of force would improve the allies' prospects in the Middle East. Furthermore, Dulles noted that the use of force in violation of the United Nations Charter would destroy the UN. He then reiterated his belief that the United Nations apparatus must be given a chance to work and not just be used as an excuse for the use of force.³ Although this was a clearer statement by Secretary Dulles of the United States position on the use of force, he still did not rule out the


³Ibid., 642.
use of force completely. This may have led to a situation in which the British and French could reasonably believe they could at least expect American inaction. Dulles reported the results of his conversation to President Eisenhower, stating that the British went along with the notion of giving the United Nations an honest attempt at a resolution, and that the French went along "grudgingly."4

On 13 October 1956 the Security Council convened to discuss issues stemming from the request of the British and French, noted in chapter three, that the United Nations resolve the issue after the failure of the eighteen-power Conferences to do so. Here the British and French attempted to satisfy the requirement of the Eisenhower administration that force be the last resort after all other avenues were exhausted, even if "grudgingly" so. The Security Council passed a portion of a joint Anglo-French resolution which outlined six basic principles for the settlement of the dispute over the canal. The portion containing these principles was adopted unanimously and was accepted by the Egyptian representative. However, a second portion of the resolution which would have helped legitimate the eighteen-power proposals was not adopted due to the negative vote of the Soviet Union.5

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4Dulles, Message From the Secretary of State to the President, 5 October 1956, FRUS, 1955-1957, 16:648-649.

5United Nations, YBUN, 23.
As the Security Council debates continued, more signs of the tenuous situation between the United States and its allies surfaced. On 20 October 1956 Douglas Dillon, the American Ambassador to France, advised the Department of State that the French viewed the situation in the Suez as one in which the United States would have to choose between its allies. He expressed the French government's concern over the future of NATO, citing its belief that Nasser was a "mortal danger" to the existence of France, a view the Americans did not share. The French believed that "unless the U.S. clearly took her place with the Western powers when the showdown came...the Atlantic Alliance was finished." Here was a second warning, this time in public, to the Eisenhower administration as to how serious the French were about their position, and how probable a breakup of the NATO alliance would be if the United States were to oppose them.

The Eisenhower administration recognized the strain being placed on allied relations and correctly attributed it to misconceptions about its position regarding the use of force. This was clearly evident in a phone conversation between Ambassador Lodge and Secretary of State Dulles on 23 October 1956. In this conversation Lodge told Dulles that British Ambassador Dixon had expressed to him his concern

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6Douglas C. Dillon, Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State, 20 October 1956, FRUS, 1955-1957, 16:760-761.
over the growing differences between the two nations. Dulles told Lodge of his concern that the British and French thought, incorrectly, that the administration's stand against the use of force would soften following the presidential election, and that the United States would be more disposed to support the use of force to solve the crisis. Yet, the record does not show that the administration took definitive steps to resolve this ambiguity.

After Israeli forces attacked the Egyptians in late October, a whole new round of debates and disagreements began between the United States and the allies. Initially there was some question as to what the British and French role was in the Israeli action. Some in the administration felt, correctly, that the Israelis had acted with encouragement from the British and French. Here again Secretary Dulles cited the probable misconception the British and French were operating under, telling President Eisenhower: "The French and British may think that - whatever we may think of what they have done - we have to go along with them." The president responded to this by stating that he intended to honor the United States commitment to the Tri-Partite statement issued in April of

which called for the United States, Britain and France to intervene militarily to stop aggression in the Middle East even if the allies did not honor their commitment.\textsuperscript{8}

On 29 October 1956 the United States informed the Security Council that Israeli forces had invaded Egyptian territory and requested a special session of the Security Council to order a cessation of the military action taken by the Israelis.\textsuperscript{9} The Soviet Ambassador to the United Nations, Arkady Sobolev, immediately stated the Soviet belief that the Israelis could not have acted on their own, directly implicating the United Kingdom and France by introducing a press release from London into the record. The press release contained statements by the British and French governments calling for an end to the fighting, and stating that they would intervene militarily to maintain free passage through the canal unless there was a cease fire within twelve hours. Along with this came a reprimand by the Soviet ambassador reminding the nations in question that "no State had a right to exploit the existing serious situation in its own interest."\textsuperscript{10} The fact that the Soviet

\textsuperscript{8}Goodpaster, Memorandum of Conference With the President, 29 October 1956, \textit{FRUS}, 1955-1957, 16:835.

\textsuperscript{9}United Nations, \textit{YBUN}, 25.

Union was able to take the initiative in condemning the British and French for their alleged involvement was undoubtedly something the United States had wished to avoid, for it was now in a position in which it would either side with the Soviet assessment, support the British and French in their denials of the allegations, or remain silent on the issue which would be tantamount to the latter.

The British and French denied the allegations of the Soviet delegate and stated that they had tried to pursue a peaceful resolution to the crisis but the Egyptians and Israelis would have no part of it. The British ambassador to the United Nations, Pierson Dixon, then tried to turn the blame for the problems in the Middle East on the Soviet Union, claiming their "persistent misuse of the veto has done much to complicate the situation in the Middle East," culminating in the current crisis. After denying the Soviet allegations, and citing the Security Council's lack of power over the situation, the British and French expressed their feelings that the draft resolution submitted by the United States calling for the recognition of a breach of the peace and subsequent U.N. action not be considered by the council. The French representative took the issue further, and in his statement revealed just how strained the relationship between the United States and its European


allies, the French in particular, was. Unlike Dixon, who laid much of the blame for the crisis on Soviet misuse of power, the French laid the blame squarely on lack of support and initiative on the part of the United States government. He stated:

The French Delegation believes that if we are now confronted with such extremely serious events it is largely because, in the face of the provocative actions of a Government which did not even bother to conceal its many aggressive intentions, certain Powers showed too much weakness and, despite my Government's appeals, allowed the Egyptian menace to grow until it has brought us to the brink of a most serious conflict.

He went on to note historical precedents showing where weakness in the face of international lawlessness can lead. This was presumably a reference to Nazi Germany.¹²

Despite the French and British objection to the United States resolution, the Security Council voted on the issue. The vote was seven to two (with two abstentions) in favor of adopting the resolution, but it did not carry because the negative votes came from the British and French who were permanent members of the council and therefore carried veto powers.¹³ Following the rejection of the United States draft resolution, the Soviet Union took the initiative and introduced its own resolution which was basically a revised version of that of the United States. The debate on this resolution was no less inflammatory, but was mainly between

¹²Ibid., 28.

the Soviets and the British and French and hence of little consequence to this study. It, too, was defeated by a seven to two vote with two abstentions, the United States being one of the abstentions.\textsuperscript{14}

Following the Security Council's failure to adopt either the American or Soviet resolutions, and rejection of the Anglo-French ultimatum issued to the Egyptians and Israelis following the outbreak of hostilities, the British and French intervened militarily in the crisis. The Soviet Union instantly seized on the opportunity to condemn the action as a clear violation of the UN charter. In addition, the Soviet ambassador once again accused the British and French of having the use of force as their primary goal from the outset of the crisis.\textsuperscript{15} The British and French denied this of course, citing among other things their right to protect their vital interests in the Middle East, as well as a lack of faith in the ability of the Security Council to act effectively to resolve crises. The French representative stated that the governments of the United Kingdom and France took what they felt were necessary steps to safeguard the canal zone even if "these steps should, at first, be misunderstood by certain of their friends."\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 27.


\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 10-11.
This was undoubtedly directed toward Ambassador Lodge of the United States.

The British and French military intervention in the crisis forced the Eisenhower administration to examine its policy goals further in relation to both its troublesome European allies and its desire not to be associated with their colonial rule. Secretary of State Dulles addressed the conflict the United States faced at a National Security Council meeting on 1 November 1956. Dulles admitted that for years the United States had walked a "tightrope" between its support for the British and French, and attempts to secure the friendship of the "newly independent countries who have escaped from colonialism." This was a dichotomy that the United States could not support much longer, lest the "newly independent" countries turn to the Soviet Union for support. Secretary Dulles implied in his statement to the NSC that this was the overwhelming concern of the United States at present. Secretary Dulles came down firmly on the side of opposing the British and French actions, stating that if United States sided with them the United States would be "looked upon as forever tied to British and French colonialist policies." Dulles noted the tragedy of the situation, especially in light of the Soviet aggression in Hungary, was that the United States would be forced to either follow British and French colonialism or split from them. Special Assistant to the President Harold Stassen
countered Dulles's argument. While agreeing that the British and French had erred, Stassen felt that they were vital friends and that "the future of Great Britain and France was still the most important consideration for the United States." Thus, in light of the serious break in allied relations, there was still a split in the Eisenhower administration over what the overriding concern of foreign policy should be. The problems first alluded to in NSC 162/2 regarding the British, French and colonialism had clearly come to fruition. NSC 162/2 had stated that efforts on the part of the United States to settle issues between the former colonial nations and the British and French would leave both sides dissatisfied and create friction within the alliance, yet the administration had followed policies which had acerbated that development.

Egypt's prominence in the non-aligned movement played a role in the UN debates as well. On 31 October 1956, Yugoslavia, which was also a prominent member of the non-aligned bloc, submitted a draft resolution calling for a special session of the General Assembly due to the lack of unanimity of the Security Council. This deference to the General Assembly came under the "Uniting for Peace"

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17S. Everett Gleason, Memorandum of Discussion at the 302d Meeting of the National Security Council, 1 November 1956, FRUS, 1955-1957, 16:902-916.

18NSC Documents, NSC 162/2, 12.
resolution which the General Assembly had passed six years earlier as a response to the ineffectiveness of the UN during the Korean War. The British and French argued that the resolution was out of order, claiming all the preconditions for evoking the resolution were not met. Ambassador Lodge expressed the view of the United States that the resolution presented by the Yugoslavs was relevant to the situation at hand, noting how the United States disliked being in disagreement with its friends. The Yugoslav resolution passed despite the objections of the British and French, and a special session of the General Assembly was called in an attempt to restore peace and order. However, the dispute between the United States and its European allies continued in the General Assembly along much the same lines as it did in the Security Council.

During the special session of the General Assembly the British representative again expressed his feelings that a special session of the General Assembly was not in keeping with the "Uniting for Peace" Resolution. He went further, stating that he was attending the special session only because the British government felt the United Nations should do all in its power to solve the "grave situation" in

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21Ibid., 15.
the Middle East. As in the Security Council debates, the British tried to blame the ineffectiveness of the Council on the Soviet Union and its misuse of the veto power. He then claimed that the British and French tried to get action from the Security Council, but that the course of action proposed by the United States, without consulting his government, could not adequately solve the problem.  

The French ambassador argued the French position on the proposal along the same lines as did Dixon, and stated that the French government also felt the United States proposal in the Security Council did not take into account the political situation and, therefore, was not satisfactory.

Secretary of State Dulles represented the United States on the floor of the United Nations during the first meeting of the special session. He began his statement to the assembly by stating that he was addressing the assembly with a "heavy heart," due to the fact that the United States found itself unable to agree with "three nations with which it has ties of deep friendship, of admiration, and of respect," two of which, the United Kingdom and France, were its oldest and most trusted allies. In his statement to the General Assembly Dulles finally proclaimed the Eisenhower


administration's firm stance against the use of force. He noted that the United States was not unaware of the "murky" circumstances out of which the current crisis arose, but that the provocations present, no matter how serious, did not justify the use of force to settle the issue. This announcement, had it been made to the British and French months earlier might have persuaded them to, if not alter their plans, strive harder to win the support of the United States both militarily, diplomatically and/or economically.

The United States then introduced a draft resolution calling for an immediate cease fire, a ban on all United Nations member states from introducing military goods into the area of hostilities, and a request that the Secretary-General of the United Nations observe and report on compliance with the resolution. This resolution passed sixty-four to five with six abstentions. The Egyptians agreed to the resolution almost immediately. The British and French contingents did not.

The lack of compliance by the British and French with the UN resolutions allowed the Soviet Union to take the initiative and put the United States in an increasingly difficult situation. It called for an emergency meeting of the Security council to discuss the issue of British and

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French noncompliance. The Soviets introduced a draft resolution asking that all members of the United Nations, especially the United States and the USSR, "having powerful air and naval forces at their disposal," aid Egypt against the aggressors should Britain and France not comply within stated time limits. Before the Security Council voted on the matter, however, the British and French showed a willingness to be more cooperative due to diplomatic and economic pressure from the United States. This pressure included a cessation of American aid for the British pound sterling and the cut off of oil for Western Europe following the blockage of the canal. Following this the Security Council voted not to adopt the Soviet proposal, four votes to three.²⁶

By 7 November 1956 all parties involved agreed to a cease fire and the process began of implementing the special United Nations Force to maintain the peace. The withdrawal of Anglo-French and Israeli forces from Egyptian territory was a priority at this time as well. During the hostilities the Egyptians blocked the Suez Canal by scuttling ships in it; hence preparations began for the clearing of the canal to resume normal shipping. Neither of these goals was attained until nearly the middle of 1957.

²⁶Ibid., 30-31.
Following the Suez Crisis, relations between the United States and the British and French were severely strained. Rebuilding the relationship would, out of necessity, become a priority following the crisis. Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wrote to Eisenhower to express his concern for the maintenance of the "Anglo-American alliance." Churchill expressed his belief that to allow arguments over what happened at Suez to come between the two nations would be "an act of folly, on which our whole civilization may founder." He also noted that the only beneficiary of a split between the British and Americans would be the Soviet Union.27

27Winston Churchill to Eisenhower, 2 November 1956, Office Files, 12:0030.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The net result of the Eisenhower administration's diplomacy during the Suez Crisis was not a success when judged in the perspective of its overall policy goals. The main objective of the Eisenhower administration's foreign policy centered on protecting the United States against the "hostile policies" of the Soviet Bloc and controlling the spread of worldwide communism. In the case of the Suez Crisis, two very important provisions in the administration's plan for achieving its goals came into conflict with each other, forcing the administration to walk "a tightrope" between them. The first of these two provisions dealt with the United States major allies and the administration's resolve to use them to meet the Soviet threat in Europe and elsewhere in the world. The second concerned developing nations which the administration wished to turn towards democracy through various means, including financial assistance. The main goal of the policies set forth in NSC 162/2 was the containment of communist expansion without the destruction of the institutions and values of the United States. The document suggested a number of means to achieve these ends and also expressed a concern for the newly emerging nations. The Eisenhower
administration saw these nations as potentially pivotal areas in the struggle against Soviet expansion. During the Suez crisis the administration undermined the goal set forth in NSC 162/2 by failing to support its allies and failing to make significant gains in the nations of the Middle East.

The use of the allies to combat the spread of communism was a necessity both financially and militarily. As NSC 162/2 clearly stated, the United States could not meet its defense needs without the support of its allies.\(^1\) NSC 162/2 specifically warned that the Soviet Union would attempt to exploit differences that could be created between the United States and its allies and use them to its own advantage. The document also expressed concern over the state of allied relations, citing an increasing willingness on the part of the allies to act independently of the United States, as well as noting how United States attempts to solve traditional colonial issues generally created tension between the allies. NSC 162/2 stressed the need to convince the allies that the United States was indeed committed to collective security.\(^2\) NSC 5433/1 followed the same line of reasoning and suggested the same basic formulas for success. During the Suez Canal Crisis, however, the administration did little to further this plank of its foreign policy

\(^1\) *NSC Documents*, NSC 162/2, 1.

\(^2\) Ibid., 12.
platform because of its other goal of building bridges to the developing areas of the world.

The challenge facing the Eisenhower administration in the Third World, and in the Middle East in particular, was that many of these newly developing nations were neutral in the struggle between the Soviet Union and the West. These uncommitted areas were seen as vital to United States interest, and how to turn these nations into allies was a major concern of the Eisenhower administration. Various means, such as economic aid, were at the administration's disposal to encourage these countries into a pro-Western stance. Furthermore, the administration wished to affirm its commitment against traditional colonial influences throughout much of the world. The administration realized that its goals in the un-committed areas of the world could potentially create problems in its relations with the allies.

In July of 1956 these policies did indeed come into conflict with each other. From the beginning of the crisis the allies, the British in particular, sought support for their actions from the Eisenhower administration. In a letter to President Eisenhower, British Prime Minister Eden stressed the need for unity among the allies writing: "The firmer the front we show together, the greater the chance

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3Ibid., 13-14.
that Nasser will give way without the need for any resort to force." This was a clear expression of two things on the part of Eden. One, that he wanted to show unity in his dealings with Nasser; and two, that, if possible, the British were not entirely determined to use force. The Eisenhower administration, however, interested in promoting pro-Western feelings in the Middle East, chose to try a more "even handed" solution rather than merely siding with its allies against Nasser, who himself had tried to play the United States and the Soviets against each other in an attempt to gain favorable financing for his Aswan Dam project. Ambassador Dillon, from the United States Embassy in France, commented on the possible effects United States policy would have on the allies during the early part of October 1956, noting that the Suez Crisis had impaired French confidence in NATO and might cause them to look at the possibility of a strong European union which would deal on even levels with the Soviet Union and the United States. One of the most poignant examples of how some in the administration came to view the conflict and its implications was the conversation held during the 302d meeting of the National Security Council, in which Secretary

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4Eden to Eisenhower, 27 August 1956, Office Files, 12:902.

5Dillon, Telegram From the Embassy in France to the Department of State, 6 October 1956, FRUS, 1955-1956, 16:656.
Dulles basically wrote the British and French off as declining powers who were in a situation of their own making. This very possibly being the case, they were nonetheless still considered vital to the defense of the United States. In addition, these outcomes were clearly not in keeping with the stated goal of convincing the allies that the United States was concerned with collective security.

The administration also did not adequately address its concerns regarding the propensity of the allies to act independently of American guidelines during the Suez Crisis. Although predominantly against the use of force from the outset of the crisis, the Eisenhower administration did not clearly enunciate this firm belief to its allies. Rather, it consistently stated that failing the success of negotiations, force might be the only alternative. This vagueness created the potential for misunderstandings between the allies over the actual stand the United States would take in the event force was the ultimate outcome. The administration addressed the potential misunderstanding on several occasions but never sufficiently remedied it. The administration continued to try to "walk the fence" between supporting its allies and its desire to prevent the use of

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force against nations with whom it was trying to gain favor. Hence, when the British and French relied on military means, the lack of support of any kind they received from the United States, and the condemnation they faced created even stronger feelings of betrayal.

The outcome of the Suez Canal Crisis for the Eisenhower administrative cannot be seen as successful by either of the two policy objectives. First, following the Suez Crisis, American relations with its allies were severely strained. Although relations with the British would eventually stabilize, relations with the French would continue to deteriorate and eventually France pulled out of the NATO alliance in the 1960s. Looking at the second objective of attempting to bring the non-aligned nations over to the side of the West, although the United States position was not hurt by their actions during the crisis, they did not further endear themselves to the nations of the Middle East. This was particularly true in regard to Nasser, who eventually received the funding for his Aswan Dam project from the Soviet Union and continued to create instability between the Arab states and Israel. The Soviet Union then increased its influence in the Middle East by receiving a military base at Alexandria as a concession for the financing of the Aswan Dam. Eisenhower also alienated the nations of the Middle East following the Suez Crisis with the Eisenhower Doctrine, which stated that the Middle East
was important to United States security and thus the United States maintained the right to intervene in the Middle East to protect its interest. This lack of success for the administration's policy in winning over the developing nations of the Middle East makes the alienation of the allies even less wise in the overall scheme of world affairs.

In conclusion, the Eisenhower administration was stuck in an unenviable position in which it was faced with either supporting its traditional allies or taking a moral stand against colonialism in an attempt to further the United States standing in the Middle East. Eisenhower chose the latter of the two, and rightly or wrongly, compromised the administration's most important policy goal, the containment of communism, which depended heavily on support from Great Britain and France.
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