The Security Council, 1956

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The United Nations Security Council is one of the 6 major bodies established by the UN charter. Its stated goal is the maintenance of peace and security by determining the existence of threats. The Security Council then passes resolutions and works with the involved parties to come to peaceful solutions to conflicts in order to mitigate violence. As a result, the Security Council has the distinct ability to pass resolutions that are binding to all UN members.¹

The Council in 1956 was composed of 11 members, 5 permanent and 6 rotating members from a diverse set of world regions. The body is continually faced with a wide array of issues from around the globe and therefore must balance swift action with thoughtfulness and consideration of the long-term impacts solutions may cause. As members you are encouraged to look past the selfish interests of your individual countries and consider the broader global wellbeing.

Trouble in the Suez

The idea of a canal at Suez, passing between the Sinai Peninsula and the rest of Egypt, was first proposed by French diplomat Ferdinand de Lesseps in 1854, and between 1859 and 1869, the Suez Canal Company, jointly owned by France and the Viceroy of Egypt, Mohammed Said. In the 1870s, the government of Egypt elected to sell its shares of the Suez Canal Company to pay off its sizeable national debt. Meanwhile, the British government was interested in facilitating travel and trade between Europe and India, so they purchased the shares of the Suez Canal Company from Egypt, becoming a primary stakeholder. In 1882, the Egyptian nationalist leader Urabi Pasha launched a revolt to drive foreign influence out of Egypt, but was defeated after the British intervened to restore order. From 1882 onwards, British troops remained in Egypt to protect their interests in the country, such as the Suez Canal.² Britain fully asserted its control over Egypt after defeating the Ottoman Empire in World War I, but granted Egypt limited autonomy as a semi-independent kingdom in 1936.³

Nationalist sentiment in Egypt ascended after the end of World War II. The British attempted to use military force to put down civil unrest against colonial rule, but the crisis continued to escalate, with rioters attacking British citizens and property on Egyptian soil. Britain threatened to place Cairo under military occupation if King Farouk of Egypt did not remove the nationalist elements from the Egyptian government who were working to aid the revolt, and Farouk controversially acceded to British demands.⁴

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⁴ ibid.
In response to the King’s perceived weakness, the nationalist Free Officers’ Movement, led by General Muhammad Naguib, deposed Farouk and proclaimed a republican government, with Naguib as president. Naguib’s policies were controversial among the military officers who had previously supported him, and in 1954, he was deposed by another member of the Free Officers’ Movement, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser.⁵

President Nasser is, in many respects, was even more nationalistic than Naguib. As one of his first acts as president he demanded the withdrawal of all British troops from Egyptian territory by June of 1956, while assuring the British government that he will continue to permit their use of the Suez Canal. He has attempted to separate Egypt from the global power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, maintaining cordial relations with both sides without swearing allegiance to either. To that end, he has sought investment by the United States in his primary infrastructure project—a dam at Aswan, which he believes will allow Egypt to irrigate the Nile river valley and revitalize its economy. At the same time, he has attempted to purchase military equipment from the Soviet Union and its allies, to support another of his main projects: a war against Israel to restore Arab sovereignty in Palestine. Alarmed by this policy, the United States has withdrawn all investment in the Aswan Dam project and Britain and the World Bank have followed suit. Nasser has responded by nationalizing the Suez Canal Company, placing the canal under the control of the Egyptian government and proclaiming that the resulting revenue will finance the construction of the Aswan Dam.⁶

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⁶ “The Suez Crisis”
Britain and France have both strenuously objected to Nasser’s decision. Also opposing Nasser is Israel, whose prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, is deeply alarmed by Nasser’s aggressive gestures towards his country. In preparation for a seemingly inevitable military confrontation with Egypt, Israel has increased arms purchases from its primary military supplier, France, and has sought support from Britain as well. It seems likely that the Soviet Union will support Egypt in this crisis against its western capitalist enemies. Whether the United States will side with its longtime allies France and Britain against Nasser or stand by its commitment to the end of European colonialism is unclear.

A Revolution in Cuba

For the past few years, revolutionary forces have been working to overthrow President Batista and install a new government in the island nation of Cuba. President Batista, who seized power in 1952 in order to, in his words, “save the Republic from chaos,” is facing increased backlash over his alleged ties to organized crime in the country. Some argue this in part is giving the rebel movement more credibility with Cuba’s citizens. Notable rebel leaders include Fidel Castro, along with his brother Raul, both of whom were released from prison by Batista’s government less than a year ago along with other political prisoners in the country.

The Castros lead the most prominent of the revolutionary factions, known as the 26th of July movement, so named because of their notable attack on the Moncada

7 ibid.
Barracks on July 26th, 1953. The attack led to the death of over 50 revolutionaries, most of whom were executed by the military after the battle, along with a handful of government forces.\textsuperscript{10} More recently on April 29th, 1956, Castro and his revolutionaries carried out another attack on the Domingo Goicuria barracks in the Matanzas area of Cuba. This attack saw limited casualties on either side but word has spread around the country of the barracks commander executing one of the captured revolutionaries.\textsuperscript{11} Many agree that executions and continued displays of similar brutality by Batista’s military are serving to anger many Cubans and building support for Castro’s movement. The 26th of July movement and its leaders represent themselves as ‘revolutionary nationalists’ and this has gained them some support in nations like the United States. However, some suggest that the leadership may share more socialist tendencies and may continue to shift in that direction should they overthrow Batista’s government.\textsuperscript{12} Revolutions are often tricky to get involved in. They raise questions of national sovereignty and the limits of foreign intervention. However, it’s up to the members of the Security Council to decide if the revolution in Cuba is an international issue worth our involvement, or simply an internal conflict.

**Demonstrations in Hungary**

After the Second World War, Hungary was absorbed by the Soviet Union as a satellite state. A communist government was established, as Hungary lay behind

\textsuperscript{11} SantiagoMcIathy, Fabiola. “Finally, Cuba's Matanzas Gets Some Respect.” The Victoria Advocate, 5 May 2010.
Winston Churchill’s so-called “Iron Curtain.” Stalin put into power Mátyás Rákosi, a staunch Stalinist who used the secret police, the ÁVH, to crack down on opposition. Under his regime, dissidents were silenced and the people suffered under economic downturns and poor living conditions. Farmers were forced to turn over their land and crops to the government.\(^{13}\) He was replaced by Imre Nagy in 1953 following the death of Stalin, but Nagy fell out of power in 1955 because of his independent fervor, and was replaced by Rákosi, who once again seized power. However, in 1956, Rákosi was forced by the Politburo in Moscow to step down as general secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, as part of the USSR’s de-Stalinization movement. Regardless, Khrushchev’s policies of de-Stalinization also encouraged the Hungarians to criticize Soviet rule and increased their desire to improve relations with the West.\(^{14}\)

Students and workers in Budapest began protesting Soviet rule by waving around Hungarian flags with the communist emblem in the center cut out of it. By October, this protest broke out into active fighting. So far, the rebels have been successful in their revolution against the Soviets. They have pulled down statues of Stalin and released political prisoners. The new Prime Minister, András Hegadűs was forced to resign, and Nagy once again became Prime Minister. As a result of this, the rebels ceased fighting the Soviets on October 28th, as they believe the Soviets have drawn out. Empowered, Nagy announced on public radio that his first actions as Prime Minister were a series of reforms including open and free elections, an impartial legal system, farmers allowed to hold private property, total withdrawal of Soviet troops from

\(^{13}\) “October 2016: Remembering ’56: The Hungarian Revolution at Sixty”. The Ohio State University.

\(^{14}\) “The Hungarian Uprising”. OER Services: History of Western Civilization II: Chapter 29: The Cold War.
Hungary, and that Hungary will withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. Khrushchev was not happy with this announcement, because if Hungary fell to the West, the other Soviet satellite states and the Warsaw Pact would fall one-by-one, and on November 1, Soviet military forces entered Hungary. Nagy has officially pleaded to the United Nations Security Council for help, and it is up to the Security Council what to do about this invasion force in Hungary.

Summary

The issues laid out in this brief are ones that have been determined to be of great concern or potential interest to the Security Council. It is not necessarily expected that the council will be able to deal with each issue in its entirety. Therefore, part of the committee’s job will be to determine which issues present the biggest threats to peace and security.

Furthermore, the topics laid out in this guide are not all encompassing and it’s possible that other issues members wish to deal with may arise over the course of the committee. A broader understanding of the global issues of the time and potential conflicts are not necessarily required, but could certainly serve delegates well.

 Blocs

Since the end of the Second World War, the world has largely divided itself into three main blocs, especially when it comes to issues of defense and security. These

blocs are generally as follows, though variation between issues is not uncommon for many nations.

**The Western Bloc:**

Generally led by the United States, along with the UK and France, this bloc consists largely of NATO members and their various allies. This bloc is defined by strong opposition to communism and is broadly devoted to the promotion of liberal and democratic ideals.

**The Eastern Bloc**

Led by the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China along with their allies. Eastern Bloc nations are most often committed to the ideals of socialism or communism and the spread of these ideals across the globe. However, members of this bloc may also work with non-communist allies that still seek to oppose western rivals.

**The Non-aligned Nations**

The last notable bloc is not a unified movement, but rather a loose group of nations noted by their refusal to be reliant upon any major power. Often, this is in an effort to maintain the freedom to shape their foreign and domestic policies without the intervention of larger nations. Notable members in this bloc include India, Yugoslavia, and Egypt among others.
Works Cited


