

Why did the suez canal crisis of 1956 take place

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There were various reasons for the start of the Suez Canal Crisis in 1956.

One of the foremost reasons for the war the nationalization of the Suez Canal this canal represented a main source for oil for the Britain and France.

Another important reason was the Arab-Israeli rivalry which had reached a peak after the 1948/49 war, the Arabs wanted revenge due to the loss of war. A separate reason was that Egypt had closed the canal for any Israeli ships and vessels. An additional cause of the crisis was Nasser's continued attempts to frustrate and anger the British through various different methods.

The western powers decision to cancel the Aswan dam building loan was another source for the start of the crisis. Of course the continued attacks by the Fedayeen had a far reaching effect on Israel. A small reason would also be Russia supplying arms and planes to Egypt, even going to extents of sending trained military personnel to train the Egyptian armed forces. One of the most important if not the most important reason was the nationalization of the Suez Canal on 26th July 1956. This was seen as a very big threat by the British and French.

As they relied heavily on the Suez Canal for oil if Nasser took control of the dam he could control the supply of oil to Britain and France. This was caused due to the soviet involvement in Egypt. The soviets were supplying the Egyptians with arms which was interpreted by the US in an offensive way, as they believed that soviet were getting involved in the Middle East. " Under the terms of this deal, Czechoslovakia sold Egypt 200 tanks, 150 artillery pieces, 120 MiG jet fighters, 50 jet bombers, 20 transport planes, 15

minesweepers, 2 destroyers, 2 submarines, hundreds of vehicles and thousands of modern rifles and machine guns.

This huge number of arms volume saw a change in balance of power which also became a catalyst for the Israelis to act quickly before the start of the crisis. Another reason for the withdrawal of US aid was due to Egypt's official recognition of China which angered US. Thus on 19th July 1956 USA withdrew all aid towards Egypt for the Aswan Dam project. The Suez Canal held a lot of importance for many European countries trying to do trade with the rest of the world. As the Suez Canal cut travel time as ships did not have to travel all across Africa.

An additional cause for the start of this crisis would be the ever increasing rivalry between the Arabs and Israel. The Arabs were humiliated by their loss in the 1948/49 war and were seeking revenge as is highlighted by a speech made by President Nasser. " Egypt has decided to dispatch her heroes, the disciples of pharaoh and the sons of Islam and they will cleanse the Land of Israel. ... There will be no peace on Israel's border because we demand vengeance, and vengeance is Israel's death. " 2 These are the exact words used by Nasser in his speech after the nationalization of the Canal.

These strong words proved and revealed that the Arabs were willing to go to any extent to gain revenge against the Israelis and eradicate them from the face of Middle Eastern map. A further cause of concern for the Israelis was the Fedayeen. They had killed more than 300 families in Israel by infiltrating to Israel from borders and committing acts of murder and sabotage. A reason worth mentioning for a cause of the war was the refugee crisis. Since

1948 the numbers of Palestinian refugees was increasing and they had become a liability to many Arab nations such as Syria, Egypt and Jordan.

The Arabs were determined to get the land back and put these refugees back to their former homes. These refugees were also a constant reminder of the humiliation that the Arab nations had to face due to their loss in 1948/49 war. A reason outside the Middle East for the war was the constant annoyance that Nasser posed to the British and the French. Nasser repeatedly proved to be a source of irritation for the British as he persuaded Arab states such as Jordan and Syria to not join the UK inspired Baghdad pact.

Another source of aggravation was that Nasser played a major role in the dismissal of British military leader Glubb Pasha. Nasser's hostile attitude towards the British further aggravated the situation. But it could be argued other way as it can be said that British Prime Minister Anthony Eden over reacted and got too involved in the Middle East. Eden went to the extent of labeling Nasser as a dictator saying that he was the Mussolini of the Arab world while barely concealing his hate for Nasser.

A rather shocking cause of this war could be France and Britain's interest in the Middle East due to its oil reserves. The two European nations might have joined forces with Israel for other motives such as getting full control of the Suez Canal which would have been very beneficial for both the European nations. The two countries were trying to humiliate Nasser and decrease his hold on the Arab world. But in the end they made him a national hero as he had stood up against the Europeans.

A rather evident reason for the war was Britain's and France's eagerness to control or retain their stakes in the Suez Canal Company. This was seen as being very profitable and advantageous for the two nations. The two nations were angry at the nationalization of the Canal and came together to battle the Egyptians. The tensions caused by Arab boycott of Israel trade from Suez Canal was another cause of the war. As it was a hassle for the Israeli's to do trade without the help of the Suez Canal due to the increased journey time. This was the first war where external influence played a major part.

This war also became a ground for the cold war between the US and the Soviets. In the end this war became a battle ground between the British and France against the Soviets as both played a big role in this war. By the end of the war Israel had managed to procure a cease fire for a few years but it had just added fuel to the ever increasing rivalry between the Arabs and the Israelis. This war was largely won by the Israel by the help of the superpowers Britain and France who supplied arms and added military support to the Israelis.