

The Suez Crisis: Security Implications for the Transatlantic Relationship and the Shift in Global Power

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On October November 5th, 1965 a joint force of British and French troops began their invasion of the Suez Canal Zone. The intervention was in response to the nationalization of the canal by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, which directly threatened the strategic and commercial well being of the British and French economies (Olukoya 2008, 530). Yet the United States expressed its dismay for the actions of their European allies and in the coming days was able to force a cease-fire and the withdrawal of troops from Egypt. The event posed immense security implications for the Atlantic Alliance, signifying the “most significant incident of transatlantic noncooperation during the 1950s” (Risse-Kappen 1995, 83). Not only were Britain and France challenged internationally, but Suez also led to further domestic political problems within the two countries. At stake for the United States was the ongoing power play with the Soviet Union in the Middle East. Suez exhibited the continuing opposition between the two powers and a shift in global power, with the United States surpassing its European partners as the preeminent power in the region. The Suez Crisis significantly altered transatlantic security because of the way in which the declining powers Britain and France were exposed by the United States, causing enduring and troublesome consequences for the Atlantic Alliance, and further demonstrating the prioritization of U.S. Cold War interests over any kind of transatlantic balance of power or neo-imperialist suppression of nationalism.

The crisis uprooted the transatlantic relationship as the United States opposed two of its closest allies and swiftly increased its involvement in the Middle East. The disregard for American interests aggravated the administration of United States President Eisenhower as the European-led intervention went too far in opposing the Nasser Regime. As a result of the crisis British Prime Minister Anthony Eden resigned and his Conservative government faltered under domestic political pressure and economic turmoil. France overcame the effects of Suez initially but the subsequent wave of decolonization and pan-Arab nationalism would lead to a constitutional crisis amidst the Algerian War in 1958. Suez also highlighted a lapse in transparency and lack of mutual understanding between the three powers that was detrimental to overall security. Most importantly, the United States emphasized that it was superior to its transatlantic partners and in the fallout of the crisis demonstrated its leadership in dictating the shape of the emerging world order.

The conflict also showed a shift in the status of world power, from an imperial-inspired view of Europe's periphery to one deeply characterized by nationalism and the Cold War tensions dividing the United States and the Soviet Union. There was an undeniable finality to the United States' emergence as the most powerful transatlantic nation. The United States demonstrated that it possessed the capabilities to hold its allies at arms' length, acting unilaterally against any challenge to its growing global presence, while simultaneously utilizing its economic fortitude to prop up Western Europe as it faltered under the pressures of decolonization in the Middle East.

By 1961, the United States had attained a more prominent role in the Middle East than ever before (Damms 2008, 193). The real challenge was to contain Soviet influence and deal with Arab nationalism (Damms 2008, 194). Thus Eisenhower challenged the transatlantic relationship with the aim of supporting the United States' grand strategy of containment. In the context of 1956, Egypt was seen as the key for sustaining influence throughout the Middle East. The conflict did not, however, lead to the complete demise of the transatlantic system, without which both the United States and its allies would have been much less secure in the long-term.

Through an analysis of the events of the Suez Crisis and the actions of the principal actors of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France this essay will demonstrate how the attempted repossession of the canal by the European powers, and the subsequent opposition of the United States, both demonstrated a shift in global power while also creating major consequences for the future of relations between the three and the transatlantic relationship overall. First, a concise summary of the events at Suez will be explained with an emphasis on the interests of the parties involved and motives behind their actions. Much of the rest of the essay will consider each nation on its own, the structural and individual influences on their respective actions, and what the ultimate implications were for transatlantic architecture following the crisis. The United States emerged as the superior power within the transatlantic relationship and the actions of the U.S. leaders were formed in large part due to the pressures of the Cold War and policies already set in place. Additionally the United Kingdom failed to come to terms with their own decline prior to Suez, but given the actions of Prime Minister Macmillan the British maintained a strong relationship with the United States going forward. France poses the most complicated narrative as the actions of French leaders diverged significantly from their transatlantic counterparts in the years following the crisis. Ultimately the essay aims to demonstrate that the crisis itself was essential in the development of transatlantic security and a result of the forces of decolonization as the world shifted from one dominated by imperialism to one dominated by the conflicting interests of the Cold War.

The Suez Crisis

Nasser had consistently been a controversial figure for the West since his rise to power in 1952, and a threat to British and French economic interests as evidenced by the nationalization of the Canal. The 193-kilometer waterway was originally built by the French in 1869 (Olukoya 2008, 527), and signified a major Western imperial legacy in the Middle East. For the British, Suez symbolized one of the major sources of their vast global trade network and was physically imperative to English power. Losing the military presence at Suez was one thing, but the loss of the canal's profitability, of which the British government was the substantial shareholder, was impermissible (Ferguson 2002, 296). The French harbored their own misgivings about Nasser as he continued to encourage "anti-French sentiment in their North African empire" (Warner 2001, 309). Interference, particularly in Algeria, threatened French prestige and resources. Thus there was an obvious threat to both European powers in the summer of 1956. Yet when it came to the United States there remained key strategic differences, foreshadowing the eventual crisis.

The definitive moment of the crisis came when the United States opposed their two allies at Suez, forcing a United Nations-sanctioned cease-fire and exposing the vulnerabilities of the British and French economies. United States Secretary of State John Foster Dulles acknowledged the precariousness of the moment, "that in these circumstances we cannot be bound by our traditional alliances, but must instead face the question how to make good our pledge" (Warner 1991, 313). The pledge of course was to prevent any violation of the existing Middle Eastern frontiers as stated in the 1950 Tripartite Declaration, which was reiterated by President Eisenhower in November 1955 (Warner 1991, 313). The United States demonstrated a strict adherence to international law and collective security at this point in the crisis, decidedly against the neo-imperialist actions of the British and French.

Following the dramatic November 6th cease-fire, Britain's hemorrhaging financial reserves led to a request for "massive American aid" (Ferguson 2002, 296). Despite the dire need of their ally, Eisenhower held out on the arrangement of a "billion-dollar" rescue package until the United Kingdom agreed to leave Egypt "unconditionally" (Ferguson 2002, 296). France did not experience such dramatic economic pressure but was nonetheless exposed. The international backlash, instigated by the US, led to a direct strategic failure in regards to the Suez military operation, revealing Britain and France's inability to act without USA approval.

The conflict demonstrated a lapse in alignment of interests between the transatlantic powers and was in large part the unavoidable progression of competing strategies that had characterized the post-war period in the region. The United States demonstrated their strategic dominance as they opposed

colonialism and attempted to promote their ideas on how the global state system should function. The USA had been confident in pursuing a strategy that did not necessarily force Nasser into action but provided important incentives. Much of this was due to the fear of increasing Soviet influence in Egypt, perceived to be the most detrimental threat to America's interests. However this was not a sentiment shared by the other transatlantic powers. Certainly they did not want Soviet influence in the region, but their interests lay with previously established roles as imperial powers and enduring relationships that the United States did not possess to the same degree.

The United States:

The Pursuit of Containment and Transatlantic Dominance

The actions of the United States surrounding the Suez Crisis in 1956 were dictated by their overall strategy of containment, leading to the confrontation with their transatlantic allies and jeopardizing the Atlantic Alliance itself. Following World War II the US developed their grand strategy in the early post-years based on the perception of Soviet aggression promoted by George Kennan's *Sources of Soviet Conduct*, economic support for Europe via The Marshall Plan, and the foundational Truman Doctrine. These developments led to the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, formalizing a permanent alliance between the transatlantic powers. The evidence for bipolarity in the post-war world fed into the structural view of policymakers to prioritize Soviet containment at Suez. The national interests of the United States in 1956 were further outlined by the actions of President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles, who emphasized the importance of such structural factors through their own individual actions and decisions in regards to their transatlantic allies.

In order to properly analyze the action of the United States at Suez it is necessary to understand the basis for which policy decisions were made, stemming in part from the beginning of the Cold War. With Diplomat George Kennan's assertion in 1947 that the US must contain "Russian expansive tendencies", the grand strategy of containment was developed and expanded upon (Kay 2014, 49). This was utilized in a greater context to justify "expansion of American power into areas peripheral to vital interests" and in support of despotic governments friendly with the United States (Kay 2014, 47). The Truman administration and Secretary of State George Marshall in 1947 added greater substance to Kennan's containment strategy with the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan in 1947. The President declared that "It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting subjugation... by outside pressures", a policy that would provide legitimacy to the use of containment, first in Europe and Asia, before turning to the Middle East (Kay 2014, 52). Secretary Marshall, in an effort to support US interests in Europe implemented

the 'Marshall Plan', which was designed in an attempt to achieve "realist gains from the economic rebuilding of Europe" (Kay 2014, 53). The combination of a commitment to containment, coupled with increasing support and influence led to the fundamental creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949. The idealist and realist principles embodied by United States policy were critical in influencing the actions taken in 1956.

At its core the transatlantic relationship was significantly fortified by the creation of NATO, however the events of Suez demonstrated the equally important structural impact of the bipolar relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. The structure of the Cold War and the strategy of containment determined that the US national interests lie primarily in preventing Soviet expansion. Therefore "U.S. decision-makers perceived the allied deception as a violation of basic rules, norms, and procedures constituting the trans-atlantic community" (Risse-Kappen 1995, 102). The lapse in common interests between the transatlantic powers was further contrary to the Atlantic Alliance, created as an organization to deter and defend against the Soviet Union (Kay 2014, 55). Due to the outright "deception" of their transatlantic allies, the United States felt secure in asserting their superiority within the alliance and pursuing their realist agenda (Risse-Kappen 1995, 102). Giving credence to the importance of bipolarity, it was the imperative of the United States to support Egyptian nationalism and, in kind, to counter the Soviets.

Almost a year prior to Suez, the United States was still attempting to incorporate Egypt into the Western sphere of influence. The strategy consisted of such offerings as supplying "Egypt with her reasonable arm requirements, assist in the financing of the Aswan High Dam" and to "help Egypt to play a role of leadership in the Arab world" (Warner 1991, 305). The failure to follow through at Aswan was particularly significant as it led to a definite break in transatlantic interests as Nasser "announced that he would raise money to pay for the dam by nationalizing the Suez Canal" (Warner 1991, 308). For the United States this was a significant policy failure but not an immediate strategic concern. However for the British and French this development became the catalyst for the following intervention.

The diplomatic relations leading up to the crisis made it clear where the individual parties stood. At the so-called Egypt Committee held in London from July 29 to August 2, 1956 there emerged major differences between Britain and the United States, who "objected to military preparations, required that the USSR be invited to the Suez Canal users' conference, disagreed about economic sanctions against Egypt, and in the end, watered down the tripartite communiqué drafted by the British and the French" (Bernard 2009, 43-44). The fundamental differences portrayed Britain and France as overly concerned with their neo-imperial interests while the United States remained focused on improving

relations with Nasser. As Niall Ferguson explains, “the Americans could not have been much more explicit about their opposition to a British intervention in Egypt” (2002, 296). Yet the execution of the Anglo-Franco intervention and lack of consensus within the transatlantic powers posed a fundamental dilemma for the United States.

The role of Secretary Dulles was instrumental in the way that events played out given his own preconceptions of the transatlantic relationship and leading role in the diplomatic process that failed to prevent the intervention. For Dulles, there remained a personal element to Suez, which stemmed from the secret negotiations of their ‘traditional allies,’ culminating in the Sèvres Protocol and disrespecting the U.S. leaders. Dulles further pointed out, despite an understanding that “much is on their side in the dispute with the Egyptians... nothing justifies double-crossing us” (Warner 1991, 313). This attitude of retribution in the fallout of Suez was fully manifested with the initial refusal to support the United Kingdom financially following the cease-fire, making it clear that the transatlantic relationship could not function without United States’ support. Indeed, the reaction of Dulles emphasizes that Suez had large strategic ramifications within the transatlantic relationship, but not in the immediacy of the Cold War. The issue with the intervention also had much to do with the economic interests of the United States in the Middle East.

Secretary Dulles perpetuated the realist interests of the United States wholeheartedly throughout the crisis and in many ways his aggressive style characterized the superiority of the US over its allies. Winston Churchill once referred to the Secretary of State as a “bull who carries his china shop with him” while Anthony Eden described him as the “woolliest type of pontificating American” (Smith 2014, 429). Foster Dulles’s blunt style could not have been clearer in outlining the crossroads facing the U.S. at Suez, stating that the United States had “been walking a tightrope between the effort to maintain our old and valued relations with our British and French allies on the one hand, and on the other trying to assure ourselves of the friendship and understanding of the newly independent countries who have escaped from colonialism” (Louis 1985, 414). Ultimately, the structural realism of containment provoked opposition to the allies and motivated support for decolonization. Dulles had feared that the Eisenhower administration would be “looked upon as forever tied to British and French colonialist policies” (Smith 2014, 431), however that was decidedly not the case.

While Foster Dulles was an integral part of the United States’ role at Suez, President Eisenhower cannot be described in any way but as the essential actor on U.S. policy decisions. Eisenhower “was in full charge throughout, making the decisions on policy and its implementations” (Bowie 1989, 189). Prior to the crisis Eisenhower made the ultimate distinction against Colonel Nasser that in the eyes of the United States, “he cannot cooperate as he is doing with the Soviet

Union and at the same time enjoy most-favored nation treatment by the US” but most importantly that it was critical to “avoid any open break which would throw Nasser irrevocably into a Soviet satellite status” (Bowie 1989, 191). Undeniably this was a much more lenient stance than that taken by the United Kingdom or France towards Nasser. Additionally it fully supports the notion that Eisenhower was committed to the strategy of containment and concerned with the possibility of Egypt and Soviet cooperation. The intervention would irrevocably qualify, as it did for Dulles, as the catalyst for “an open break” with Nasser.

The President nonetheless was concerned with the overall function of the transatlantic alliance and the problematic state of affairs in the fallout of Suez as he tried to simultaneously support U.S. interests while managing the roles of Britain and France. Immediately following the crisis, Eisenhower “wanted to minimize the harmful consequences... while ‘thwarting’ the error of his allies, to limit the damage to the relationship with them and to future co-operation” (Bowie 1989, 211). Certainly the President, like Dulles, was not pleased with the actions of the transatlantic allies and furthermore wanted to emphasize the crucial role that the United States had to play as the leading power within the Alliance. However, it also follows that Eisenhower went through multilateral means to suppress Britain and France because of the dilemma their intervention had posed to his administration. Reconciliation could not therefore come about by outrageously hostile means, but ones, albeit facilitated by the US, that were swift yet fair.

The most integral part of President’s response to Suez was the outlining of the Eisenhower doctrine, demonstrating the increasing interests for the United States in the Middle East and their replacement as the leading transatlantic influence in the region. The Eisenhower Doctrine in early 1957 (a direct response to Suez) was a more unilateral approach, based on the Truman Doctrine of 1947 to provide “direct assistance to Middle Eastern countries threatened by international communism... and if necessary, dispatch American military forces to any nation requesting assistance” (Damms 2008, 181-2). Thus Eisenhower did indeed remain altogether consistent with U.S. grand strategy, adding his own adaptation to the post-Suez Cold War. While the success of the policy was not much better than the Baghdad Pact created by the United Kingdom in 1955 (although it did not lead to any immediate crisis), the strategic thinking behind the policy was essentially progressive compared to the policies of the other transatlantic powers by emphasizing the United States’ continued strategy of containment. It also symbolized the enhanced influence of the United States in the Middle East. The United States was now undeniably a major player in the region. It is unfair to say that at the inception of Eisenhower’s policy British power had been eclipsed, but nonetheless Suez had severely shifted the power relationship.

Suez was a major turning point because of the way in which the U.S. prioritized keeping the Soviets out over allowing their allies to continue going

in. The crisis demonstrated the ability of the United States and its interest to act against anyone, even their closest allies, when it came to supporting their overall strategy of containment. However the U.S. did not cease to support their allies after Suez, which is further evidence that in their grand strategy of containment, leading the transatlantic world was a key component of their policy aims. Eisenhower and Dulles could not separate the U.S. from the NATO alliance structure nor did they desire to. Suez therefore demonstrated a shift in world power because of the way in which United States' strategy was so extensive and overbearing on all fronts.

The United Kingdom: The Decline of Empire and the 'Special Relationship'

The strategic implications for the United Kingdom were severe as the economic emergency and the overt failure at Suez led to a political crisis and signaled in many ways that the end to the British Empire was suddenly approaching. Ferguson argues that "it was at the Bank of England that the Empire was effectively lost" as the "façade of neo-imperial power collapsed" (2002, 296-299), in reference to the run on the pound stemming from the Suez Crisis. Indeed, the events of Suez were in many ways irreconcilable due to the deep economic scars that were immediately felt within the economy and the idea of British prestige was permanently damaged as Suez "hammered home the need for a post-imperial role" (Damms 2008, 232). Nonetheless, despite the failures of Prime Minister Anthony Eden in 1956, his successor Harold MacMillan made it his prerogative to maintain a strong commitment to the Atlantic Alliance and the United States.

The role of the British at Suez is one that characterizes the attempt of its leaders to keep up with older legacies, emphasizing the overestimation of the United Kingdom's capabilities in 1956. The canal itself was a symbol of imperial power for the British, however it had lost much of its significance since the days of the Raj. Prime Minister Winston Churchill, in office until 1955, represented the sentiments of many who "detested any surrender of British power" (Brendon 2008, 493). Furthermore right-wing conservatives in Britain declared that it would be a national embarrassment for the United Kingdom, a nation "which had won 'the biggest war in history' to retreat in the face of Egyptian 'terrorism'" (Brendon, 2008, 493). In this way Egypt and the Suez Canal represented the next potential example of successive imperial losses for the British Empire. Moreover the glorification of the British role in World War II reinforced the fact that the objectives of the government in the years leading up to Suez were "out of proportion to Britain's wealth-producing capability" (Barnett 2001, 54). This mindset of British self-identity for many policy-makers had large ramifications in 1956 and the ensuing altercation with the United States.

It was the United Kingdom's own insecurities that were partially responsible for jeopardizing the transatlantic alliance, given the animosity felt towards the increasing role of the United States in the Middle East. As evidenced by the economic bailout administered by the United States for Britain (and the political pressure put on Prime Minister Eden) in the wake of the Suez intervention, there was no doubt as to which nation was the dominant power within the Atlantic Alliance. However, it was not the intention of the United States to completely displace or weaken Great Britain, for this served no purpose. On the contrary "America continued to value a British presence in the Middle East" (Smith 2012, 252). The U.K.'s own insecurity was what prompted such a tense encounter as the government was determined not to "abandon its remaining responsibilities" in the region (Smith 2012, 252). The willingness of British actors to pursue policies at odds with those of the U.S. further stresses "the extent to which London was prepared to defend perceived national interests" (Smith 2012, 256). Such a characterization of the British policy-makers only makes it more apparent why the insecurities of the declining power created issues for the transatlantic alliance. The United States certainly complicated matters by condemning British actions at Suez, but it was the false sense of security and pursuit of neo-imperialism that failed the U.K initially.

No one personified Britain's moment of humility better than Prime Minister Anthony Eden. He had the unfortunate role of being "the last Prime Minister to believe Britain was a great power and the first to confront a crisis which proved she was not" (Smith 2012, 252). Eden saw the defeat of Nasser as "desirable by any means" whereby he "locked himself into a position where the only possible end was defeat" (Braun 2003, 536). Moreover the inability to act without "American approval... reduced its [Britain's] much-vaunted ability to 'punch above its weight'" (Damms 2008, 232). The major strategic implication was that the United Kingdom sustained immediate economic damage, decreasing faith in Eden's government and symbolically condemning its actions in Suez as the culmination of truly unchecked British world power. Indeed, Suez was a turning point due to this newfound necessity for 'approval' within the 'special relationship'.

Eden did implement one of the more important international agreements prior to 1956 with the Baghdad Pact, yet the Pact only came to demonstrate the abject failure of Britain to consolidate its influence in the region vis-à-vis the U.S. The 1955 Baghdad agreement between the United Kingdom, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Turkey "was the ideal umbrella under which they [U.K.] would be able to protect their regional system of alliances and their programs of military and economic aid from being criticized as simply a continued imperial presence" (Bernard 2009, 41). Yet for many the establishment of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 was "a form of diplomatic imperialism" which sought to "maintain British paramouncy in the Middle East" (Brendon 2008, 494). Compared with

the Eisenhower Doctrine two years later, Eden's policy was largely unsuccessful in convincing anyone that it was not a renewed attempt for neo-imperial power. Eisenhower himself believed that "rather than bolstering confidence throughout the region", joining the pact would "tar the United States with the Western imperialist brush" (Damms 2008, 181).

To be sure, Egypt viewed the policy in a completely negative context as a patronizing strategy to promote Britain's puppet regimes of their former empire. With 'Baghdad', Britain was operating entirely within their 'sphere of influence' and providing benefits to those countries that supported them. Thus it was the polar opposite of what Nasser saw as the ideal direction for the Middle East, which was evident during the lead up to the Suez Crisis. Ultimately the Pact only caused further tension with Nasser who "vehemently denounced it for splitting the Arab world, which he aspired to lead" (Brendon 2008, 495).

For Eden's successor Harold Macmillan, Britain's failures at Suez and its relationship with the United States would be of the utmost importance as he pursued vastly different and more successful strategies of partnership and cooperation, reinvigorating the 'special relationship'. Ironically, Macmillan had been one of the staunchest proponents of intervention at Suez from the very beginning, but changed sides as the events played out, forcing Eden's hand with the cease-fire on November 6th (James 1986, 13). Following the resignation of Eden in January 1957 and Macmillan's appointment as Prime Minister, the new British leader worked to revitalize the Anglo-American 'special relationship' almost immediately (Risse-Kappen 1995, 99). The new realities for the United Kingdom were only too apparent. Speaking in the early 1950s, Macmillan had stated, "the choice facing the country was between 'the slide into a shoddy and slushy Socialism (as a second rate power), or the march to the third British Empire' " (Ferguson 2002, 300). Following the crisis only the first option remained plausible and the new Prime Minister "blamed himself" for the lack of awareness in assuring Eden that the U.S. would not oppose the intervention at Suez (Beloff 1989, 333). Macmillan learned the hard way that Britain would from then on have to accept a role as the "indispensable junior partner of the United States" (Damms 2008, 182). This was made evident by his endorsement for the Eisenhower Doctrine and the expansion of U.S. influence in the Middle East.

Ultimately, the role of Macmillan and general perception within the British government was essential in maintaining the 'special relationship' and, on a greater scale, a key commitment to the Atlantic Alliance for the foreseeable future. There was "general acceptance" among Conservative leaders that the superiority of the United States in world affairs "could not be challenged" and that the most prudent option for British policy would be to align with the U.S. (Beloff 1989, 333). Macmillan himself was undeniably an essential factor in such a dramatic submission to U.S. policy and there was also the emerging economic dependency

that effected British officials. There was a fundamental “sense of kinship” between the British and Americans, which was absent from the French (Watson 1989, 342).

France: Decolonization and De Gaulle’s Pursuit of Independence

Like the British, the French suffered an embarrassing setback at Suez and while the immediate repercussions did not amount to the same degree of panic, the long-term effects were much more detrimental to the transatlantic relationship and for France’s overall engagement as a Western power. The United Kingdom is somewhat easier to analyze due to the eventual Anglo-American partnership that was re-established after Suez. France experienced successive failures of security in Indochina and Algeria that reinforced the detrimental consequences of Suez. An examination of the French role at Suez and within the transatlantic relationship therefore requires a structural basis of analysis due to the deep effects of decolonization and the eventual constitutional crisis that had immense ramifications for the Atlantic Alliance.

The years leading up to Suez were fraught with severe political instability. Tensions over the French Empire already were present in 1954 over Indo-China and thus Suez only exacerbated issues of French imperialism and the weaknesses of the NATO alliance structure. The spring of 1954 and the French defeat at Dien Bien Phou “conveyed a sense of a turning point in history” (Louis 1989, 66). From 1946 to 1958 there were twenty different governments” and Prime Minister Guy Mollet, in power throughout the Suez Crisis, “was the 17th Prime Minister in ten years” (Lahav 2015, 1318). Indeed, prior to Suez, there were already signs of a strain in the Franco-American relationship, caused by what France perceived to be a U.S. betrayal in Indo-China. Structurally this supports the argument that the norms between the United States and the United Kingdom had always overruled those of the Franco-American relationship (Risse-Kappen 1995, 103). By 1956 France was experiencing a “crisis of confidence in the Atlantic alliance” and in the United States, due to the ambiguity of the cease-fire in Indo-China and the American stance on North Africa (Vaisse 1989, 336). The Franco-American ties never recovered after Suez.

There were deep internal problems as well for France, further complicating their role at Suez. The army was somewhat compromised after the settlement in Indo-China and in North Africa, which made the French military “the object of increasing solicitude by the government of the Fourth Republic” (Vaisse 1989, 337). The insecurity of imperial power that France was left with after their campaign in Asia fed into their interests foremost in Algeria, but also in Egypt, where the army became convinced that a settlement with Nasser was key to victory in the French African sphere of influence (Vaisse 1989, 337). Although their motivations at Suez differed slightly from those of the British, the French were still intent on protecting colonial possessions, extending and protecting their influence in the region, and containing Arab nationalism.

Such was the case in November 1956 when France helped Britain to intervene at Suez, which ultimately only exacerbated the underpinning insecurity of the socialist government and their overall imperial interests of the state. The Anglo-French alignment in 1956 was not inconceivable due to the fact that “the character of the Suez Canal Company was French... while the British government was the principal shareholder” (Kyle 1989, 112). Yet all Suez amounted to was another defeat for the Fourth Republic as “the budgets deficit increased... Inflation rose at a higher rate, and the franc weakened” (Vaïsse 1989, 339). The collapse of the French Fourth Republic in 1958 over Algeria stemmed in large part from the “military disillusionment” that Suez helped to perpetuate (Risse-Kappen 1995, 103). At the foreign policy level the consequences were dire as all of the Republic’s post-World War II problems were bluntly revealed, “France was no longer a great power... she no longer had the ability to impose her will” (Vaïsse 1989, 335). More than ever, De Gaulle appeared to be the solution to reassure France’s security. In opposing French neo-imperial interests, the United States damaged strategic relations with France for the long-term future of the Cold War.

Similar to the United Kingdom, it was in the fallout of Suez where the true implications for the transatlantic relationship became clear. The weaknesses of the French were not immediately apparent and in many ways they were initially able to respond more securely than the British. Unlike Anthony Eden in the United Kingdom, Mollet remained in power following the crisis. The failures of Suez however crushed his previous preference of a Paris-London axis, leaving a Franco-German partnership as an alternative option (Vaïsse 1989, 337). West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer commented to Mollet “Europe will be your revenge” and in the following months the basis for a Franco-German axis was established with the Treaty of Rome (Vaïsse 1989, 336). Furthermore the French Prime Minister felt it was his only viable choice in order to overcome the “humiliation that France had just undergone”, distancing France further from its transatlantic partners and even deeper into the Algerian War (Vaïsse 1989, 337).

The longer-term ramifications of what French leaders perceived to be a betrayal by the British and an abuse of power by the United States came to fruition once President Charles De Gaulle withdrew France from the military integration of NATO. Although this did not occur until 1966, the roots of the differentiating allied interests became clear with the Algerian War and De Gaulle’s re-emergence as the leader of the Fifth Republic (Risse-Kappen 1995, 84). One lesson of Indo-China and Suez for de Gaulle was that the costs of holding onto the French African empire were now higher than its value to France and he applied policies of “military realism” in regards to French foreign and colonial policies (Watson 1989, 342).

De Gaulle and the Algerian War further demonstrated the different views between British and French interests, and subsequently why they pursued different policies towards the United States. In his mind, “the Americans could not be trusted and so long as Britain was so dependent upon the United States she was an unreliable ally—especially under someone like Macmillan ” (James 1986, 15). However the two both did recognize the imperial weaknesses of their respective states, as de Gaulle’s liquidation of the empire “was comparable to Macmillan’s” (Louis 1989, 11). It was over the United States where the two European diverged most obviously. While U.S.-U.K. relations recovered quickly under Macmillan, the Franco-American partnership never did. Suez “set in motion a gradual trend of deinstitutionalization” between the two allies that culminated in the withdrawal of France from the NATO military alliance (Risse-Kappen 1995, 103). His assessment, in line with Mollet, was radically opposite to that of the British as France attempted to recapture some of their global power via the process of European integration and closer ties with West Germany.

The Legacy of Suez and its Implications for World Power

The events of the Suez Crisis in November 1956 undeniably held significance for the future of global power as the United States demonstrated its superiority as the leading member of the Atlantic Alliance over its closest partners the United Kingdom and France. The decolonization and nationalist influences worldwide came to a head in Egypt as the imperial ambitions of Britain and France continued to falter and symbolize their respective declines as world powers. In a wider historical context Suez was clearly part of “the great tide of political revolt and cultural rejection of alien dominance” throughout the Third World (Hourani 1989, 394). The relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States increasingly emerged as the most important structural factor in foreign affairs given the bipolarity of their competing interests, particularly in the Middle East.

For the United States the successful prevention of its European allies in reclaiming the Suez Canal reaffirmed their rising status as a super power, while also incurring several important costs for Eisenhower and his successors. The Eisenhower Doctrine, while an important tool of U.S. policy in the Middle East after Suez, “proved to be a singularly ineffective instrument for the preservation of western interests in the region” (Smith 2012, 257). Furthermore the actions taken at Suez “proved to be a mistake” as “Nasser continued to flirt with the Soviets” (Ferguson 2002, 296). The intervention itself did not entirely convince Nasser or other nationalist leaders of the United States’ true commitment to their respective causes. As a pragmatic leader Nasser aimed to hold his own leverage over the region and in doing so he made it increasingly difficult for the United States to

unequivocally control other Middle Eastern countries. Thus whilst Eisenhower and Dulles did support anti-imperialism, Suez could not be considered a success in every aspect given the problems that remained.

For the Soviet Union, the other pole, the results of Suez were also inconclusive, as the Middle East remained a region influenced by both major powers. The intervention and aggression shown by the United Kingdom and France did not push Nasser into the Soviet sphere of influence any more than Egypt previously had intended. Like with the United States, Nasser acted as a realist with the U.S.S.R., capitulating to Soviet interests only when it fell within the interests of his regime. Furthermore, “the failure of the Suez did not lead to a new Russian policy” and the relationships that Khrushchev aimed to secure “were cautious on both sides” (Hourani 1989, 407). For Egypt and Syria, the main benefactors of Soviet policy, neither state “had any intention of being drawn too far into the power of the Soviet Union” (Hourani 1989, 407). Given the tenuous setting of the Cold War, the U.S.S.R. neither attempted nor desired to “provoke an American reaction” (Hourani 1989, 407). The dynamic following Suez only reinforced the structural relationship of the two powers. While the U.S. certainly emphasized that it was not afraid to pursue the grand strategy of containment, this only occurred on the periphery and in the Third World.

The Hungarian Revolution best serves to support the idea of a peripheral Cold War and transition in global power as the United States did little to aid the democratic movement of those well within the Soviet Bloc. Ultimately the Suez Crisis was extremely important in influencing the United States’ response to the Hungarian Revolution, occurring almost simultaneously in October 1956. Due to the actions of Britain and France, the “condemnation” of Soviet actions in Hungary became extremely difficult (Borhi 2000, 104-105). In the context of global power Hungary was much more directly a function of the Cold War itself as the Soviet Union attempted to maintain their control of Eastern Europe. One could argue that the United States pursued the same agenda in subduing British and French interests in Suez, however the use of multilateralism by the U.S. suggests otherwise. Nevertheless, as a promoter of democratic ideals, President Richard Nixon later explained that the U.S. could not “complain about the Soviets intervening in Hungary” while supporting British and French imperial interests at Suez (Borhi 2000, 104-105). It was much easier to aim at controlling allies such as Britain and France in contrast to the Soviet Union, which had the possibility of igniting nuclear war.

For Europe, the events at Suez fit into the great narrative of decolonization and declining imperial power as Britain and France, while converging on their views of the United States, both saw it within their interests to support European security. By 1958 Suez was an accelerating factor for European solidarity and the formation of a European Community given the necessity that international

tensions, threats to the supply of resources, and the relative weaknesses of European states compared to the U.S. and U.S.S.R. had prompted (Väisse 1989, 336). France would attempt to lead this European process of integration and in turn promote their own cause to enhance their status as the world's third major power. British power, somewhat more separate from the rest of Europe was content to rely on the United States for support within the parameters of the 'special relationship'.

The Effects on the Transatlantic Relationship

For the transatlantic alliance and the leading members of N.A.T.O., Suez reinforced many of the qualities that supported the common interests of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. The crisis emphasized a crucial point for transatlantic relations, as the United State emerged more powerful than its counterparts, willing to oppose their interests if they conflicted with the ultimate aims for American leaders and their support for democratic ideals. The United Kingdom, victim to a legacy of decline that became apparent with the 1956 intervention, maintained strong ties with the United States thanks to the actions of Harold Macmillan and a mutual understanding on many issues. France however proved to be an outlier in the Alliance as the third leading member struggled to come to grips with an increasingly insecure empire, prompting the re-emergence of Charles de Gaulle who fundamentally changed the direction of France from a transatlantic focus to one inclined to promote European unity.

The United States, while emerging as an influential and increasingly powerful global power, dictated the direction for the future of the alliance as they promoted their strategy of Soviet containment. Essential to the U.S. role in the years following Suez was the reality that in several ways, the United States was replacing Britain in many of its traditional areas of influence as the crisis "drew the United States into the centre of the political process" (Hourani 1989, 406). Eisenhower and Dulles were critical in further developing and guiding their transatlantic partners throughout in the fallout of 1956. While there was a pursuit of grand strategy in play, the realist tendencies always were inclined to support policies "in the Western direction" for ultimately the interests of the three countries were relatively intertwined and consistent (Hourani 1989, 406).

Great Britain made the conscious choice to remain a strong ally of the United States, despite the negative associations of their declining power and the opposition that the U.S. posed to the Suez Canal and their overall economic interests. For the British, "laid some ghosts to rest" as politicians had perceived the seizure of the canal as a return to the problems of the 1930s (Hourani 1989, 404). It was the end for Britain's role as a dominant power, but nevertheless in the years to follow "no British government would take this acquiescence for granted" and "provided the ultimate consonance of British and American interests, the British position still

appeared to be strong” (Hourani 1989, 404). Thus the United Kingdom and leaders such as Macmillan understood that it was in their best interests, politically and economically, to continue supporting their role in conjunction with the United States. The U.S. supported the vast majority of British initiatives and the mutual interests of the nations were quite linear despite the confrontation at Suez. For transatlantic architecture this reinforced the relationship between the United States and Europe for the distant future given that in times of dispute American leaders could turn to the United Kingdom for support.

France, in its attempt to pursue a role of greater independence from the influence of the United States, was entirely detrimental to the overall security of the transatlantic community. The overall aims of France were not so different than their two allies. In fact, the congruence exhibited by all three nations kept France in the N.A.T.O. military alliance ten years removed from Suez. However it was increasingly apparent there were fundamental differences in how France viewed their role within the transatlantic structure, or moreover within Europe, in clear opposition to the dominant role of the United States. De Gaulle himself came to the conclusion that France could not hold on to their imperial possessions and was instrumental in promoting the eventual decolonization of the French African colonies who received independence in 1960 (Louis 1989, 12). Yet equally significant was that unlike Macmillan, De Gaulle viewed the events of Suez as evidence that the transatlantic allies were not trustworthy and that ultimately France must make their own path in the increasingly volatile setting of the Cold War.

Conclusions

The Suez Crisis of 1956 was one of the major turning points in the history of transatlantic security because of the way in which Britain and France were subdued by the United States, as the U.S. actively pursued a realist Cold War policy over the neo-imperialist interests of its closest allies, creating enduring and troublesome consequences for the future state of the Atlantic Alliance. The support of the United States for nationalism over imperialism had reverberating effects throughout the world as the British and French empires continued to shrink in due time. For the Third World, “the hour of freedom had struck. But the hour was chosen by the Americans, not by the nationalists” (Ferguson 2002, 297). The shift in world power, from Britain and France to the United States and Soviet Union, was not directly confrontational given the close relationship of the actors in the lead up to the crisis, but in many ways it demonstrated the increasing influence of the Cold War power dynamic on a global level. For the British, the failures of Prime Minister Eden were symbolic of their declining role. Eden’s successor Harold Macmillan was able to salvage the ‘special relationship’ between the United States and the United Kingdom, thus reinforcing the Anglo-Saxon relationship. France, equally humiliated by the events of Suez, took a completely different direction in their actions post-1956. Due

to the successive imperial crises that culminated with Algeria and the end of the Fourth Republic in 1958, Charles de Gaulle deemed it necessary to pursue a more independent strategy that led to France's departure from the military structure of N.A.T.O. in 1966. Ultimately, the strategic implications were indicative of the power of the United States, both economic and political, which prioritized Soviet containment. The shift in world power was clearly announced by the events of the Suez Crisis as nationalism was prioritized over imperialism and Middle Eastern relations saw a rampant increase in American influence. The Cold War narrative would continue to expand for the United States as the policy of containment led the U.S. to re-involve itself in the fallout of the imperial legacies of its transatlantic allies in places such as Aden and Vietnam.

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