



India's role during the 1956 Suez Crisis: Between peacemaking and postcolonial solidarity

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ABSTRACT

The 1956 Suez conflict was not inevitable. The involvement of an impartial third party had offered an exit ramp for the main protagonists. Largely forgotten today, India strove to reconcile the interests of the Western powers with Arab nationalism. Displaying creativity and perseverance in attempting to arrest the sudden deterioration in security in its extended neighborhood, India's unceasing but responsible support for a weaker Arab state in the backdrop of determined Western coercion is a useful illustration for contemporary policymakers who are attempting to craft a sustainable approach towards a tumultuous West Asia. Using previously unused archival documents, this paper adds to the small literature on India's involvement in this crisis by offering the first detailed account of India's attempt to prevent the outbreak of hostilities in those fateful months of 1956. By doing so, this article also reveals interesting facets of India's approach to conflict management and regional stability in the 1950s, a role that was predicated on not just promoting strategic restraint between antagonistic states but also enabling conflict resolution options that preserved the vital interests of competing actors.

“What will be the next step if Colonel Nasser is allowed to succeed in the action he has taken?...It is that if getting away with it takes place, then there will be such a rush of power, such haste and hurry to get on the bandwagon of the Egyptian dictator, as has not been seen in our generation in respect of any country at all.”

– Anthony Eden, September 15, 1956¹

“The story of the past three and a half months...is full of tragic drama, and events have happened which I would have thought could not possibly occur in this modern age. I find it a little difficult to deal with this record of unabashed aggression and deception.”

– Jawaharlal Nehru, November 16, 1956²

Introduction

Looking back at the 1956 Suez crisis is important because it echoes a recurring feature of Middle Eastern geopolitics and international politics, namely the explosive interaction between great power ambitions and the abiding quests for sovereignty among regional powers. The coercion and ultimate assault on Egypt foreshadowed more recent western military interventions in Iraq, Libya, and Syria, leaving a troubled legacy for a region still tottering between war and peace. In retrospect, the first Suez crisis still serves as an enduring lesson in imperial hubris and the extraordinary lengths that great powers will resort to in order to preserve their material privileges and spheres of influence.

However, the Suez conflict was not inevitable and the involvement of an impartial third party had offered an exit ramp for the main protagonists. Largely forgotten today, India strove to reconcile the interests of the Westerns powers with rising Arab nationalism. Displaying remarkable creativity and perseverance in an attempt to arrest the sudden deterioration in security and stability in its extended neighborhood, India's unceasing but responsible support for a weaker Arab state in the backdrop of determined Western coercion is a useful case study and an apt reminder for contemporary policymakers who are attempting to craft a sustainable approach toward a tumultuous region.

The existing literature on the Suez crisis is dominated by Western perspectives. With the opening of British, American, and Israeli archives since the 1970s, the crisis has been extensively explored from several vantage points.³ More recent international historical accounts too have not devoted adequate attention to the Indian side of the story,⁴ with one authoritative study on the multinational dimensions of the crisis completely neglecting India's role.⁵ But India was not nearly as peripheral to the events of 1956 as is made out to be in these historical assessments. The intricacies of India's diplomacy and the tension confronted by policymakers as they found their generally positive view of Western Europe, particularly of the United Kingdom, suddenly upended by neo-imperial coercion against a fellow non-aligned state has not been fully explored.⁶ Gopal highlights how India was thrust into an international crisis and struggled to reconcile its then special ties with London with its post-colonial identity and Nehru's role conception for India as a peacemaker. Yet, Gopal appears mortified at India's and Nehru's predicament and dwells considerably on how India disappointed both sides. In doing so, however, he understates the substantive Indian efforts to promote a peaceful resolution as well as India's support for the principle of Egyptian sovereignty, a position that never wavered at any stage of the crisis.⁷

As Nehru had himself recognized, the Suez crisis was the “the toughest international problem” that India had confronted since independence.⁸ Using previously unused archival material, this article adds to the small literature on India’s involvement in this crisis by offering the first detailed account of India’s attempt to prevent the outbreak of hostilities in those fateful months of 1956. By doing so, this article also reveals interesting facets of India’s approach to conflict management and regional stability in the 1950s, a role that was predicated on not only promoting strategic restraint between antagonistic states but also facilitating conflict resolution options that could preserve the vital interests of competing actors.

India’s involvement in the crisis came at a time when Delhi held a generally benign view of the international environment and perceived a thawing of the Cold War. Surveying world politics in August 1955, Nehru, with some obvious satisfaction, highlighted the stability of the post-war order and the emergence of a stable balance of power. The “Great powers are more or less agreed today that force will not be used to change the status quo...It leads people to think more realistically in terms of negotiated settlements...All this fits in with India’s policy and in our small way we have helped to bring it about both directly and to some extent by influencing others.”⁹

The backdrop to the crisis was an Anglo-Egyptian dispute, which erupted in 1951 over British suzerainty over the Suez Canal. A stalemate followed after Cairo abrogated a 1936 Treaty that had provided the British with a military base in the Suez area. Anglo-Egyptian negotiations on this issue were suspended in May 1953.¹⁰ In June 1953, at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ meeting in London, Nehru stated that he would not like to see an agreement imposed on Egypt by the West, “regardless of the consequences.”¹¹ Nehru, however, refused to endorse the rival positions in the Suez dispute at the time other than expressing a desire for a peaceful settlement and underscoring both the principle of Egyptian sovereignty and the importance of the Canal as an international waterway.¹² When asked whether the British military base hosting 80,000 troops in Suez was consistent with an area of peace, Nehru responded that it was a reality and one “cannot get rid of them (military installations) unless you propose to sink them into the sea.”¹³ In early 1956, Nehru’s “basic goodwill for Britain and the Eden Government was without reserve.”¹⁴ He was also “surprised to find how much there was in common” between Indian and French approaches “to many international problems.”¹⁵ The Suez crisis would dramatically shock India’s perceptions of Western Europe.

Crisis outbreak

In October 1955, Egypt’s U.S. Ambassador announced that Moscow had offered Cairo a \$200 million loan for the Aswan Dam project, a vital undertaking given Egypt’s agrarian economy.¹⁶ A few months later, Egypt

approached the World Bank and in a communiqué on December 17, the United States and United Kingdom assured Cairo of their support in the Aswan project, “which would be of inestimable importance in the development of the Egyptian economy.”¹⁷ In January 1956, the World Bank signed a \$200 million agreement with Egypt.¹⁸ This Western offer, Indian officials assessed, had been made as a “counterpoise” to the Soviet offer.¹⁹ The crisis was sparked by a sudden Western decision to withdraw financial support for the Aswan Dam forcing Nasser’s hand. On July 19, Washington withdrew its offer, which was quickly followed by London, ensuring that the large World Bank assistance was also withdrawn. The United States also ensured that a \$70 million loan commitment from Exim Bank to Egypt was also cancelled.²⁰

Nasser responded a week later by nationalizing the Suez Canal Company, a Franco-British majority owned-enterprise that had owned and operated the Suez Canal since 1889. Referring to the Suez Canal Company as “an exploitative company,” Nasser declared that Egypt would use the “income from the Suez Canal – 100 million dollars a year – and build the (Aswan) dam.” However, he also assured that Egypt would compensate the company’s shareholders at prevailing market rates.²¹ Nasser felt the West was “punishing Egypt because it refused to side with military blocs.”²² But he was determined to “rely on our own strength, our own muscle, our own funds” for the project.²³ The rationale for Egypt’s nationalization was “mainly economic” since the Canal company was very profitable and would have provided Egypt’s economy with a “very big package of foreign exchange every year”.²⁴

In this early stage of the crisis, Nehru gave the benefit of doubt to United Kingdom and France and felt that Cairo was “being pushed by extremist elements and by angry reaction to” the West.²⁵ Nehru was also defensive because he had just returned from long talks with Nasser and there had been no mention of the Suez issue.²⁶ This attitude was also reflected in his guidance telegram to Ali Yavar Jung, India’s Ambassador in Cairo. The sympathies of “most countries in Asia are with Egypt.” Yet, “whatever the rights or wrongs of the situation,” India could not “join any measures which are likely to create a war-psychosis or to hinder any steps” towards a “peaceful settlement.” India, therefore, “should not appear to line up completely with Egypt and other countries sympathetic to Egypt just as we will not line up against Egypt with powers hostile to her.”²⁷

By the end of July, Egypt made reassuring statements that the security and freedom of navigation of the Canal would be maintained and that Cairo would honor its international obligations.²⁸ Nasser stated that the Canal Company’s nationalization would “not in any way or to any extent” affect Egypt’s international commitment toward the Suez waterway.²⁹ Now more reassured, Nehru shared his perceptions with Nasser. While India was directly interested as a user of the Canal, it was “naturally also interested in

a friendly settlement” and was “in no doubt as to the sovereign rights of Egypt.” Nehru hoped that Nasser would decide to take the initiative himself “to call together all those interested in the international aspects” of the Suez issue “and on the basis of Egypt’s sovereignty...My own attitude and desire is only to see that all questions that have arisen should be settled by peaceful means.”³⁰ Since Egypt had physical control of the Canal, Nehru felt she could “afford to take a calmer view of the situation despite provocation and excitement in UK, France and other western countries.”³¹

By now, Nehru had also realized that the “discourteous and peremptory manner” of the U.S. decision to withdraw financial support to Egypt was deliberately timed to embarrass other nonaligned states – Nehru, Nasser and Tito had met on July 18 and July 19.³² The broad opinion in the Indian Cabinet was one of caution. The main objective, it was felt, “was to prevent hostilities and to have a peaceful settlement which would ensure the use of Canal as heretofore.”³³ Nehru also outlined India’s role, which “would be to find a way by which the two sides can come together. It is our national interest also that arrangements in regard to the Canal should be such as to promote confidence all round.”³⁴

Hoping to sway India, Eden invited Nehru to attend a conference in London to discuss the prospects for putting the Canal under an international authority. The British Prime Minister sought Nehru’s “support for this principle and for the convening of the conference.”³⁵ Nasser, however, requested Nehru to develop a better insight into Egypt’s position before he considered the British proposal.³⁶ Expressing his surprise to the Western reaction, Nasser remarked that one could understand the agitation over nationalization had it been “about compensation and the rights of stock or shareholders.” But “in the absence of justification for any such objections,” the issue was “being deliberately mixed up with the question of the security of the canal and the freedom of navigation.” He added that the proposed London conference was against Egypt’s “sovereignty and dignity” and asked how the West could unilaterally lay down, at the point of a bayonet, future principles and methods of controlling Egyptian territory. Nasser proposed that instead of rejecting the invitation he would make a credible “counter proposal” that included Egypt’s willingness “to execute a fresh treaty with all the concerned nations guaranteeing the security of the canal and freedom of navigation, and that treaty could be registered with the UN.” Having assured Nehru of his bonafides, Nasser sought the Indian premier’s advice.³⁷ Instructively, no fewer than 237 ships had passed through the Suez Canal in the immediate aftermath of its nationalization “without hindrance or difficulty,” and with all vessels settling their transit fees.³⁸

Nehru quickly despatched two telegrams to Cairo on August 5. He first assured Nasser that India would not “subscribe to any form of settlement without full considerations ourselves and consultation with you. Our object

would not be to weaken your position but...to work for conciliatory approaches.”³⁹ Nehru also suggested a draft on Egypt’s counter proposal, one whereby the latter would agree to a conference but without “requiring from the participants any prior commitments on the basis of a future settlement.” He also endorsed Nasser’s offer to execute a fresh treaty with the concerned parties but cautioned against taking the issue to the United Nations (UN) because of an unfavourable “alignment of forces,” which could “lead to the interpretation of a prior acceptance of international control.”⁴⁰ This tempered view of the UN stemmed from India’s own unpleasant experience on the Kashmir issue as well as the UN’s role during previous international crises where it had sought to undercut India’s peace-making efforts.

Nehru then candidly explained to Eden that while all parties agreed that the Suez Canal should continue as an international waterway open to all, “it was necessary for Egypt to be intimately concerned” with the means to attain this outcome. He urged Eden “to take advantage” of Cairo’s constructive “attitude and arrive at satisfactory settlements,” while also warning that “force and coercive tactics” would have “far-reaching” consequences across Asia and North Africa.⁴¹ Although unsatisfied with the British approach, Nehru accepted the invitation to the London conference hoping it “might prepare the ground for a later conference with which Egypt is associated.”⁴²

Clearly, Nehru wanted to avoid a deadlock. Indian “participation might help towards a more rational approach to the issues” but would “in no way injure Egypt’s interests or her sovereignty and dignity.”⁴³ Providing a comprehensive backdrop to the Suez crisis, Nehru now affirmed India’s peacemaking role in Parliament on August 8. India was “passionately interested in averting a conflict” and was in “friendly relations with Egypt,” as well as possessing “good and close relations with the principal Western countries involved.” It was “with a sense of grave responsibility” that Delhi had decided to send a delegation to London.⁴⁴ Hereafter, India’s attitude to the crisis would be guided by three principles: Egypt’s right to nationalize was sacrosanct, the freedom of navigation and efficient management of the Canal must be ensured, and a settlement should be peaceful and without the threat of use of force.

London conference

The belligerent mood in London and Paris was evident from the outset. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, India’s High Commissioner, had reported that there was a bipartisan consensus in the British political establishment on Government policy and a “desire to ‘teach this Pharaoh a lesson.’”⁴⁵ The British were “now hysterical and in throes of war psychosis.”⁴⁶ The French attitude too was one of “Nasser must accept or else.” They seemed “convinced that if war comes it can be localized and there is a strange public

apathy over possibility of war.”⁴⁷ Aware of this aggressive outlook in Western Europe, Nehru had hoped that America’s influence would “be used to bring an end to the present attitude of display and threats of force.”⁴⁸ However, he was also aware of the U.S. posture.

Although John Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State, had not provided any commitment to his British and French allies in their meeting in London, a “common Western front” had been established on the question of Suez.⁴⁹ Dulles had told G.L. Mehta, India’s envoy in Washington, that the “question of Suez was not only one of legal rights but of distrust of Nasser” given the latter’s “gigantic ambitions” and his “attitude and policies.” Dulles felt, “there was a point beyond which it was difficult for the US to restrain Britain and France but he would try his best to do so.”⁵⁰ Nehru, thus, recognized that the line India was adopting to promote a settlement would “displease” the West and certainly the British whose attitude appeared “very rigid.”⁵¹

Then Foreign Secretary, Subimal Dutt, recalls “there was no doubt” in the Prime Minister’s “mind as to who should represent India at the Conference... his choice fell on Krishna Menon of whose negotiating capability he had the highest opinion.”⁵² Nehru hoped that Menon could produce a formula acceptable to both sides.⁵³ En route to London, Menon had stopped in Cairo for talks with Nasser to understand the Egyptian position.⁵⁴ Menon also remained in daily touch with Ali Sabri, Nasser’s senior advisor in London, throughout the conference.⁵⁵ After his meetings in Cairo on August 12, Menon reported that Nasser was inclined to accept “some form of international cooperation” but “without control or takeover.”⁵⁶

In the meanwhile, there was an escalation of rhetoric from London. Eden declared, “Our quarrel is not with Egypt, still less with the Arab world. It is with Colonel Nasser...(who) is not a man who can be trusted to keep an arrangement.”⁵⁷ An anxious Nehru remarked that he could not “understand the reason or logic of the military and other measures that the UK and France have been taking. Do they want war? I have no doubt that (if) real war came... they would not survive as first class powers.” He also expressed skepticism about the London conference.⁵⁸ A few days later, nine British warships including an aircraft carrier were sighted within twenty miles of the Egyptian coast near Alexandria and Port Said.⁵⁹ This was classic gunboat diplomacy.

The London Conference began on August 16 and was attended by 22 states including India. Nehru’s general instructions to his delegation laid stress on a negotiated settlement that would respect Egyptian sovereignty and guarantee the freedom of navigation of the Canal, the latter ostensibly being the primary concern of the Western powers. One of Menon’s initial moves was successfully opposing the British suggestion of majority-based decision making in the conference.⁶⁰ The conference also accepted Menon’s suggestion that the entire conference proceedings be shared with Cairo. In his speech to the delegates, Menon argued that the Conference should

confine itself to addressing the proper functioning of the Canal and allaying fear.⁶¹ He then outlined a five-point formula to reconcile the interests of both sides: Recognition of Egypt's sovereignty, recognition of the Suez Canal as an integral part of Egypt, and, as a waterway of international importance, freedom of navigation for all as affirmed in 1888 Convention, equity and nondiscrimination in levying of tolls and charges, and, interests of Canal users should receive due recognition.⁶² These principles were quickly welcomed by Cairo as a basis for future negotiations.⁶³ India formally proposed that the Canal's operation by Egypt be with the assistance of "a consultative body of user interests formed on the basis of geographical representation and interests, and charged with advisory, consultative and liaison functions."⁶⁴ Nehru and Menon were seeking to assuage Western concern on the critical waterway while simultaneously securing Egyptian sovereignty.

The U.S. proposal, on the other hand, was fundamentally aimed to internationalize the operational arrangements of the Suez Canal. Menon interpreted the U.S. plan as one where "Egypt would have the sovereign rights of ownership, but not the sovereign rights of the exercise of ownership, and it is a new political theory to me that you can separate sovereign functions from sovereignty unless it is for the purpose of delegating those functions. That delegation can only be done by Egypt in the exercise of her own will." The core difficulty with the U.S. plan was that it would "not enable us to take the initial step (of negotiations) with Egypt and that is the fundamental step."⁶⁵ More broadly, Menon also argued for an empathetic method of dealing with post-colonial states. "There is a continent that is awake and...it is very wrong, it is very dangerous to disregard their susceptibilities. That does not mean we are to pander to every kind of mob opinion that turns up from everywhere. In dealing with countries formerly subject to empires, where the rights of nationalism and sovereignty have received an exaggerated outlook in many cases, the way to deal with them would be to convince them of their interests in cooperation, and that can only be done by bringing them into the field of negotiation in the first instance."⁶⁶

Despite such a passionate defense of Egypt's interests, eighteen countries including Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey supported Dulles's plan. The Soviet Union, Indonesia and Sri Lanka supported India's proposal. Khrushchev even asked the British and French envoys in Moscow to support India's "most reasonable" proposals on the Suez crisis.⁶⁷ But in order to prevent the issue from becoming an east-west dispute, India deflected a Soviet request to issue a joint statement to communicate their common positions after the London Conference because Menon sensibly felt it might "become a block" to a peaceful resolution.⁶⁸ On balance, while Dulles's proposals were "basically impossible", India's proposals, Menon felt, might have gained traction if they had "the quality of compromise." But India's lead negotiator had been restrained in making more reasonable proposals given Egypt's position, and,

the inability of Ali Sabri, the unofficial Egyptian observer in London, “to commit his Government although he himself was convinced.” Menon warned that unless there was some advance from Cairo, the pivot would “shift to the US” and “the situation will develop more grave.”⁶⁹ Egypt’s Foreign Minister Fawzi had found the circumstances difficult to make concessions although Egypt did have more room to “concede.”⁷⁰ Short of internationalization, Nasser said he was willing to “accept anything” provided it did not affect Egyptian ownership or administration.⁷¹

Menon received Nehru’s authorization to exercise discretion, with the objective being “to keep door open for further negotiations and avoid crisis.”⁷² But Menon was skeptical. The western proposal undermined Egyptian sovereignty “because their essentially irreducible minimum is setting up of International Authority displacing Egyptian Corporation on which Egypt will be given representation.”⁷³ He also tried to persuade Dulles, stressing that Egypt “could not and would not negotiate on the basis of the Five-Power Proposal” because it was “an infringement upon their sovereignty and contrary to their national interests.” India’s compromise plan, on the other hand, “could develop the kind of satisfactory relationship between Egypt and the users of the Canal which would give confidence that the Canal would be operated properly.”⁷⁴ On August 22, Menon told a press conference that the Indian and U.S. proposals “represented two fundamentally different approaches.” The latter viewed “internationalization as the only remedy – the repeal of nationalization.” India’s “plan does not involve the abdication of the position the Western powers have taken up on internationalization...But we must find a position between the Western position and de facto position of Egypt. The purpose of negotiations is to alter the position of both sides.”⁷⁵

Nevertheless, the Western powers, backed by the majority, decided to send a delegation led by Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies to present the 18-Power Proposals to Nasser. Unsurprisingly, the Menzies-Nasser talks ended in a deadlock.⁷⁶ The West, Nasser noted, seemed to be “more after control than efficiency (of the Canal).”⁷⁷ Even though Egypt was doing everything to keep the Suez waterway “open to international traffic”, Western governments were interfering with the Canal’s navigation by “detering pilots and other essential employees from continuing in the service of the nationalized Suez Company.” The British and French had induced commercial ship pilots to resign in an attempt to embarrass Egypt.⁷⁸ Nasser affirmed that, “so long as the sovereign rights and dignity of Egypt are respected, we shall respect the Canal as an international waterway.”⁷⁹ Indian officials recall the “unnecessarily stubborn and arrogant” British attitude of not agreeing to the “notion of letting the users’ association now be an advisory council. He (Eden) felt how can we who have run the Canal

for the last 100 years agree to take a backseat and simply be advisors to the Egyptians who don't know how to run this Canal at all."⁸⁰

Even while the Menzies delegation was in Cairo, Nasser and Nehru were exchanging perspectives on containing the crisis. Nasser was contemplating two simultaneous moves: appealing to the UNSC against Anglo-French military preparations and economic sanctions and releasing a memorandum to the UN Secretary General indicating Cairo's willingness to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Nasser sought Nehru's advice.⁸¹ Nehru promptly endorsed the proposal to issue a memorandum on seeking a peaceful settlement. However, given India's own experience of the Security Council, Menon was "very doubtful" about the desirability of Egypt approaching the UNSC at this stage. Being interested for the moment in pre-empting hostilities, Nehru noted that issuing a memorandum would reduce the possibility of immediate Anglo-French military action.⁸² Nasser agreed with this assessment⁸³ and on September 10, Egypt issued a statement proposing a negotiating body should be formed which would be representative of the different views held among Suez Canal users and that "discussions should take place forthwith to settle the composition, the venue and the date of the meeting of such a body." This would include discussions on (a) the freedom and safety of navigation in the Canal; (b) the development of the Canal to meet the future requirements of navigation; and (3) the establishment of just and equitable tolls and charges.⁸⁴

Encouraged by Nasser's constructive response, Nehru now appealed to Eden and Eisenhower to pursue peaceful means to settle the dispute by seeking "common ground." Dulles, however, retorted that there was not much merit in Egypt's proposals and that he could not understand them. Eisenhower too expressed doubts and said that the Western powers would again meet in London on September 19 to discuss the latest developments.⁸⁵ On September 12, Eden told the House of Commons that an association of the Canal users would maintain operational oversight on the Canal and "requested" Egypt to "cooperate" with this Western initiative. In almost undisguised coercion, Eden declared that if efforts to secure the rights of Canal users failed, his "Government must be free to take whatever steps are open to them."⁸⁶ Egypt immediately retorted that implementation of the Western scheme would mean war.⁸⁷ Fearing an escalation, Nehru advised Nasser to immediately invoke the Security Council to stave off a conflict.⁸⁸

Nehru then cabled Dulles saying that the Western plan was "an attempt at imposition of internationalization of the operation of the Canal by instalments." Because it was accompanied with threat of consequences, the plan had "become a provocation", and perceived by Egypt as a violation of her "rights" and "an attempt to seize the Canal operation system." Nehru argued for an alternative approach, which sought settlement and was "not directed

against the regime in Egypt or other considerations which Britain and France may have with regard to their influence or positions in the Middle East.” He also urged Washington to rein in its European allies. Again, unimpressed, Dulles bluntly replied that he feared Egypt would misuse its position if it alone controlled operations and asked Nehru to influence Egypt.⁸⁹

Nehru then appealed to Eden and underscored the anti-colonial sentiment that had been heightened by the Suez crisis. India had “sought to foster relations between the West and Asia and to prevent animosities. We would like you to consider the effects of any attempt to put the clock back in respect of the national independence and status of the nations that have become free in the East and attach great value to that independence. Our two countries have cooperated in this enlargement of the areas of freedom.”⁹⁰ But convinced of “his mission, destiny, and responsibility to future British generations,” Eden regarded any resolution that kept Nasser in power as a “death blow to Britain’s prestige vis-a-vis the Arabs in particular and Afro-Asian nationalists in general and consequently to Britain’s greatness.”⁹¹

Between peace and war

Ironically, both the United Kingdom and France, and, Egypt wrote to the UN Security Council almost simultaneously asking it to consider the Suez crisis.⁹² Nehru felt that the threat of war had receded for the moment.⁹³ The scene of diplomacy moved to New York with the British, French and Egyptian delegations commencing direct talks. Menon and India’s UN representative Arthur Lall played a useful intermediary role in these private talks.⁹⁴ By October 9, Menon’s compromise proposals seemed to have found some traction with Eisenhower,⁹⁵ Lloyd,⁹⁶ and, Nasser’s advisor, Ali Sabri.⁹⁷ The following day, Menon formally presented the compromise plan to the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, France, and Egypt.⁹⁸ In essence, these proposals sought to alleviate Western concerns regarding the credibility of Egypt’s operational control over the Canal. It suggested that day-to-day operational running of the Canal should rest with an Egyptian Suez Canal Authority whose functioning would be transparent and would include joint meetings with representatives of the Canal Users’ Association to discuss operational matters such as tolls and maintenance. It also included an arbitration option in case of disputes.⁹⁹

In the event, on October 13, a persistent Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN Secretary General, managed to push through an agreement on six principles that were accepted by the three primary parties in a unanimous UNSC resolution. Although these principles embodied the Indian plan, they went further by diluting Egypt’s operational control over the Canal into a shared framework, and, in that sense seemed closer to Dulles’s original proposals. Indian policymakers were surprised that Egypt had conceded far more

ground than she had indicated to India and on core issues of sovereignty.¹⁰⁰ The third clause, which stated that the Canal's operations would be insulated from the politics of any country, implied a greater degree of international control, and, according to Menon "was the crux of the trouble, and upset the balance of the other five principles."¹⁰¹

What explains this change in Egypt's position? For one, Hammarskjöld was "very persistent" to find some success and pursued his mandate with skill and finesse. Although his interlocutor, Egypt's Foreign Minister Fawzi, was an equally skilled practitioner, Fawzi acquiesced.¹⁰² Menon later opined, "Fawzi was like Hammarskjöld – I never knew precisely what he was saying; perhaps he believed that vagueness would help him."¹⁰³ Nasser too expressed his dissatisfaction with Fawzi's feeble negotiating posture in New York and the error of suggesting that Egypt might agree to greater international control over the Canal.¹⁰⁴ For another, there is evidence that Egypt's diplomatic strategy was aimed at multiple goals in New York. For example, Nasser's advisor, Sabri, told a US official that, "he wished to come to Washington to discuss, within the context of a settlement, the broader range of United States-Egyptian relations."¹⁰⁵ Indeed, Dulles had let the Egyptians know that if they abandoned the Soviet Union and became cooler towards non-aligned states such as India, "the US will in return take her under her wings."¹⁰⁶

But perhaps most likely it was a tactical concession by Egypt on general principles that could be interpreted differently by both sides. Indeed, the Western attempt to advance the October 13 UNSC resolution to translate the six principles into a concrete path to settlement by also attaching the London Conference proposals for international control of the Canal was foiled by a Soviet veto after Egypt objected.¹⁰⁷ The six principles were, however, unanimously accepted by the UNSC after the veto but only as a guide to further negotiations.¹⁰⁸ This left Cairo in a position where it had made no binding concessions other than an expression to negotiate a settlement. Indeed, as the *New York Times* reported, the only way for the West to attain "some semblance of international control over the canal" was via "a negotiated settlement with Egypt...the general feeling is that the final settlement will leave Colonel Nasser with renewed prestige, and in better position than ever before to lead the challenge of Arab nationalism to Western interests."¹⁰⁹

India continued to pursue its mediatory role and Menon made yet another trip to London and Cairo to impress his New York proposals. To the international media, Egyptian officials expressed confidence that exploratory talks with UK and France would commence soon at Geneva.¹¹⁰ Encouraged by recent events, a relieved Nehru stated that the "acute stage" of the Suez crisis had now passed and the world had come twice on the verge of war.¹¹¹ With the dispute now in the negotiating stage, Nehru felt "it was difficult to go back on it."¹¹² On October 29, Nehru urged Dulles to re-visit Menon's

New York proposals, which were a “reasonable and practical basis for negotiations and a peaceful settlement.”¹¹³

However, on the same day, in a surprise attack Israel launched a military offensive on the Sinai Peninsula advancing to within 10 miles of the Suez Canal. On October 30, after a 12-hour joint ultimatum, British and French forces began their attacks on Egyptian airfields and landed their troops near Port Said a few days later.¹¹⁴ The French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau publicly stated that the “purpose of the attack was to destroy the Egyptian military potential.”¹¹⁵ On November 5, Eisenhower reached out to Nehru expressing hope that the Indian premier would add his “powerful voice to those counselling restraint with regard to this proposal for expanded military action.”¹¹⁶ On November 6, under U.S. pressure Britain and France accepted a UN ceasefire, and, a resolution was passed approving the creation of a UN emergency force. In the following months, India would continue to play a role during the post-war phase to limit the conflict and promote a vacation of the aggression against Egypt.

Conclusion

“(O)ur policy has been to maintain peace in the world and fight for the cause of freedom,” remarked Nehru after the attack on Egypt.¹¹⁷ India’s interests and objectives during the Suez crisis were remarkably ambitious and consistent with the fine line that had defined Nehru’s overall foreign policy until this moment in the Cold War: to attempt to peacefully secure the sovereignty and interests of a postcolonial state while also accommodating great power interests. But unlike crises in the early 1950s, such as the Korean and Indochina crises, where both blocs were balancing each other over a contested area, in the Suez crisis a nonaligned state found itself resisting the pressures of an entire bloc. India, to a large extent, assumed the sole countervailing diplomatic responsibility from the Afro-Asian countries to challenge the big power pressures against Egypt.

At the heart of the Suez crisis was a cohesive Western policy against any potential regional power role for Egypt outside a western alignment. The real issue, as Nehru recognized too, was not the Canal “but all the fears and apprehensions” that lay behind it. It was about “oil” and the conflict between “rising Arab nationalism” and “elements of Western control” in the Middle East.¹¹⁸ Even the United States, which is typically portrayed as a benign superpower seeking to restrain its unruly allies, did not fundamentally disagree with the core policy of weakening Nasser’s Egypt and Arab nationalism in general.¹¹⁹ Regime change, in fact, was at the heart of Western policy. After “having ignited the spark”¹²⁰ by renegeing on the financial commitment to Egypt’s economic development, the United States chose to pursue a subtle and longer-term strategy where Washington did not wish to taint its image in

a highly sensitive region such as the Middle East in the evolving context of a bipolar competition for influence.

Menon later reflected that “Dulles played a double game here; probably he talked about it one way to us and to the British differently. He was the person who actually killed the London Conference. We could have got an agreement in London if the United States played the role that she had to and did play afterwards, at the United Nations.”¹²¹ Subsequent assessments too confirm that despite U.S. opposition to the tripartite attack on Egypt, the Eisenhower administration “had played a crucial role in precipitating the crisis via Dulles’s sudden withdrawal of the US offer of funds to construct the Aswan dam.” This was, of course, linked to America’s basic hostility to Arab nationalism and toward the regional popularity of non-alignment during the 1950s.¹²² Indeed, Dulles did not disguise his attitude when he told Indian officials that the Suez question “was not only one of legal rights but of distrust of Nasser” and his regional “ambitions.”¹²³

An acceptance of India’s proposal at the London conference would probably have arrested a further escalation in the crisis. Delhi had hoped the British “would agree...we thought Krishna Menon would be able to persuade them.”¹²⁴ But an apparent unity among the Western powers made implementing India’s bridging role extraordinarily frustrating because there was little leeway available to introduce creative compromises. On the overt issue of freedom of navigation, India rejected the Western argument that Egypt could not be entrusted to ensure the integrity of the Suez waterway. This “was one of those fictions that had built up”, recalls Menon. “More ships passed through that canal during the period of the interregnum than during any corresponding length of time before, which angered the British very much.”¹²⁵ In their attempts to show up Egypt’s competence in handling Canal navigation, the British had even arranged “for an exceptionally large number of ships to approach the Canal at the same time, but the pilots employed by Egypt were able to cope with them.”¹²⁶ Throughout the crisis, India suggested numerous confidence-building initiatives that would have assuaged Western concerns on the operational efficacy of the Canal without undermining Egyptian sovereignty. The primary reason for India’s failure was that for the West, Egyptian sovereignty was a technical afterthought that had to be subordinated to the primary goal to internationalize the Canal.

Finally, this case also shows India’s wider construction of its national interest. While the concern to preserve India’s reputation of non-alignment and a reliable “go between” is apparent from the archival record, there is no evidence of direct pursuit of materialist goals. For example, India had discouraged Egypt from adopting the Indian rupee as a trading currency with third countries,¹²⁷ a decision that could have potentially enhanced India’s financial influence¹²⁸ and reduced Egypt’s high dependence on the

Sterling.¹²⁹ To be sure, Delhi's reluctance to assist Egypt in bypassing the financial leverage enjoyed by London also emanated from Nehru's unwillingness to oppose the British so openly as well as a fear that India might itself face "economic retaliation."¹³⁰ Interestingly, India did not provide pilots either to assist Egypt after the British and French began inducing their pilots from resigning from operations in the Canal.¹³¹ It appears that the scope of Indian assistance to Egypt was constrained by its own material dependence on the West.

Nehru also ruled out supplying military hardware after a request from Egypt arguing it would be "greatly resented" by the West and "make them feel we are supporting Egypt 100 percent in peace and war. Our capacity for playing a mediatory role would disappear."¹³² Nehru's sensitivity to maintaining India's reputation as a peacemaker is apparent from his words. In addition, it is not as if India did not have a direct stake in the crisis. A total of 70 percent of India's imports and 60 percent of her exports moved through the Suez Canal.¹³³ Re-routing Indian sea-borne trade around the Cape of Good Hope, in the event of the Canal's closure, would have increased the cost of imports by 200–300 million Rupees per year.¹³⁴ Therefore, freedom of navigation was not simply an abstract issue for India. Yet, Delhi chose to secure its own interests in a wider cooperative framework. The primary concerns and goals throughout the Suez crisis were on systemic matters, regional security, and defusing tension or conflict that could enter a dangerous escalatory spiral. As Nehru argued, "if there is a war anywhere in the world, we are bound to get scorched by its heat...When the picture is one of warlike conditions, we must pay attention to it."¹³⁵ At no stage did Indian policymakers consider materially exploiting or hiding from regional disorder.

To conclude, the application of Nehru's approach to conflict management in the Suez crisis had major implications for regional security. There were two possible outcomes to the crisis. The erstwhile colonial powers could have made a graceful exit via a negotiated settlement responsibly and objectively promoted by Delhi whereby Anglo-French prestige was preserved in the Middle East, including their concerns on the integrity of the Suez waterway, or, they could have resorted to force and physical annexation of the Canal to maintain their traditional privileges. Ultimately, despite Nehru's ardent efforts, the unwillingness of the former colonial powers to benefit from India's peacemaking role left them with a disgraceful exit, shorn of their military prestige and economic privileges. And, contrary to western intentions, Suez established Nasser as the "pre-eminent Arab leader until the end of his life, and Arab nationalism as the leading Arab ideology for at least that long."¹³⁶

Notes

1. J.N. Papers, File no. 473, 179.
2. Lok Sabha Speech, Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961), 536.
3. Michael B. Oren, "Suez : A crisis for all seasons," *Shofar* 12, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 104–7. Keith Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: Tauris, 1991). David Carlton, *Britain and the Suez Crisis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988). W. Scott Lu, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the U.S., and the Suez* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990). Peter L. Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945–1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Mohammed Heikal, *Cutting the Lion's Tail: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes* (New York: Arbor House, 1987). Mahmoud Fawzi, *Suez, 1956: An Egyptian Perspective* (London: Shorouk International, 1987).
4. Michael T. Thornhill, *Road to Suez: The Battle of the Canal Zone* (Stroud: Sutton, 2006). Guy Laron, *Origins of the Suez Crisis Postwar Development Diplomacy and the Struggle over Third World Industrialization, 1945–1956* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Washington D.C. and Baltimore, 2013).
5. Simon C. Smith, ed., *Reassessing Suez 1956: New Perspectives on the Crisis and its Aftermath* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
6. Gopal's two brief accounts remain the main explorations of Indian behavior during this crisis. Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: Volume Two 1947–1956* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), 272–90 and Sarvepalli Gopal, "India, the Crisis, and the Non-Aligned Nations," in *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Implications*, ed. W. M. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 173–87. India's involvement in the Suez affair has also been briefly explored in Magali Grolleau, "L'Inde et la crise de Suez," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 243, no. 3 (2011): 73–92; Jitendra Mohan, "India, Pakistan, Suez and The Commonwealth," *International Journal* 15, no. 3 (Summer, 1960): 185–99. Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 124–32; Swapna Kona Nayudu. "India's Moment in the Suez Canal Crisis." *Hindu Business Line*, November 9, 2016.
7. Another reason for the scholarly neglect of India's policy during the Suez crisis is that it was soon overshadowed by the Hungarian crisis that broke out in late October 1956 and which evoked a more restrained reaction from Delhi who viewed it as largely a European problem and internal affair for the Soviet bloc. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.
8. To Pandit, August 9, 1956, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Second Series (SWJN-SS), 34, 359. Source reference: Gopal, Sarvepalli, Ravinder Kumar, H.Y. Sharda Prasad, A.K. Damodaran, and Mushirul Hasan, Madhavan K. Palat, ed., *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Second Series. 73 Volumes (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1984–2017).
9. To Chief Minister, August 26, 1955, SWJN-SS, Volume 29, 444.
10. The Middle East, June 5, 1953, SWJN-SS, 22, 404.
11. The Middle East, 406.
12. Security of Suez Canal, June 10, 1953, SWJN-SS, 22, 409.
13. Security of Suez Canal, 411.
14. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 2, 274.
15. To Chief Minister, March 14, 1956, SWJN-SS, 32, 553.
16. To V. Pandit, July 27, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 319.

17. K.P. Karunakaran, ed., *Outside the Contest: A Study of Non-alignment and the Foreign Policies of some Non-aligned countries* (Delhi: People's Publishing, 1963), 144–45.
18. Nehru-Dulles talks, March 10, 1956, SWJN-SS, 32, 375.
19. To Ali Yavar Jung, July 27, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 320.
20. Ali Sastroamidjojo to Nehru, August 6, 1956, Jawaharlal Nehru's unpublished papers (J.N. Papers), File No. 462 (Part 1), Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.
21. Subimal Dutt, *With Nehru in the Foreign Office* (Calcutta: Minerva, 1977), 158–59.
22. Karunakaran, *Outside the Contest*, 146.
23. To Foreign Secretary, July 31, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 324.
24. Arthur Lall (1990). Also see, Guy Laron, *Origins of the Suez Crisis Postwar Development Diplomacy and the Struggle over Third World Industrialization, 1945–1956* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).
25. To Pandit, July 27, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 319.
26. To Pandit, 318.
27. To Jung, August 3, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 329.
28. To Nasser, August 2, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 328.
29. To Pandit, August 2, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 325.
30. To Pandit, 327–28.
31. To Jung, August 3, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 329–30.
32. To Pandit, August 2, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 325.
33. To Cabinet Secretary, August 4, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 332–33.
34. To Jung, August 4, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 334.
35. To Eden, August 4, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 335.
36. To Nasser, August 5, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 336.
37. Nasser to Nehru, August 4, 1956, J.N. Papers, File No. 461 (Part 2).
38. Jung to Nehru, August 5, 1956, J.N. Papers, File No. 462 (Part 1).
39. To Nasser, August 5, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 336–37.
40. To Nasser, August 5, 1956, 337–38.
41. To Eden, August 5, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 339.
42. To Ali Sastroamidjojo, August 6, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 341.
43. To Jung, August 7, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 343.
44. Lok Sabha statement, August 8, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 353–54.
45. Pandit to Nehru, August 4, 1956, J.N. Papers, File No. 461 (Part 2).
46. Pandit to Pillai, August 4, 1956, J.N. Papers, File No. 461 (Part 2).
47. Malik to Pillai, September 2, 1956, J.N. Papers, File No. 470 (Part 1).
48. To G.L. Mehta, August 8, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 356.
49. G.L. Mehta to Subimal Dutt, August 4, 1956, J.N. Papers, File No. 461 (Part 2).
50. To Mehta, August 10, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 361.
51. To Mehta, August 9, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 359.
52. Dutt, *With Nehru*, 162.
53. Dutt, *With Nehru*, 163.
54. “Mr. Menon to meet Col. Nasser.” *Times of India*, August 8, 1956.
55. Arthur Lall, “United Nations Oral History Project, United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library,” June 27, 1990, <http://www.unmultimedia.org/oralhistory/2011/10/lall-arthur-samuel/>.
56. To Nasser, August 10, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 362.
57. To V. Pandit, August 11, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 365.
58. To V. Pandit.
59. Jung to Krishna Menon, August 15, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 464 (Part 2).
60. C.S. Jha to Subimal Dutt, August 16, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 465.

61. London to State Department, August 20, 1956, FRUS (Vol. XVI-Suez).
62. Dutt, *With Nehru*, 163.
63. "Cairo Favors Indian Plan: Paper Reflects Cairo Stand." *New York Times*, August 22, 1956.
64. To Eisenhower, September 7, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 389.
65. Krishna Menon statement at the Suez Canal Conference in London, August 22, 1956, J.N. Papers, File No. 470 (Part 1).
66. Krishna Menon statement. Also see, "India calls for rejection of Dulles Plan." *Times of India*, August 23, 1956.
67. K.P.S. Menon to Subimal Dutt, August 23, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 467 (Part 1).
68. Krishna Menon to Nehru and Jung, August 23, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 467 (Part 1).
69. Menon to Nehru and Ali Yavar Jung, August 20, 1956; Menon to Nehru, August 21, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 466 (Part 2).
70. To Jung, August 21, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 371.
71. Jung to Menon, August 23, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 467 (Part 1).
72. To Menon, August 22, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 372.
73. To Menon, 373.
74. Dulles-Menon Conversation, August 22, 1956, FRUS (Vol. XVI-Suez).
75. M.S. Rajan, *India in World Affairs, 1954-1956* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), 157.
76. "Egypt's firm stand." *Times of India*, September 11, 1956.
77. Nasser to Nehru, September 6, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 471.
78. Jung to Krishna Menon, August 15, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 464 (Part 2).
79. Frank Moraes interview with Nasser, "Egypt will keep Suez Canal open to all ships." *Times of India*, September 2, 1956.
80. Arthur Lall (1990).
81. Nasser to Nehru, September 6, 1956 and Jung to Nehru, September 6, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 471.
82. To Jung, September 7, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 391-92.
83. Jung to Nehru, September 8, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 472 (Part 1).
84. Jung to Nehru, September 9, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 472 (Part 2). Eisenhower to Nehru, September 15, 1956, FRUS (Vol. XVI-Suez).
85. G.L. Mehta to Nehru, September 12, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 473. To Eisenhower, September 11, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 394-97.
86. To Nasser, September 13, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 399.
87. "To support West is to want war: Egypt informs America." *Times of India*, September 14, 1956.
88. To Nasser, September 13, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 399.
89. To Nasser, September 13, 1965, 405-7.
90. To Nasser, September 13, 1965, 410.
91. Pandit to Nehru, September 13, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 473.
92. Arthur Lall to Menon, September 26, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 476 (Part 1).
93. "Fear of world conflagration has now lessened," *Times of India*, September 24, 1956.
94. Dutt, *With Nehru*, 166-67; Arthur Lall (1990).
95. Eisenhower-Hoover Conversation, October 8, 1956, FRUS (Vol. XVI-Suez).
96. In his conversation with Dulles, Selwyn Lloyd had implied that Krishna Menon's "outline (proposal) might be acceptable, but that he did not like to negotiate through Menon." Dulles-Lloyd Conversation, October 8, 1956, FRUS (Vol. XVI-Suez).
97. Rountree-Ali Sabry Conversation, October 9, 1956, FRUS (Vol. XVI-Suez).

98. Dutt, *With Nehru*, 166.
99. To Dulles, October 29, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 420.
100. Krishna Menon to Nehru, October 14, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 479 (Part 2).
101. Michael Brecher, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 66.
102. Arthur Lall (1990).
103. Brecher, *India and World Politics*, 66.
104. As Jung reported, "British calculations that Egyptians may make big concessions seem to be due to Fawzi's usual oiliness." Jung to Menon and Nehru, October 15, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 479 (Part 2). Jung to Nehru, October 20, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 480.
105. Rountree-Ali Sabry Conversation, October 9, 1956, FRUS (Vol. XVI-Suez).
106. Krishna Menon to Nehru, October 14, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 479 (Part 2).
107. Menon had previously noted in a Cabinet meeting that, "it was difficult for the Security Council to pass a resolution against Egypt owing to Russia's power of veto." Cabinet meeting minutes, September 14, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 407–8.
108. "World Control Plan for Suez Vetoed: But Russia Approves West's Principles." *Times of India*, October 15, 1956.
109. "Suez at UN." *New York Times*, October 14, 1956.
110. "Nehru Aide Prods Nasser on Accord." *New York Times*, October 20, 1956.
111. "Acute Stage of Suez Crisis Ends," *Times of India*, October 22, 1956.
112. "Egyptian Approval for Indian Plan on Suez," *Times of India*, October 26, 1956.
113. To Dulles, October 29, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 420.
114. To Eisenhower, October 31, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 421.
115. E. S. Reddy and A. K. Damodaran, ed., *Krishna Menon at the United Nations: India and the World* (Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House, 1994), 113.
116. Memorandum of a Conference with Eisenhower, November 5, 1956, FRUS (Vol. XVI-Suez).
117. Nehru speech, November 1, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 55.
118. To Chief Minister, September 20, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 590.
119. Also see Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
120. Pandit to Nehru, August 3, 1956, J.N. Papers, File No. 461 (Part 1).
121. Brecher, *India and World Politics*, 64.
122. Rashid Khalidi, "Consequences of the Suez Crisis in the Arab World," in *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Implications*, ed. W. M. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 378–79.
123. G. L. Mehta to Nehru, August 9, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 463.
124. Arthur Lall (1990).
125. Brecher, *India and World Politics*, 62–63.
126. Louis and Owen, *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Implications*, 398.
127. Delhi did assist Egypt with short-term credit as well as use of rupees in bilateral trade.
128. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2, 280.
129. 80 percent of Egypt's foreign trade was conducted through sterling accounts. To Cabinet Secretary, August 4, 1956, SWJN-SS, 34, 333.
130. B.K. Nehru to Jung, August 16, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 465.
131. By mid-September 1956, foreign ship pilots, mostly European nationals, were induced to defect from their professional Canal operations. Much of the shortfall for trained pilots was quickly made up by Russian, Polish and Yugoslavs. Jung to Menon, September 12, 1956, J.N. Papers, File Number 473.

132. To Foreign Secretary, September 17, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 415.
133. "India Reports Egypt Would Yield on Fees." *New York Times*, September 15, 1956.
134. Minutes of Cabinet meeting, September 14, 1956, J. N. Papers, File Number 474 (Part 1).
"Re-routing Shipping is Costly." *Times of India*, September 15, 1956.
135. Speech, November 1, 1956, SWJN-SS, 35, 55.
136. Khalidi, "Consequences of the Suez Crisis in the Arab World," 377.

Notes on contributor

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