"The Eyes of the World Are Upon You:" International Organisations and the Suez Crisis

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Introduction

Gamal Abdel Nasser savored the moment: it is 26 July 1956 and he has just announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal. The thousands packed into Alexandria's Mohammed Ali Square are ecstatic.[1] This bold and highly contingent decision marked the beginning of the Suez Crisis, a complex mixture of war and diplomacy that tested the 1950s international system. Despite intense disagreement and violence, the crisis eventually reached a peaceful (if not uncontested) resolution. In this study, I will pursue a comparative analysis of international organizations (IOs) in order to understand their role in bringing the conflict to a close. Beginning with a narrative and historiographical background, the purpose of this section is to demonstrate how the introduction of new primary and secondary material can help us to understand this role and, consequently, enrich scholarship on the Suez Crisis.

The crisis itself can be divided into three phases. First, after Egypt nationalized the Canal, a period of diplomatic deliberation ensued between Britain, France, the United States, and Egypt, which failed to bring about the international control of the Canal. Second, as planned in the clandestine Sèvres Protocol of 24 October 1956, an Israeli invasion of Egypt commenced on 29 October. Two days later an Anglo-French force intervened on the pretext of 'police action' to protect international shipping. Hostilities ended with a ceasefire on 6 November. Third, a withdrawal period began, which entailed intense diplomatic pressure on Britain, France, and Israel as well as the stationing of UN Peacekeepers (UNEF) in Egypt. UNEF supervised the withdrawal of troops, the clearing of the Canal, and the keeping of the peace on the Israeli-Egyptian border. British and French personnel evacuated by 22 December and the last Israeli troops left Egypt on 12 March 1957.

[1] 'The Night Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal', *Le Monde diplomatique* (July 2002), https://mondediplo.com/2002/07/12canal, (6 March 2022).

Each of the crisis' protagonists regarded their vital interests to be at stake as they entered the crisis. President Nasser felt compelled to nationalize the Canal in order to fund the Aswan High Dam project, the cornerstone of his plan for Egypt's socioeconomic development. The West had withdrawn funding for the dam over fears of Soviet influence in Cairo; thus, by nationalizing the canal, Nasser could both enrich Egypt and capture an important symbol of both the old imperialism and contemporary Western influence. Indeed, Britain had maintained a Protectorate over Egypt between 1882 and 1922 as well as a massive military base in the canal zone primarily to protect what a young Anthony Eden once called the "swing-door of the British empire."[2] Regarding the 120-mile waterway as essential to communications, trade, and (increasingly) oil-supply, Britain and France had together owned most of the shares in the Canal Company.[3]

The imperial powers could not accept that Nasser, who lambasted the French presence in Algeria and the British-led Baghdad Pact, would have control over a strategic interest that British leaders still regarded as their "jugular vein."[4] Israel, constantly under threat from its numerous hostile neighbors and cross-border *Fedayeen* raids, was also unsettled by the fervently anti-Zionist Nasser. For these reasons, the botched British-French-Israeli operation had attempted to precipitate Nasser's downfall and restore international control to the Canal.[5]

Broadly speaking, three waves of writing on the Suez Crisis can be identified. The first of these was the publication of personal memoirs by contemporaries of the crisis, which, from the late 1980s, a second wave of scholars used alongside newly accessible archival material to structure a lively academic debate.[6] This literature generally applied what one might

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[2] Quoted in K. Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East*, 2nd edn. (London, 2003), p. 7.
[3] J. C. Hurewitz, 'The Historical Context' in Wm. R. Louis, and R. Owen (eds), *Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 19-30.
[4] Ibid., p. 22.
[5] M. Bar-On, 'David Ben-Gurion and the Sèvres Collusion' in Louis, and Owen (eds), *Suez 1956*, pp. 145-160.
[6] For memoirs, see: A. Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden* (London,

call a diplomatic history approach; to simplify somewhat, it draws on national archives to understand nation states and relations between them. Consequently, it has understood the resolution of the Suez Crisis as a product of Britain and France's inability to withstand American pressure to withdraw.[7] Since the turn of the century, however, historians have emphasized the importance of non-state actors in the crisis as a whole.[8] This third wave of historiography gives us strong historical and theoretical reasons to look at the crisis' resolution from a different angle. Instead of treating IOs as epiphenomena, the idea emerges that they played a significant part in the course and resolution of the crisis.

International relations theory provides us with analytical tools that help to understand the role of IOs in history. I will draw inspiration from Abbott and Snidal's argument that IOs effect agency through their ability, first, to centralize diplomatic engagement in a single, stable forum, and second, to remain independent.[9] I will also draw on Barnett and Finnemore's idea that their "control over technical expertise and information" gives them a special role in making international norms.[10]

International historians have also used the English School concept of international society to incorporate the underappreciated agency of IOs.[11] International society is an ideal type historical category that

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1960); D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years vol. ii: Waging Peace, 1956–1961* (2 vols, Garden City, 1965); H. Macmillan, *Riding the Storm, 1956–1959* (London, 1971); M. Ḥ. Haykal, *Nasser: The Cairo Documents* (London, 1972).

[7] For diplomatic histories, see: D. Kunz, 'The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis' (Ph.D thesis, Yale University, 1989); Kyle, *Suez;* Louis and Owen (eds), *Suez 1956*; W. S. Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the US and the Suez Crisis* (London, 1996).

[8] See for example: J. M. Boughton, 'Northwest of Suez: The 1956 Crisis and the IMF', IMF Working Papers 2000/192 (Washington, 2000); N. MacQueen, *Peacekeeping and the International System* (London, 2005), pp. 61-79; A. Staples, *The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Health Organisation changed the world, 1945-65* (Kent, 2006), pp. 56-63; E. Moeller, 'The Suez Crisis of 1956 as a Moment of Transnational Humanitarian Engagement', *European Review of History: Revue Européene D'histoire*, 23/1-2 (2016), pp. 136-53.

[9] K. W. Abbott and D. Snidal, 'Why States Act through Formal International Organizations', *The Journal of Conflict* Resolution, 42/1 (1998), p. 4.

[10] M. N. Barnett and M. Finnemore, 'The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations', *International Organization*, 53/4 (1999), p. 707-15.

[11] J. Suri, 'Non-governmental Organisations and Non-State Actors', in P. Finney (ed.), *Palgrave Advancements in International History* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 223-46.

"comprises actors and institutions of numerous types, both state and non-state" to understand how rules, norms, and institutions structure state relations.[12] It aids this study of IOs first, by giving us a way of relating state and non-state actors to rules and norms, and second, by helping to harmonize the multiple strands of historiography in play. Still, my conclusions on the agency of IOs in the crisis' resolution will be more a contribution to than a completion of an international society approach to the Suez Crisis, which will require in-depth investigation into multiple state and non-state archives.

To understand IO agency, I will focus on the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Though other IOs — notably the World Bank — played a role, these three organizations embodied the three central loci of multilateralism during the crisis: diplomatic cooperation (UN), international monetary stability (IMF), and humanitarian aid (ICRC). While my comparative methodology certainly adds complexities, this type of analysis will, I hope, allow me to make new and insightful conclusions about both the collective role of IOs and their place in the wider international society approach.

I will proceed as such: in the first chapter, I will investigate the aims of IOs. In the next chapter, I will outline their operations and assess the degree to which each organization achieved its stated aims. Across both chapters, I will compare their aims, operations, and outcomes. In my final chapter, I will discuss how my research changes our understanding of the course and resolution of the Suez Crisis.

I will explore an underutilized body of archival material from the ICRC, IMF, and UN to address the questions I have outlined. The ICRC reported its aims and operations in the *Revue Internationale de la Croix-Rouge* (hereafter *RICR*) whereas the IMF and UN employed press releases. Meeting minutes and resolutions from the UN Security Council and General Assembly also elucidate the organizations' activities. IMF press releases were infrequent and relatively uninformative, so I draw on the Executive Board Series, composed of internally circulated documents that

[12] H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 13; E. Manela, 'International Society as a Historical Subject', *Diplomatic History*, 44/2 (2020), p. 185.

appeared before Executive Board Meetings. Whereas the *RICR* and the UN documents I am using were immediately available to the public, much of the IMF material was strictly confidential. The *RICR* was mainly of interest to ICRC delegates, other humanitarian organizations, Red Cross societies, and the organization's sponsors; whereas UN Secretariat documents, meeting minutes, and resolutions were generally addressed to "the world", which, perhaps vaguely, we can take to mean the international community.[13] Though I rely on self-reporting by officials from each organization, which lends itself to the presentation of activities in a positive light, I approach the sources critically and with reference to other primary and secondary sources. In this way, it becomes possible to appreciate the agency of IOs in the history of the Suez Crisis.

'Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained': The Aims of International Organizations

Three central consequences of the Allied victory in 1945 characterized the 1950s international order. First, a superpower confrontation between the American-led West and the Soviet-led East permeated all areas of geopolitics. The rapid proliferation of nuclear weapons made the prospect of this incipient Cold War turning hot particularly frightening. Second, the power and legitimacy of European imperialism was quickly falling away. Especially after the Bandung Conference (1955), anti-colonial movements and post-colonial states increasingly challenged European political, economic, and ideological domination. Third, several international organizations, including the UN and IMF, were set up after 1945 to preserve the postwar peace. Despite the intensifying East-West Cold War confrontation and North-South contestation over decolonization, states continued to engage with multilateral institutions through the 1950s. Sequentially, I will locate the mandate of the ICRC, the IMF, and the UN in this international order before outlining their articulated aims at the Suez Crisis and concluding with a comparison of these aims.[14]

The ICRC

[13] For example, United Nations General Assembly (hereafter UNGA), '565th Plenary Meeting', 4 November 1956, UN, A/PV.565, p. 80.

[14] O. Westad, 'The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century' in M. Leffler and O. Westad (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Vol. 1 Origins, 1945-1962* (3 vols, Cambridge, 2010), pp. 1-19.

The ICRC was founded in 1863 "to protect and assist people affected by war."[15] Though technically a private Swiss association, the ICRC was mandated by the 1949 Geneva Conventions — international treaties governing armed conflict — to inspect the treatment of civilians, prisoners of war, and the wounded.[16] Its role as the centerpiece between various national Red Cross and Crescent Societies and in the 1949 Geneva Conventions was justified with specific reference to the organization's neutrality.[17] Indeed, in a series 'Les Principes de La Croix-Rouge', published between August 1955 and May 1956, the ICRC declared that "La Croix-Rouge agira sans faveur ni prevention à l'égard de quiconque" in its endeavor to realize "buts universels et, par certains aspects, supranationaux."[18] Thus, the organization's mandate implies that its humanitarian role at Suez would be to implement the Geneva Conventions as a "specifically neutral and independent institution."[19]

By the time the Suez Crisis arrived, moreover, the ICRC badly needed to prove its worth: since 1945, it had not only lost major portions of its funding, but also the confidence of governments on both sides of the Iron Curtain.[20] Its failure to expose the Holocaust and the wholesale abuse of Soviet prisoners during the Second World War as well as its supposed anti-communist biases during wars in Korea and Indochina had especially harmed its standing in the East, though relations had improved somewhat since 1945.[21]

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[15] F. Bugnion and F. Perret, *From Budapest to Saigon: History of the International Committee of the Red Cross, 1956–1965* (Geneva, 2009), p. 2.
[16] Ibid., p. 5.
[17] *Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field* (adopted 12/08/1949), 75 UNTS 31, Art 9.
[18] "The Red Cross shall act without favour or prejudice towards anyone." J. Pictet, 'Les Principes de la Croix-Rouge (III)', *RICR,* 37/442 (1955), p. 633; "Aims that are universal and in some respects supranational." J. Pictet, 'Les Principes de la Croix-Rouge (IX)', *RICR,* 38/448 (1956), p. 218.
[19] ICRC, *Handbook of the International Red Cross*, 10th ed. (Geneva, 1953), pp. 305-11.
[20] D. Forsythe, 'On Contested Concepts: Humanitarianism, Human Rights, and the Notion of Neutrality', *Journal of Human Rights,* 12/1 (2013), pp. 65-6.
[21] G. Steinacher, *Humanitarians at War: The Red Cross in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 237-44.

Moving from the general to the particular, ICRC delegates had identified specific risks for the humanitarian management of conflict in the Middle East; an ICRC delegate who toured the region between January and May 1956 noted "l'absence de preparation pour le temps de guerre."[22] Furthermore, in Autumn 1956, the ICRC would at the same time be stretched to address humanitarian issues arising from the Hungarian Revolution. As the first interstate war where the ICRC was tasked with implementing the untested 1949 Geneva Conventions, the Suez Conflict was expected to test the ICRC.

The ICRC articulated specific aims prior to its involvement in the Suez Crisis that corresponded closely to its general mandate. On 2 November, it released the following radio broadcast: the ICRC "a prié les Gouvernements des pays impliqués dans le conflit…à assurer l'application des quatre Conventions de Genève."[23] In addition, the ICRC announced that it was "prêt à assumer les tâches prévues pour lui par les Conventions de Genève", which have been outlined.[24] In addition, the ICRC committed to organizing the direct provision of aid.[25] Overall, an analysis of the ICRC's mandate in international law and its press releases ahead of the Suez Crisis suggests that it aimed to mitigate the effects of war on civilians, prisoners of war, and the wounded by means of the neutral allocation of aid and by coordinating the efforts of various national societies.

The IMF

The IMF was set up in 1946 technically as part of the UN Economic and Social Council, but in effect operated as a fully independent organization. During the 1940s, a consensus formed among economists that one key failure of the post-1919 world order had been the resort to manipulative currency practices in the 1930s, which had led to autarky, economic stagnation, and (indirectly) war.[26] The IMF was set up to prevent

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[22] "The absence of preparation for wartime." Comité International de la Croix-Rouge (hereafter CICR), 'De Retour du Moyen-Orient…', *RICR*, 38/449 (1956), p. 278.
[23] "Has requested the Governments of the countries involved in the conflict…to guarantee the application of the four 1949 Geneva Conventions." CICR, 'La Croix-Rouge et le Conflit de Suez', *RICR*, 38/455 (1956), p. 659.
[24] "Ready to assume the tasks laid out for it by the Geneva Conventions." Ibid.
[25] Ibid., p. 661.
[26] M. G. De Vries and J. K. Horsefield, *The International Monetary Fund, 1945-1965: Twenty Years of International Monetary Cooperation* (3 Vols, Washington, 1969), ii, p. 40.

a regression to capital controls by resolving balance of payments issues through technical advice and temporary credit support.[27] Thus, it is possible to conceive of the IMF's formally economic role as consciously related to the maintenance of the post-1945 peace; the June 1956 Annual Report's reference to the organization's "obligations to the international society" supports this view.[28] In practice, member states, who pooled resources in the Fund, could request withdrawals of 'tranches 'of their 'quota' when problems arose. This process protected the stability of the Bretton Woods international currency system, which governed monetary exchange outside of the Soviet bloc. Before 1956, however, the Fund had not made any major interventions in the international monetary system.

The most revealing feature of the IMF's aims at the Suez Crisis is that they were never publicly announced. The absence of press releases related to the crisis was not surprising given the organization's functions as articulated in the Articles of Agreement. The Articles mandated the IMF "to promote international monetary cooperation"[29] and "to facilitate the expansion and balanced growth of international trade."[30] Given the technical, jargon-laden focus on economics in the Articles, it is unsurprising that political neutrality was a tenet of the IMF.[31] Article 12 states that "the Managing Director and the staff of the Fund, in the discharge of their functions, shall owe their duty entirely to the Fund and to no other authority."[32] Thus, the IMF presented itself as a technocratic institution with technocratic goals.

There was, however, one private reference to the Fund's aims with regard to the Suez Crisis at an Executive Board meeting in September 1956. When Egypt's request to withdraw its gold tranche was accepted, the IMF acknowledged that the crisis might crop up in the press; thus, it was noted that "if the press raised any questions on [the dispute over the Canal], the management would reply that the transaction was of a routine nature

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[27] Ibid., pp. 3-18.
[28] 'Annual Report, 1956', 23 May 1956, IMF, SM/56/43, p. 134.
[29] *Articles of Agreement of the International Monetary Fund* (adopted 27/12/1945), 2 UNTS 39, Art. 1 (i).
[30] Ibid., Art 1(ii).
[31] I. Hurd, *International Organizations: Politics, Law, Practic*e, 4th ed. (Cambridge, 2021), p. 146.
[32] *Articles*, 2 UNTS 39, Art. 12, section 4, (c).

and consistent with Fund rules and practice."[33] It appears, then, that the IMF was committed to discharging its functions apolitically and intended to treat any incidental involvement in the crisis as routine. In sum, IMF documents suggest that the organization sought to perform its normal function as guarantor of international monetary stability and, by consequence, to remain as neutral as possible.

The UN

The United Nations was established in 1945 as the world's premier multilateral organ "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."[34] Though by 1956 its membership contained a large majority of the planet's population, Cold War divisions within the Security Council and disputes about decolonization in the General Assembly had circumscribed its grandiose collective security ambitions.[35] Especially after disputes between the West and East over the use of the UN mandate in the Korea, many feared that the organization would repeat the sorry demise of the League of Nations. Appointed in 1953, however, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld had worked to win the trust of the Warsaw Pact countries and the Global South in order to develop collective security in the absence of Security Council consensus.[36]

The UN Charter laid out shared principles that national representatives and UN officials were obliged by international law to serve. Article 1 defined the fundamental purpose of the UN: "to maintain international peace and security."[37] Enshrining the "principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members", the Charter commits signatories to only engage in self-defensive wars.[38] Though UN organs all worked under these shared principles, our assessment of the organization's aims must distinguish between the UN as diplomatic forum — the Security Council and the General Assembly — and the UN as international diplomat and civil servant — the Secretariat.[39]

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[33] 'Executive Board Meeting', 22 September 1956, IMF, EBM/56/48.
[34] *Charter of the United Nations* (adopted 24 October 1945), 1 UNTS 16, Preamble.
[35] MacQueen, *Peacekeeping*, p. 61.
[36] Ibid., p. 68.
[37] *Charter*, 1 UNTS 16, Art. 1.
[38] Ibid., Art. 2.
[39] T. G. Weiss, 'The United Nations: Before, During and After 1945', *International Affairs*, 91/6 (2015), p. 1230.

The two UN diplomatic forums never expressed unanimous 'aims' because of intense disagreement between member states, but did pass resolutions that indicate where consensus could be found. The one substantive resolution passed by the Security Council during the crisis, SCR/118, preceded the invasion of Egypt and formed part of Britain and France's deceitful "agenda within an agenda", which merely set the stage for invasion.[40] On 31 October, moreover, the Security Council deferred the crisis to the General Assembly, noting a "lack of unanimity of its permanent members."[41] Thus, the Security Council professed collective aims either disingenuously or not at all.

Invoking the 'Uniting for Peace 'Resolution for the first time, an Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly set three goals: a unilateral ceasefire, the withdrawal of invading troops, and the restoration of free navigation to the Canal.[42] On 2 November, GAR 997 "[urged] as a matter of priority that all parties now involved in hostilities in the area agree to an immediate ceasefire"; it passed with an overwhelming majority, but not unanimously.[43]

Even if the General Assembly was only a diplomatic organ, it could authorize the Secretariat to take action in the pursuit of its goals — the setting up of UNEF, for example.[44] Mandated by the General Assembly, Secretary-General Hammarksjöld's aims would then be aligned with those of the Assembly as well as the Charter. Although Article 97 of the Charter describes the Secretary-General as "the chief administrative officer of the Organization", Dag Hammarskjöld expressed an intention to use his position to broker peace.[45] For example, on 13 October 1956, a Secretariat press release indicated a desire to facilitate "a just and peaceful solution to the Suez problem."[46] In addition, Hammarskjöld personally emphasized

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[40] United Nations Security Council (hereafter UNSC), 'Resolution 118', 13 October 1956, UN, S/3675; Kyle, *Suez*, p. 148.
[41] UNSC, 'Resolution 119', 31 October 1956, UN, S/3721.
[42] UNGA, 'Uniting for Peace', 3 November 1950, UN, A/RES/377(V).
[43] UNGA, 'Resolution 997 (ES-I)', 2 November 1956, UN, A/RES/997(ES-I).
[44] For example, see UNGA, 'Resolution 998 (ES-I)', 4 November 1956, UN, A/RES/998(ES-I).
[45] *Charter*, 1 UNTS 16, Art. 97.
[46] 'Statement by Secretary-General after Security Council Action over Suez', 13 October 1956, UNA, Press Release SG/510.

his aspiration to "discretion and impartiality" in his role.[47] In sum, the Secretariat aimed to restore peace with a special focus on remaining neutral.

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To conclude, the ICRC, the IMF, and the UN Secretariat expressed different specific aims, but shared a commitment to neutrality and the service of their core values. Interestingly, the ICRC, IMF, and UN presented humanitarianism, monetary stability, and peace as neutral, universal goals. This presentation of neutrality and universality fits nicely into the wider discourse of twentieth century internationalism, which is defined as "values which were supposed to be valid to all people at all times…everywhere."[48] These commonalities, moreover, strengthen the case for considering IOs collectively in the wider question of the international society approach to the Suez Crisis. As the dispute over the Suez Canal entered its militarized phase, then, the ICRC, the IMF, and the UN Secretariat aimed to go about protecting those affected by war, ensuring monetary stability, and promoting peace as neutral parties.

'Acting Neutral': The Operations of International Organizations

Now for the action: in this chapter, I will examine primary and secondary accounts of what IOs did after the beginning of hostilities on 29 October and outline the outcomes that had emerged by the end of the crisis the following Spring. By referring these outcomes back to the aims I described in the last chapter, it becomes apparent that IOs for the most part achieved their articulated goals: atrocities were, by and large, avoided, monetary stability maintained, and the *status quo ante bello* restored. By looking at the actions of each organization sequentially and then comparatively, I will analyze the processes employed by IOs in the realization of their aims. With this in hand, it will become possible to assess the collective contribution of IOs to the resolution of the Suez Crisis, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

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[47] UNSC, '751th Meeting', 31 October 1956, UN, S/PV.751, pp. 1-2.
[48] S. Kott, 'Cold War Internationalism' in G. Sluga, and P. Clavin (eds), *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 340.

The ICRC

Today, our popular memory of the Suez Crisis (if such a thing exists) tends to forget the extreme threat to human security that it precipitated.[49] That threat was all too apparent to the ICRC, however. Accounts of the organization's intervention in this "short but intensive war" show that: it effectively supervised the implementation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, recording very few violations; it coordinated the allocation of its own aid supplies reserves alongside those of other national Red Cross and Crescent societies; and it maintained neutrality in the eyes of states during its activities.[50] These outcomes can be attributed to three core activities: diplomacy, information gathering, and coordination.

Upon the outbreak of hostiles on 29 October, the ICRC's first response was to push for the application of the Geneva Conventions. After the ceasefire came into effect on 6 November, however, the ICRC went about ensuring that civilians, the wounded, and prisoners of war received proper treatment and humanitarian aid; negotiating the repatriation of prisoners; and organizing the departure of Jews fleeing persecution in Egypt.[51]

The ICRC's supervision and diplomacy ensured the near universal adherence to the new Geneva Conventions. On 2 November, it issued a radio broadcast reminding all parties in the conflict the contents of the Conventions.[52] One day prior, it had used its diplomatic positions to receive guarantees from Anthony Eden that Britain would adhere to the Conventions, even though they had not yet been ratified.[53] Similarly, given the ambiguous position of UNEF in international law, the ICRC worked to receive a guarantee from Dag Hammarskjöld on 4 December 1956 that the UNEF would "observe the principles and spirit" of international humanitarian law if it had to use force.[54] Hammarskjöld's guarantee, which notably did not constitute a legal adherence to the Conventions, shows how

[49] For a generic if surprisingly accurate 'popular' account, see *The* Crown, dir. Philip Martin, (TV Series, 2017), Season 2, Episodes 1-3.
[50] Moeller, 'Humanitarian Engagement', p. 137.
[51] Bugnion and Perret, *Budapest to Saigon*, pp. 63-82.
[52] CICR, 'Conflit de Suez', pp. 659-60.
[53] Bugnion and Perret, *Budapest to Saigon*, p. 68.
[54] **'**Letter from the UN secretary-general to the ICRC president', 4 December 1956, ICRC Archives, B AG 201 139-001 quoted in Bugnion and Perret, *Budapest to Saigon*, p. 79.

the interests of different IOs sometimes conflicted. Despite this ambiguity, however, the ICRC used its diplomatic position to ensure that all parties in the Suez conflict would in principle adhere to the Geneva Conventions.

This diplomatic position allowed the ICRC to negotiate and supervise the reciprocal transfer of prisoners. By the time the ceasefire had come into effect, Israel held some 5600 Egyptian prisoners with France and Britain in possession a further 400.[55] Conversely, Egypt captured one Frenchman, who died unavoidably soon after detainment, and four Israelis.[56] The ICRC was essential for organizing the repatriation of 48 seriously injured Egyptians held in Israel on 18 November; flights between Egypt and Israel had been banned since 1949 and no diplomatic relations existed between the two countries.[57] Using its position as Israel's protecting power to negotiate with Egypt, it had organized the final repatriation of all prisoners by 5 February.[58] Especially in view of the difficulties faced repatriating prisoners after the 1947-9 Palestine War, the ICRC's formally neutral diplomatic position appears to have facilitated dialogue between Egypt and Israel that would otherwise have been impossible.[59]

Except with regard to the maltreatment of Israeli prisoners in Egypt, ICRC accounts suggest that the organization's formal neutrality and the special ability of its personnel to gather information allowed it to minimize violations of the Conventions. Newly established delegations in Alexandria, Port Said, and Tel Aviv secured permission to inspect prison facilities and the administration of occupied zones.[60] In the occupied Sinai, Dr. Louis-Alexis Gailland spoke to prisoners in Israeli, British, and French captivity, securing the release of those imprisoned unjustly.[61] Throughout the period of their captivity, "il [Gailland] peut se rendre compte de la

[55] CICR, 'Le rapatriement des prisonniers de guerre dans le Proche-Orient', *RICR*, 39/459 (1957), p. 162.
[56] Moeller, 'Humanitarian Engagement', p. 143.
[57] CICR, 'L'action du Comité International dans le Proche-Orient', *RICR*, 39/458 (1957), p. 92.
[58] CICR, 'Le rapatriement', p. 163.
[59] Moeller, 'Humanitarian Engagement', p. 144.
[60] CICR, 'L'action du Comité International dans le Proche-Orient', *RICR*, 38/456 (1956), p. 732.
[61] CICR, 'Conflit de Suez', p. 661.

situation d'environ cinq mille prisonniers."[62] On the other side of the ceasefire line, however, Egypt initially prevented the inspection of Israeli prisoners. Eventually, on 14 December a list of Israeli prisoners and 474 Britons interned in Egypt was provided, which the ICRC relayed to the Central Agency for Prisoners of War.[63] Despite ICRC inspections, it was reported on 27 January that Israelis had been beaten and even tortured in captivity.[64] After further investigation, the ICRC received the almost certainly disingenuous reply from Egypt that the Israelis had fought amongst themselves.[65]

Thus, the ICRC ultimately depended on the cooperation of states. The maltreatment of Israeli prisoners suggests that we cannot entirely accept the assertion in the March 1957 *Revue Internationale* that "pendant leur captivité tous les prisonniers ont été assistés, en Israël et en Égypte."[66] Still, there is nothing to suggest that this was not mostly the case. In sum, even if it could not prevent any violations of the Geneva Conventions from occurring, it is possible for the most part to accept the ICRC's assertion that the Suez Crisis "demeure très caractéristique de l'accomplissement des tâches du [CICR] dans le cadre des Conventions de Genève."[67]

The attitude of the belligerents to the ICRC suggests that its formal neutrality made it more trustworthy than various national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, which helped it to both gather information on humanitarian conditions and allocate humanitarian aid. From the start of the conflict, "un fonds spécial de secours aux victimes des événements est immédiatement ouvert;" the ICRC was better placed than national Red Cross societies to allocate this aid.[68] For example, on 10 November, the Egyptian Red Crescent tried to gain access to the heavily damaged Port

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[62] "He is aware of the situation of around 5000 prisoners." CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 38/456, p. 732.
[63] CICR, 'L'activité du Comité International dans le Proche-Orient', *RICR*, 39/457 (1957), p. 25.
[64] Moeller, 'Humanitarian Engagement', p. 145.
[65] Bugnion and Perret, *Budapest to Saigon*, p. 73.
[66] "During their captivity all prisoners in Israel and Egypt were supported." CICR, 'L'activité du Comité International dans le Proche-Orient', *RICR*, 39/459 (1957), p. 158.
[67] "Remains characteristic of the fulfilment of the tasks of the [ICRC] within the framework of the Geneva Conventions." CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 39/458, p. 90.
[68] "Special aid funds [were] immediately opened up to the victims of the events." CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 38/456, p. 732.

Said; only one ambulance of supplies was permitted entry, and only for one day.[69] Access was again denied them on 26 November.[70] In contrast, ICRC delegate Maurice Thudichum was able to enter Port Said on 12 November and negotiate the passage of a large freight train of cargo across the ceasefire lines on 16 November.[71]

It is clear that Britain's understanding that the ICRC was neutral was a condition for this; on 10 November, the British army had told Egyptian Red Crescent personnel that groups entering Port Said "should consist of neutral and not (repeat not) Egyptian personnel."[72] Consequently, by the time the Egyptian Red Crescent was given full access to Port Said on 12 December, the ICRC had long been running regular convoys of aid.[73] Egypt also perceived the ICRC to be neutral; despite great suspicion of European encroachment in Egypt, the organization's European delegates were given free reign to inspect Port Said after the British-French withdrawal.[74] Thus, because '"neutrality 'was…achieved more easily by the ICRC than by the various national societies", the ICRC provided aid where other actors could not.[75]

The ICRC's position as an international aid agency allowed it to coordinate national Red Cross societies and to convert the international community's solidarity with Egypt into concrete aid commitments. By February 1957, forty-seven national Red Cross societies had answered the ICRC's call three months earlier for aid to be sent to Egypt.[76] For example, Denmark and Italy donated planes for the ICRC to transport the wounded out of Israel. ICRC inspectors in occupied areas were able to distribute vaccines and other supplies, including juice, games, and cigarettes.[77]

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[69] CICR, 'Égypte', *RICR*, 39/461 (1957), p. 283.
[70] Moeller, 'Humanitarian Engagement', p. 141.
[71] CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 39/458, p. 91.
[72]' That a request was made by two Red Crescent vehicles, containing Egyptians, to proceed to Port Said and inquires if General Burns could be approached on the Subject', 10 November 1956, TNA, JE 1094/90, fo. 371/1118906 quoted in Moeller, 'Humanitarian Engagement', p. 141.
[73] CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 38/456, p. 734.
[74] CICR, 'La Croix-Rouge au secours des sinistrés de Port-Said ', *RICR*, 39/459 (1957), p. 165.
[75] Moeller, 'Humanitarian Engagement', p. 142.
[76] CICR, 'Conflit de Suez', p. 661; CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 39/458, p. 89.
[77] CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 38/456, p. 733; CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 39/458, p. 94.

According to reports from ICRC delegates, the organization worked "en liaison étroite" with other aid agencies such as the UN Relief and Works Agency.[78] This ability to transcend ceasefire lines and coordinate permitted ICRC delegate De Traz to transmit some 71,113 letters through the conflict zone.[79] By the *RICR*'s own account, the ICRC's coordination was efficient; faced with the task of allocating aid to Egyptian prisoners "Tout le réseau Croix-Rouge est alerté, et les démarches se succèdent."[80] A letter sent from the Egyptian Red Crescent to the ICRC in mid-November suggests that it was also effective: "Nous désirons vous exprimer notre profonde gratitude pour l'aide généreuse que vous nous avez apportée en ces jours troublés."[81]

Thus, the ICRC for the most part achieved the goals it set for itself during the Suez Crisis. With the notable exception of the treatment of Egyptian prisoners, its sources indicate that it was able to inspect the treatment of prisoners and civilians, ensuring the adherence of the combatants to the Geneva Conventions in the process. Through information gathering and diplomacy, it was also able to delegate aid in ways that were not available to other organizations. Through this examination of the ICRC's functions, moreover, an interesting observation emerges: its neutrality in the eyes of states gave it special access. The construction of neutrality, it appears, was essential to the ICRC's achievement of its goals.

The IMF

To understand the IMF's role in the resolution of the Suez Crisis, I will assess how far the IMF maintained international monetary stability as well its neutrality. I will pursue my investigation by evaluating the extent to which the Fund approved loans according to its own rules during the crisis. With this in mind, I will assert that the Fund prevented a calamitous rupture in the international monetary system and maintained a significant though not unqualified degree of neutrality by allocating aid according to

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[78]" In close contact." CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 39/458, p. 94; CICR, 'L'activité du Comité', *RICR*, 39/457, p. 27.
[79] CICR, 'Égypte', p. 289.
[80] "The whole Red Cross network is alerted and the messages are passed along." CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 38/456, p. 733.
[81] "We want to express to you our deep gratitude for the generous assistance that you have provided us with in these troubled days." CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 38/456, p. 731.

the rules of the international monetary regime and producing technical economic information. Viewing the conflict as just another economic factor on its balance sheet, the organization avoided involving itself in politics. Even if the United States did use its disproportionate voting power in the IMF as leverage over Britain, I will seek to understand the operations of the IMF on its own terms. Overall, I find that when confronted with questions relating to the crisis, the Fund worked almost entirely according to 'business as usual'.

During the diplomatic phase of the Suez Crisis, the archives do not suggest that IMF officials were much preoccupied with the dispute, even when dealing with requests from its main protagonists. On 21 September, the Egyptian government made a request to draw its gold tranche. Noting that "in recent months the payments position has been complicated by international developments," the loan was rapidly approved on 22 September as a normal response to a short-term trade imbalance.[82] In any case, it was rare for a gold tranche withdrawal to be denied. Business as usual with Egypt.

It took longer for IMF staff to approve a French stand-by arrangement for its gold and first credit tranche, which it requested on 11 October. Delays arose because of concerns over the Franc's par value and the size of the withdrawal, but not over France's involvement in the Suez Crisis.[83] Staff were of the opinion that France's massive current account losses were a result of "temporary factors", including the import demands of the booming postwar economy, a bad harvest in 1956, and the intensifying war in French Algeria.[84] Indeed, Suez was not mentioned in any of the multiple staff reports which were considered at the 17 October Executive General Meeting where the stand-by agreement was approved.[85] The 18 October press release announcing the arrangement did not mention any political concerns.[86] Staff analysis recommended its approval on the basis that the balance of payments issue would be temporary. France was

[82] 'Use of the Fund's Resources - Egypt', 21 September 1956, IMF, EBS/56/28, p. 3.
[83] Boughton, 'Northwest of Suez', p. 10.
[84] '1956 Consultations - France', 17 October 1956, IMF, SM/56/61 (Supplement 2), p. 2.
[85] 'Executive Board Meeting', 17 October 1956, IMF, EBM/56/51.
[86] 18 October 1956, IMF, PR/243.

able to withdraw funds allocated by the stand-by arrangement as normal between February and June 1957. Business as usual with France.

When war broke out in the Middle East the IMF moved more cautiously, albeit still according to its normal rules. Tranche withdrawals were designed to ease short-term pressures on balance of payments, rather than to support "large and sustained" outflows of capital — such as a protracted war.[87] The continued presence of Israeli troops in Egypt complicated its request for a first credit tranche withdrawal on 25 January 1957; staff analysis noted that "the full impact of [the Suez] crisis on the Egyptian economy cannot yet be assessed."[88] Still, on 4 February the withdrawal was approved on the basis that difficulties had arisen from the loss of dues from the closed Canal and sanctions imposed by Britain and the US the previous summer.[89] Business more complicated, but again business as usual with Egypt.

As a result of the Suez Crisis, discussions between Israel and the Fund on increasing its quota and setting a par value for the Israeli pound were stalled; the matter was removed from the 31 October Executive Board Meeting agenda because of the invasion of Egypt.[90] However, despite the continued presence of Israeli troops in Egypt, consultations continued from December to February, culminating in a long report in February 1957 on the economic situation in Israel; the report steered clear from sensitive policy matters, referencing the "international situation" only once.[91] Israel's quota was increased on 27 February to $7.5 million and on 6 March the Fund recommended that Israel's par value be set at 1.80 Israeli Pounds to the dollar all while boots were still on the ground in Egypt.[92] Despite Israel's recent transgressions in Egypt, its request on 15 May 1957 for a gold and credit tranche was also dealt with largely apolitically. The staff consultation document presented to the Executive Board, explained Israel's large trade deficit with reference to increased immigration from Poland and Hungary; the words immigration and immigrant are together

[87] Boughton, 'Northwest of Suez', p. 5.
[88] 'Use of the Fund's Resources - Egypt', 30 January 1957, IMF, EBS/57/7 (Supplement 1), p. 4.
[89] 'Minutes of Executive Board Meeting', 4 February 1957, IMF, EBM/57/5, pp. 2-3.
[90] 'Israel - Revision of Quota', 19 October 1956, IMF, EBS/56/31, p. 1; 'Par Value for Israel', 26 October 1956, IMF, EBD/56/124.
[91] '1956 Consultations - Israel', 5 February 1957, IMF, SM/57/12, p. 16.
[92] 'Minutes of Executive Board Meeting', 27 February 1957, IMF, EBM/57/10, p. 15.

mentioned 11 times, whereas Suez is only (indirectly) referenced once.[93] Thus, the loan was approved, again for economic reasons. Business more complicated and temporarily delayed, but almost as usual with Israel.

No precedent existed in the Fund's history for resolving the problem brought by Britain in December 1956. The crisis of confidence in Britain precipitated by the Suez dispute created a massive speculative pressure on the sterling that almost forced the British government to devalue and/or impose capital controls. It was thought that Britain's reserves needed to remain above $2000 million to maintain a stable parity of $2.80 to the pound, so their collapse from $2405 million in late July 1956 to $1965 million at the start of December alarmed the British government.[94] Bank of England director C.F. Cobbold had already been warned in October by Commonwealth central bankers that "a further devaluation of sterling would mean the end of the sterling area."[95] Not only was the sterling area considered to be a binding force in the Empire and the Commonwealth, it also ensured to a large degree the stability of the Bretton Woods exchange system, financing over 50% of global transactions.[96] Thus, the importance of "the continued existence of the sterling area to the British government in 1956 cannot be over-emphasized."[97]

Naturally, Britain began seriously considering an IMF withdrawal request in November alongside relief funds from EXIM and the delay of lend-lease repayments due to the US and Canada. When Chancellor of the Exchequer Macmillan informed Cabinet on 6 November that the US would not allocate this aid so long as Britain maintained operations in Egypt, a sense of crisis grew.[98] Indeed, the IMF's weighted voting system gave the United States disproportionate influence over the allocation of funds. As a consequence, Diane Kunz argues that in this position Britain had "complete and utter dependence" on US support for its continued presence

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[93]' Use of the Fund's Resources - Israel', 13 May 1957, IMF, EBS/57/26 (Supplement 1).
[94] Kunz, 'Economic Diplomacy', p. 272.
[95] 'Cobbold to Macmillan', October 17 1956, TNA, T 236/4188 quoted in Kunz, 'Economic Diplomacy', p. 197.
[96] Kunz, 'Economic Diplomacy', p. 353.
[97] Ibid., p. 152.
[98] Ibid., p. 230.

in Suez because to continue Britain needed money that only America could release from the IMF.[99]

Diplomatic histories have conclusively demonstrated that the US used its leverage in the IMF, alongside other bargaining chips, to force a British withdrawal from Port Said by threatening to block a tranche release.[100] It does not follow, however, that the IMF failed to approach the British loan request neutrally when it arrived or, indeed, that the Fund ever contravened its rules. In fact, if we look at the way that the IMF handled Britain's request — rather than the way that the US threatened to handle the IMF — it becomes clear that its decision making conformed to the normal technical approach. On 7 December, British Director Lord Harcourt made a request for the release of Britain's gold and first credit tranches ($561.47 million) with its remaining quota available on standby ($738.53 million) for reasons, in his own words, entirely "consistent with the provisions of the Fund Agreement."[101]

It would be the technical recommendations of IMF staff and not American geopolitical interests, it appears, that decided the approval of this massive tranche release. The Executive Board was presented with a background material document that noted the "improvement in the situation, both internally and externally" of Britain's 1955 trade deficit into a surplus in 1956.[102] Staff analysis concluded that "reserves were influenced not only by the United Kingdom's trading position but also by its role as banker and by the international use of sterling."[103] During the Executive Board Meeting itself, executive director F.A. Southard remarked that "if the Fund did not act to bolster such a key currency as sterling…all members would regret it and…the consequences would be serious"[104] because of its status as reserve currency. The Fund granted Britain support because it recognized that the sterling's problems resulted from a speculative attack rather than from fundamental problems with the British

[99] Ibid., p. 246.
[100] Kyle, *Suez*, p. 464; Boughton, 'Northwest of Suez', p. 19.
[101] 'Use of the Fund's Resources - United Kingdom', 7 December 1956, IMF, EBS/56/44, p. 1.
[102] United Kingdom - Background Material', 7 December 1956, IMF, SM/56/83, p. 7.
[103] '1956 Consultations - United Kingdom', 11 February 1957, IMF, SM/57/14, p. 19.
[104] 'Executive Board Meeting', 10 December 1956, IMF, EBM/56/59, p. 3.

economy. It applauded Britain, furthermore, for avoiding the introduction of trade controls.[105]

Case by case, IMF internal documents suggest that the organization operated according to its own rules during the Suez Crisis. Even if Executive Board documents were available to top officials in member countries' central banks, which incentivizes the presentation of impartiality, I find that the willingness of the IMF to deal with Israel while it sustained troops in Egypt suggests that it was not so extensively influenced by the US, who at the same time vehemently sought an Israeli withdrawal in the UN. Still, Kunz presents the IMF as a just another instrument of the American economic leverage.[106] Indeed, she goes as far as to describe Britain as an American "client state" because of its reliance on IMF aid.[107] However, Kunz's view likely stems from her reliance on British-American diplomatic correspondence; in 'The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis', which is nearly 400 pages long, she references IMF sources just once.[108] Relating IMF documents to secondary material, in contrast, demonstrates that it is inappropriate to see the Fund merely as another weapon in America's economic arsenal. Thus, we must circumscribe Kunz's argument. Instead, "the IMF was able to act upon [loan requests] without becoming embroiled in the crisis."[109]

Turning to outcomes, it appears that the technical information and neutral decision making effected by the Fund mitigated the short to mid-term monetary problems associated with the Suez Crisis. The 1957 annual report "found it encouraging that difficult internal adjustments had been made with considerable success, and that it had proved possible, with the assistance of the Fund, to avoid a reintroduction of the restrictive practices [in Europe]."[110] Indeed, after the announcement of the IMF package, staff analysis found that "speculative pressures [on the sterling] virtually ceased."[111] Despite the role of direct US aid in reviving the sterling, Boughton argues that "a much larger multilateral package would have to be assembled to end the crisis, and the IMF was the institution that was

[105] Ibid.
[106] Kunz, 'Economic Diplomacy', p. 1.
[107] Ibid., p. 5.
[108] See footnote in ibid., p. 279.
[109] Boughton, 'Northwest of Suez', p. 5.
[110] De Vries and Horsefield, *The International Monetary Fund*, i, p. 441.
[111] '1957 Consultations - United Kingdom', 10 December 1957, IMF, SM/57/101, p. 4.

best placed to do so."[112] The pound retained its exchange rate with the dollar until 1967. In February, an Executive Director noted that "the current balance of payments was better than one would have thought possible some months ago."[113]

Thus, the IMF maintained the stability of the international monetary system during the Suez Crisis. Even if its decisions affected the diplomacy of the crisis, it has been shown that they were by and large formulated according to a neutral application of the Articles of Agreement. Like the ICRC, then, the IMF could perform its functions in no small part because its neutrality was credible. Its unprecedented achievement in keeping countries financially buoyant and open for trade in this time of crisis is captured in the Business Week headline of 30 March 1957: "IMF wins over the skeptics."[114] It had put its technical powers to effective use in a testing time for the international monetary system.

The UN

Though the UN had been involved in the first, diplomatic phase of the Suez Crisis, its operations began in earnest after Israeli tanks rolled into the Sinai Peninsula.[115] With the military conflict in motion, the organization's aim became the restoration of peace with a full withdrawal by all the belligerents. In fact, a ceasefire was declared within a fortnight of the Israeli invasion and the full withdrawal of foreign troops from Egypt completed inside six months; however, it is necessary to draw direct causal links between the UN's intervention in the conflict and the outbreak of peace. The UN effected four key processes: it set international norms and directly encouraged states to follow them; it solved technical problems; it shaped interstate diplomacy by creating a neutral forum for debate; and it created the world's first peacekeeping force, which acted as a physical extension of its diplomacy.

The UN acted as the primary shaper of norms during the Suez Crisis, a position that proceeded from the "strength of its [near] universal

[112] Boughton, 'Northwest of Suez', p. 26.
[113] IMF, EBM/57/10, p. 11.
[114] 'IMF Wins Over the Skeptics', 30 March 1957, IMF, PREP/57/3.
[115] E. Johnson, 'The Suez Crisis at the United Nations' in Smith, S. C. (ed.), *Reassessing Suez 1956: New Perspectives on the Crisis and Its Aftermath* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 170.

membership" and its status as the premier diplomatic organ in world politics.[116] Crucially, the UN Charter commanded what Weiss calls "international legitimacy."[117] Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions were the main vehicle by which the UN made normative pronouncements over the crisis. From the outset of the crisis, belligerents attempted to frame their actions in terms of the normative mandate of these resolutions. Indeed, even though Britain and France ended up completely transgressing the principles of SCR/118 both countries presented their invasion as a 'police action' to protect international shipping — i.e. in terms broadly consistent with the Charter.[118]

Unfortunately for Anthony Eden and Guy Mollet, however, deliberation at the UN affirmed the opposition of most states to the invasion. The First Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly passed Resolution 997 on 2 November, which called for a ceasefire, withdrawal, and clearance of the Canal. These demands were repeated in motions passed on 4, 7, and 24 November.[119] After the British-French withdrawal, Israel was pressed further through motions on 19 January and 2 February.[120]

Though some countries (notably Australia), voiced their support for the British-French 'police action', the General Assembly, overall, conclusively condemned the tripartite aggression with large majorities in the General Assembly.[121] On 3 November, the Egyptian representative rebuked Britain and France's "false pretext of separating the Egyptian and Israel armies until a solution has been found to the Suez Canal question."[122] In an address on 7 November, the delegate for Ceylon noted that, "the Assembly, by its resolution [GAR 997], rejected in unmistakable terms the explanation that their [Britain and France's] action was a 'police action'; it was an invasion, a military operation conducted against Egypt. In those

[116] Weiss, 'United Nations', p. 1226.
[117] Ibid., p. 1227.
[118] UN, S/3675; UNGA, '567th Plenary Meeting', 7 November 1956, UN, A/PV.567.
[119] UN, A/RES/997(ES-I); UN, A/RES/998(ES-I); UNGA, 'Resolution 1002 (ES-I)', 5 November 1956, UN, A/RES/1002(ES-I); UNGA, 'Resolution 1120(XI)', 24 November 1956, UN, A/RES/1120(XI).
[120] UNGA, 'Resolution 1123 (XI)', 19 January 1957, UN, A/RES/1123(XI); UNGA, 'Resolution 1124 (XI)', 2 February 1957, UN, A/RES/1124(XI).
[121] P. Lyon, 'The Commonwealth and the Suez Crisis' in Louis and Owen (eds), *Suez 1956*, pp. 257-274; UN, A/PV.567, pp. 126-7.
[122] UNGA, '563rd Plenary Meeting', 3 November 1956, UN, A/PV.563, p. 46.

circumstances, they have no legal or moral right to remain there."[123] Thus, the role of the African-Asian bloc in admonishing the imperial powers is especially important.[124] Britain and France had attempted to prevent this by framing their invasion as a 'police action', which demonstrates a key diplomatic dimension of the Suez Crisis: UN norms mattered.

The diplomatic operations of the Secretariat were also crucial in the UN's pursuit of peace, facilitating consensus-building deliberation on the General Assembly Floor as well as behind the scenes. On 29 October, Secretary-General Hammarskjöld convened private meetings with American, British, French, and Soviet diplomats to discuss the situation.[125] Working with Canadian Foreign Minister and committed UN advocate Lester Pearson, he led backroom discussions from 2 November that helped to distil the principles of UNEF, which would replace British-French 'police action'.[126] Pearson and Hammarskjöld's plan for UNEF was approved on 7 November with 64 votes in favor, 12 abstentions, and none against.[127] While it was important that the superpowers accepted the idea, the independent diplomatic action of the Secretariat was essential. Between 16 and 18 November, Hammarskjöld opened talks in Cairo to secure Nasser's approval, spending seven hours alone on 17 November to sway his doubts about the inclusion of Canadian forces — whose head of state was the Queen of England — in the operation.[128] Nasser's acceptance of foreign UNEF troops on Egyptian land depended on his trust in Hammarskjöld. Later in the crisis, Hammarskjöld brokered talks over the opening of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, which had been blocked since 1950.[129] When Egypt agreed to their opening, the last Israeli troops left Egypt.

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[123] UN, A/PV.567, p. 124.
[124] Ibid., p. 106; UN, A/PV.563, p. 59.
[125] Kyle, *Suez*, pp. 277-88.
[126] M. Tudor, 'Blue Helmet Bureaucrats: UN Peacekeeping Missions and the Formation of the Post-Colonial International Order, 1956-1971 '(Ph.D thesis, Manchester University, 2020), p. 47.
[127] UN, A/PV.567.
[128] M. Fröhlich, 'The "Suez Story"' in C. Stahn and H. Melber (eds), *Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency: Rethinking Human Security and Ethics in the Spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 334.
[129] P. Wallensteen, 'Dag Hammarskjöld's Diplomacy', in Stahn and Melber (eds), *Peace Diplomacy*, p. 377.

To understand the agency of the Secretariat, we also have to appreciate its use of what I call 'hard diplomacy' — diplomatic process that bolsters verbal negotiations with action on the ground. The Secretariat's status as a neutral, international body allowed it to provide the technical aid needed to clear the several ships scuttled in the Suez Canal at the start of the invasion. Whereas Britain and France argued that their own engineers would be needed, Hammarksjöld organized an alternative pool of technical expertise, which was accepted because it was not deemed to undermine Egypt's sovereignty.[130] As a result, France and Britain lost an important justification for their continued presence in Egypt. The United Nations began work in mid-December and the Canal was in full working order by 10 April 1957. The UN's provision of neutral, technical aid, then, both resolved a material problem created by the Suez Canal — the blocking of a major seaway — and increased diplomatic pressure on Britain and France to withdraw.

A more impressive example of the UN's 'hard diplomacy', however, is the formation of UNEF. By establishing a peacekeeping force that was neutral and "fully independent of the policies of any one nation", the security of the Suez Canal could be assured without undermining Egyptian sovereignty.[131] With the first UNEF troops entering Egypt on 15 November to supervise the Egyptian-Israeli truce, the basis for British-French occupation began to evaporate. Indeed, the forceful appeals of GAR 1121 for the three invading countries to withdraw emphasized the presence of UNEF.[132] Furthermore, General Burns, the Commander of UNEF, coordinated with Israeli commanders to increase the speed of their withdrawal from the Sinai, which, excluding a band of forces on the Gulf of Aqaba, was complete on 15 January. By February, UNEF troops numbered around 6000, forming a mediating band on the Egyptian side of the ceasefire line.[133] Though only mandated to act in self-defense, these forces were a physical embodiment of the UN's mandate for peace as Dag Hammarskjöld emphasized in a radio address to his soldiers: "You are the frontline of a moral force which extends around the world…Your success can have profound effect for good, not only in the present emergency, but

[130] Fröhlich, 'The "Suez Story"', p. 330.
[131] UNGA, 'Second and final report of the Secretary-General on the plan for an emergency international United Nations force', 6 November 1956, UN, A/3302, p. 2.
[132] UNGA, 'Resolution 1121 (XI)', 24 November 1956, UN, A/RES/1121(XI).
[133] MacQueen, *Peacekeeping*, p. 73.

on future prospects for building a world order of which we may all one day be truly proud."[134]

In sum, the UN was an active participant in the restoration of peace in the Middle East. First, the UN set norms that carried real weight due to the organization's near universal membership and commitment to high ideals. Second, the UN's body of international civil servants in the Secretariat facilitated diplomatic engagement between states, especially through the personal work of Dag Hammarskjöld.[135] Third, this diplomatic engagement was bolstered by 'hard diplomacy', including technical aid and UNEF.

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Overall, international organizations were active participants in making their articulated goals happen. Interestingly, despite their varying aims and institutional designs, there were remarkable similarities between the operations that each international organization used in the pursuit of its goals. The IMF, ICRC, and to some extent the UN were very active gatherers of technical information. Furthermore, the ICRC and UN facilitated diplomacy between different entities, acting both as diplomatic agents and forums of dialogue.

This overlap in function can explain apparent clashes between organizations; in an address on World Red Cross Day, Dag Hammarskjöld noted that "when…the United Nations arranged and carried out the transfer of prisoners of war, the International Committee of the Red Cross lent valued assistance."[136] The ICRC claimed credit for supervising the same operation — such contradictory reporting was rare, but it demonstrates the extent to which overlapping interests could lead to conflict.[137] While the IMF 1956 Annual Report noted that the UN and IMF "have worked

[134] 'UN Pamphlet on UNEF', 1 March 1957, UNA, S-0313-0002-12, p. 17 quoted in Tudor, 'Blue Helmet', p. 64.
[135] Fröhlich, 'The "Suez Story"', p. 308.
[136] 'Message from United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld on World Red Cross Day', Security Council Action over Suez', 3 May 1957, UNA, Press Release SG/591.
[137] CICR, 'L'action du Comité', *RICR*, 39/458, p. 93.

together in close association, whenever their interests required it", there is no evidence they *actively* cooperated during the Suez Crisis.[138]

Still, IOs employed common processes in a way that allows us to consider their role in the resolution of the Suez Crisis collectively, strengthening the argument for an international society approach. Most importantly each of these international organizations sought to embody neutrality in the eyes of states both as an end in itself and as a means to achieving their goals, presenting their actions through a discourse of internationalism.[139] Thus, the humanitarian, monetary, and diplomatic rules and norms promulgated by the ICRC, the IMF, and the UN respectively held weight because they were deemed to be neutral.

A Crisis for the World?

It is clear that international organizations were deeply involved in making the history of the Suez Crisis. Yet in some ways this conclusion begs more questions than it answers. In this chapter, I will argue that the similarity of the processes effected by IOs and the analogous way that they constructed neutrality in the eyes of states necessitate certain adjustments to the historiography. Most importantly, international organizations must be central to how we understand the course and resolution of the militarized phase of the crisis. Though IOs were not always the principal shapers of events, their status as neutral actors with internationalist aims allowed them to exert an important agency that has hitherto been overlooked. Furthermore, the similarity of the processes that they employed supports the application of the international society approach to the Suez Crisis. I will close with some tentative research recommendations for future scholarship into the crisis

International organizations were at the center of Suez Crisis from the first shots fired in the Sinai Desert on 29 October 1956 to the reopening of the Canal on 10 April 1957. Though they achieved their articulated goals, the role of states in this process remains to be fully examined. Indeed, most histories of the Suez Crisis have understood international organizations merely as instruments of states; however, this ignores the

[138] IMF, SM/56/43, p. 141.
[139] E. Muschik, 'Managing the World: The United Nations, Decolonization, and the Strange Triumph of State Sovereignty in the 1950s and 1960s', *Journal of Global* History, 13/1 (2018), p. 122.

way that IOs shaped norms, which directed state power.[140] The UN is of primary importance here. For example, the United States exerted diplomatic and economic pressure on Britain, France, and Israel to withdraw in a large part because the UN had laid bare the way that the invaders' actions violated international norms, which jeopardized the West's position in the Cold War.[141] On 8 November, acting Secretary of State Herbert Hoover Jr. raged that "if the British and French had stayed out of Egypt and the Soviets had nonetheless moved against Hungary, they would have been ruined in the eyes of the world."[142] Indeed, both Macmillan and Eden's memoirs make reference to the extreme pressure exerted on Britain at the UN.[143] Reflecting on the crisis, Sir Charles Keightley, Commander in Chief of the British forces, concluded "the one overriding lesson of the Suez operation is that world opinion is now an absolute principle of war and must be treated as such."[144]

In sum, "the UN…established norms of government but did not rule."[145] For just this reason, British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd had attempted to cast Britain's invasion in terms of "an international policing role", reflecting on 8 November that Britain "have heartily welcomed the idea of sending a United Nations force to the area to take over the responsibilities which we have felt bound to shoulder."[146] A similar narrative of the crisis is repeated in Eden's memoirs.[147] By consequence, the establishment of UNEF necessitated a French-British withdrawal. Thus, norms coming from the UN exerted agency on state action.

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[140] See for example: Kyle, *Suez*; Lucas, *Divided We Stand*; N. J. Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955-59* (Basingstoke, 1996); S. C. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East: Britain, the United States and Post-war Decolonization, 1945-1973* (London, 2012).

[141] P. G. Boyle, 'The Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Crisis', *History*, 90/300 (2005), p. 564.

[142] Memorandum of Discussion at the 303rd Meeting of the National Security Council, 8 Nov. 1956, FRUS, 1955–1957, xxv., pp. 419-420 quoted in Boyle, 'Hungarian Revolution', p. 562.

[143] Eden, *Full Circle*, pp. 488-58; Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, pp. 89-180.

[144] Sir Charles Keightley, 11 December 1957 quoted in Kyle, *Suez*, p. 392.

[145] Muschik, 'Managing the World', p. 125.

[146] Tudor, 'Blue Helmet', p. 61; UN, A/PV.567, p. 112

[147] Eden, *Full Circle*, pp. 522-27.

It has been noted that international organizations pursued courses of action unavailable to states. Paradoxically, the unique ability of the ICRC to supervise the implementation of humanitarian law and the IMF to maintain monetary stability has led their influence in the crisis to be overlooked. Given the preoccupation of diplomatic historians with state action, it is unsurprising that the historiography has ignored *the several problems that states did not face because of IO activity*. For example, although the US aid helped to ease pressures on the sterling, it could not have resolved Britain's balance of payments problem alone.[148] Furthermore, the ICRC's unique position in the supply of aid to civilians, prisoners of war, and the wounded prevented human disasters and public relations difficulties for the invading powers, which were explicit concerns of British commanders in Port Said.[149] The impact of these two organizations does not appear in the state archives precisely because they were successful.

Reflecting on this point, one might model the agency of IOs, then, along a continuum between 'stage-setting' — the ICRC's preemption and mitigation of humanitarian problems — and 'actioning' — the deployment of UNEF. Each IO shaped the crisis in both of these ways, with the UN engaging in the most actioning, the ICRC in stage-setting, and the IMF somewhere in between.

Across both of these processes, though, the construction of neutrality by IOs was a means to achieving their goals and an end in itself. Indeed, as research of their aims has shown, the neutral promotion of universal values was central to the internationalist mandates of the UN, the IMF, and the ICRC. Still, the realization of these goals during the Suez Crisis depended to some extent on the support of the two superpowers, the USA and the USSR. For example, they both supported the intervention of a UN peacekeeping force because each wanted to bring about a British-French withdrawal without facilitating the intervention of the other superpower.[150] Still, though it was important that American and Soviet diplomats accepted the idea, the UN occupied a unique position as an *international* organization designed to serve *internationalist* goals in the

[148] Boughton, 'Northwest of Suez', p. 26.
[149] Moeller, 'Transnational Humanitarian Engagement', p. 144.
[150] J. C. Campbell, 'The Soviet Union, the United States, and the Twin Crises of Hungary and Suez' in Louis and Owen (eds), *Suez 1956*, p. 247.

formation of an *international* peacekeeping force. Though the IMF acted according to its own rules in approving the massive rescue package for Britain, its approval was by then in the USA's interests as Britain had already committed to withdraw from Port Said. In addition, circumstances at Suez did not present the ICRC with difficult questions on how to remain neutral that were faced in other conflicts.[151] Thus, if by their own accounts IOs operated as neutral actors, this depended to some extent on favorable background conditions.

Overall, I contend that this study has bolstered the importance of international society as an object of analysis in international history. I have not pursued such an analysis outright, but rather have drawn inspiration from it and examined one facet of building a more holistic, international understanding of the Suez Crisis. By examining the aims and operations of IOs, I have shown that they pursued similar aims and generated influence in comparable ways. Indeed, they often interrelated in their functions. For example, the UN and ICRC jointly managed the transfer of prisoners in the Sinai peninsula. In addition, they sometimes exerted a joint influence of states, even unintentionally. For example, the flight on the sterling was to a large degree motivated by Britain's weak position at the UN, which pushed Britain into the hands of the IMF.[152] The main point, however, is that the internationalist, neutral aims of IOs were realized through some combination of diplomacy, information gathering, technical aid, and normative influence, which are processes I have identified through primary research. This suggests that in an international society approach to the Suez Crisis individual IOs ought to be examined together.

In sum, this study impels the historian to approach the Suez Crisis — and indeed international history — more holistically. In 2008, Scott Lucas noted that "various collections from 1991 have tried to represent Suez as a multi-national affair, only to run the risk of merely re-scripting the historical play with more actors."[153] What this study has sought to show is that future research should seek to understand the crisis in terms of international society, a singular category that brings all of these actors — and the historiographies they bring with them — together.

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[151] M. N. Barnett, *The Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, 2011), p. 133.
[152] Kyle, *Suez*, p. 464.
[153] W. S. Lucas, 'Conclusion' in Smith (ed.), *Reassessing Suez*, p. 239.

My research throws up other future areas of exploration into the Suez Crisis. Most importantly, the Suez Crisis must be recognized as an important moment in the history of the organizations themselves. Indeed, the way that IO officials discussed the crisis reveals a palpable sense of their 'making history' for their respective organizations; the wording of instructions from the ICRC to its delegates shows the importance attached to the first implementation of the 1949 Conventions.[154] As early as 10 December 1956, moreover, IMF Executive Director Pinto posited that the sterling rescue "would establish a new phase in the Fund's existence."[155] The Fund lent $500 million more during the crisis than it had cumulatively since its foundation; the IMF's own official history aptly described its involvement as "a turning point for the Fund."[156] Later histories have suggested that its massive increase in intervention "put it on the map as an episodic international lender" able to manage major crises.[157] For the UN, the formation of UNEF was the "huge leap forward in scale and ambition" of conflict resolution that "drove an expansion of UN functions from predominantly deliberative to actively interventionist."[158] Its ability to manage crises without Security Council consensus was also significant. The importance of the Suez Crisis in the development of the UN was as apparent then as it is now; on 24 November, the Belgian representative noted "I believe we are going through a crucial phase in the life of the United Nations."[159] Thus, the Suez Crisis is almost as important for understanding the history of IOs as they are to understanding it.

In addition, historians should build on this study to revisit state archives with international society in mind and perhaps new material will become useful. It will be important to study how different actors shaped norms and other features of international society. Furthermore, the interaction between normative rhetoric in foreign relations and domestic policy ought to be addressed. In view of postcolonial approaches, further study should go into the Eurocentrism lurking behind the ability of IOs to construct of neutrality. Perhaps this study of the the Suez Crisis begs more questions than answers, but it is certainly a start in the right direction.

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[154] Bugnion and Perret, *Budapest to Saigon*, p. 80.
[155] IMF, EBM/56/59, p. 7.
[156] De Vries and Horsefield, *The International Monetary Fund*, i, p. 426.
[157] Boughton, 'Northwest of Suez', p. 23.
[158] MacQueen, *Peacekeeping*, p. 67; Tudor, 'Blue Helmet', p. 38.
[159] UNGA, '594th Plenary Meeting', 24 November 1956, UN, A/PV.594, p. 295.

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On 4 November 1956, Omar Loufti, the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations appealed to the sovereign nations of the world, "The solution of the problem is in your hands. The eyes of the world are upon you. Yours is a great responsibility."[160] Several states responded to his call for support, but the resolution of the problem to which he referred — the Suez Crisis — could not have happened in the way that it did without the intervention of international organizations. Acting in ways that states could not, the ICRC, the IMF, and the UN together shaped the course of the crisis and contributed significantly to its conclusion. This study has shown that states did not underestimate their influence; neither should history.

[160] UN, A/PV.565, p. 80.

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