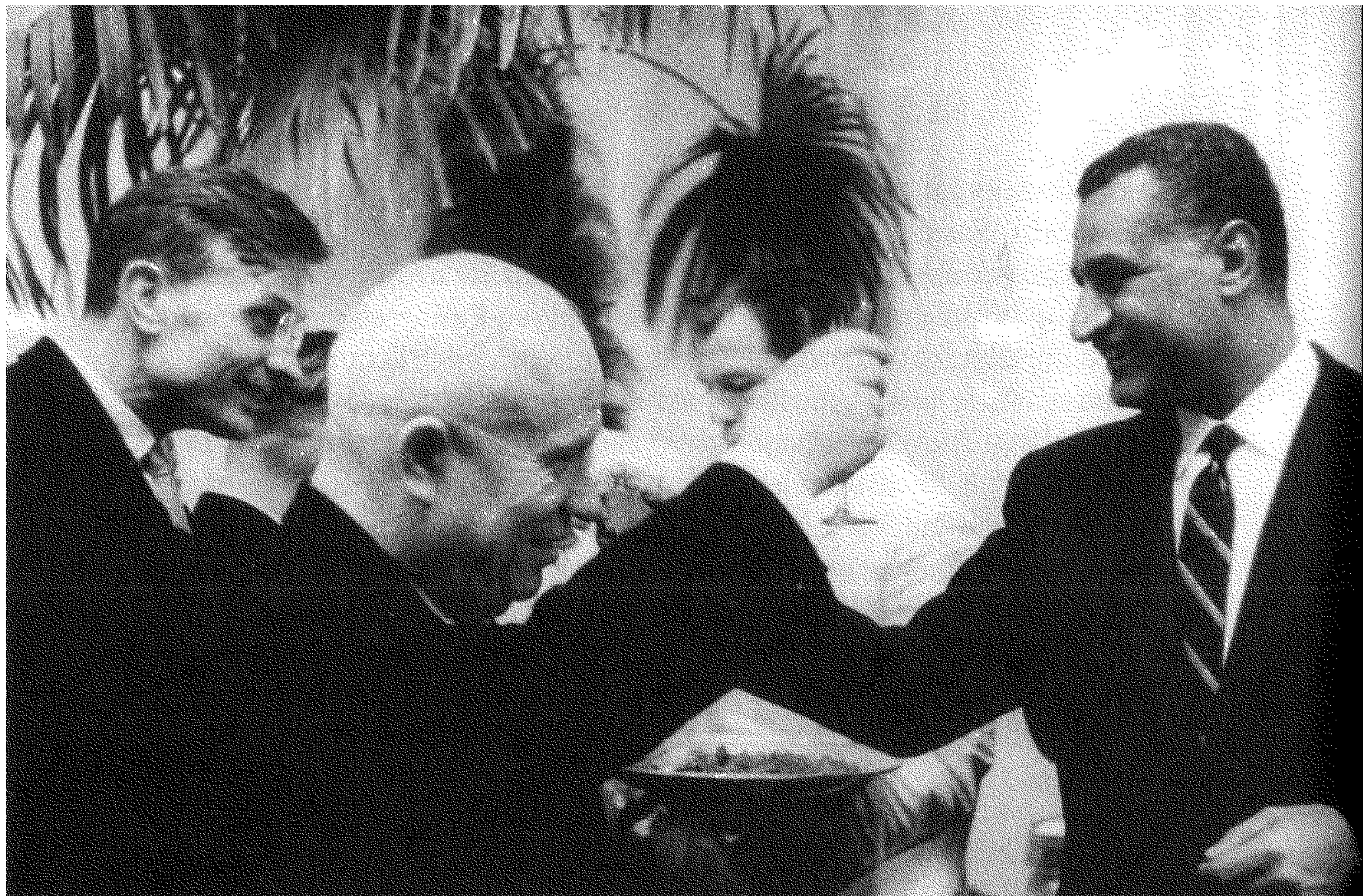

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Leapfrogging Containment: The Suez Crisis

All the talk of peaceful coexistence emanating from the 1955 Geneva Summit could not alter the fundamental reality: the United States and the Soviet Union, far and away the pre-eminent powers in the world, were locked in geopolitical competition. A gain for one side was widely perceived as being a loss for the other. By the mid-1950s, the American sphere of influence in Western Europe was thriving, and America's demonstrated willingness to protect that sphere with military force deterred Soviet adventurism. But stalemate in Europe did not mean stalemate around the world. In 1955, just two months after the Geneva Summit, the Soviet Union made a major arms sale to Egypt by bartering weapons for cotton, then in oversupply—a daring move to extend Soviet influence into the Middle East. In making his bid for influence in Egypt, Khrushchev had in effect "leapfrogged" the *cordon sanitaire* which the United States

had constructed around the Soviet Union, confronting Washington with the task of having to counter the Soviets in areas heretofore considered to be safely within the Western sphere.

Stalin had never been willing to stake Soviet credibility on the developing world. He considered it too far from home and too unstable, its leaders too difficult to control, and the Soviet Union not yet powerful enough to engage in distant adventures—though, in time, the growth of Soviet military power might well have changed his attitude. As late as 1947, Andrei Zhdanov, who had appeared to be among Stalin's closest advisers at the time, was still describing the Middle East as an area dominated by American and British imperialists competing with each other.[1]

The Soviet leaders could not have failed to understand that their first sale of arms to a developing country would inflame Arab nationalism, make the Arab-Israeli conflict more intractable, and be perceived as a major challenge to Western dominance in the Middle East. By the time the smoke cleared, the Suez crisis had destroyed the Great Power status of both Great Britain and France. Outside of Europe, America would henceforth be obliged to man the ramparts of the Cold War essentially alone.

Khrushchev's opening gambit was cautious enough. The Soviet Union was not even involved in the initial arms sale, since the transaction was technically Czechoslovakian, although that subterfuge was soon abandoned. However camouflaged, the sale of Soviet arms to the Middle East pressed on a neuralgic point of Western Europe, especially of Great Britain. After India, Egypt represented the most important legacy of Great Britain's imperial past. In the twentieth century, the Suez Canal had become the principal artery for the supply of oil to Western Europe. Even in its weakened state immediately after the Second World War, Great Britain continued to regard itself as the pre-eminent power in the Middle East, its dominance resting on two pillars: Iran, which supplied oil through a joint Anglo-Iranian company; and Egypt, which served as the strategic base. The Arab League was promoted by Anthony Eden in 1945 as the political framework for resisting outside penetration of the Middle East. Significant British forces remained in Egypt, Iraq, and Iran. A British officer, General John Glubb (Glubb Pasha), commanded Jordan's Arab Legion.

In the 1950s, this world came unglued. To the applause of the first generation of newly independent countries, Iranian Prime Minister Mossadegh nationalized Iran's oil industry in 1951 and demanded the withdrawal of British troops protecting the oil complex at Abadan. Great Britain no longer felt strong enough to undertake military action so close

to the Soviet border without American support, which was not forthcoming. Moreover, it thought it had a fall-back position in its major base along the Suez Canal.

The challenge posed by Mossadegh ended two years later when the United States encouraged a coup to overthrow him. (In those days, Washington still considered covert operations more legitimate than military intervention.) Great Britain's pre-eminence in Iran was never restored, however. By 1952, Great Britain's military position in Egypt was crumbling as well. A group of young officers expressing the nationalist and anticolonial mood that was sweeping the region deposed the corrupt King Farouk. Their dominant figure was Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser.

A powerful personality possessed of considerable charm, Nasser grew into a charismatic figure by appealing to Arab nationalism. He had felt deeply humiliated by the Arab defeat in the 1948 war with Israel. He saw in the establishment of the Jewish state the culmination of a century of Western colonialism. He was determined to expel Great Britain and France from the region.

Nasser's emergence brought into the open the dormant conflict between the United States and its principal NATO allies over the issue of colonialism. As early as April 1951, Churchill, then still the leader of the Opposition, had called for joint action in the Middle East:

> We are no longer strong enough ourselves to bear the whole political burden we have hitherto borne in the Mediterranean, or even to take the leading part in the diplomatic control of that theatre. But the United States and Britain together, aided by France . . . we three together would be in a most powerful position to deal with, say, the Egyptian problem and the whole question of the defence of the Suez Canal.[2]

When it came to the Middle East, however, America rejected the role it had played in Greece and Turkey, and would neither assume the legacy of European political pre-eminence nor allow itself to be associated with the colonial tradition. Both Truman and Eisenhower adamantly opposed British military action in Iran or Egypt on the ostensible ground that disputes of this kind should be adjudicated by the United Nations. In reality, they did not want to be identified with Great Britain's colonial heritage, which they correctly considered to be untenable.

Yet America was prone to its own illusions, one of which was that the independence movements of the developing world paralleled the American experience, and that the new nations would therefore support American foreign policy once they realized that the U.S. attitude about

colonialism sharply differed from that of the old European powers. But the leaders of the independence movements were of a different type than America's Founding Fathers. While using the rhetoric of democracy, they lacked the commitment to it of the drafters of the American Constitution, who genuinely believed in a system of checks and balances. The vast majority of them governed in an authoritarian manner. Many were Marxists. Almost all of them saw in the East-West conflict an opportunity to overturn what they identified as the old imperialist system. However much America might dissociate from European colonialism, American leaders, to their chagrin, found themselves perceived in developing countries as useful auxiliaries from the imperialist camp rather than as genuine partners.

In the end, America was drawn into the Middle East by the containment theory, which required opposition to Soviet expansion in every region, and by the doctrine of collective security, which encouraged the creation of NATO-like organizations to resist actual or potential military threats. Yet, for the most part, the nations of the Middle East did not share America's strategic views. They thought of Moscow primarily as a useful lever to extract concessions from the West rather than as a threat to their independence. Many of the new nations managed to convey the impression that their takeover by the communists would hold more danger for the United States than it did for them, so that there was no need for them to pay any price for American protection. Above all, populist rulers like Nasser saw no future in being identified with the West. They wanted their volatile publics to perceive them as having wrested not only independence but freedom of maneuver from the democracies. Nonalignment was for them as much a domestic necessity as a foreign policy choice.

At first, neither Great Britain nor America fully grasped what Nasser represented. Both nations proceeded from the premise that Nasser's resistance to their policies was due to some specific set of grievances that could be redressed. What little chance existed for testing this hypothesis was vitiated by the different premises of the democracies. Great Britain sought to induce Nasser to accept its historic dominance, whereas the United States tried to lure Nasser into its grand strategy of containment. The Soviet Union discerned an opportunity to outflank "capitalist encirclement" and to acquire new allies by supplying them with arms without (as in Eastern Europe) having to assume responsibility for their domestic governance. Nasser cleverly used the conjunction of all of these impulses to pit the various contenders against each other.

The infusion of Soviet arms into the volatile Middle East accelerated this process. Great Britain's and America's best riposte would have been

to isolate Nasser until it had become obvious that Soviet arms had gained him nothing, and then, if Nasser abandoned his Soviet ties—or, better still, if he was replaced by a more moderate leader—to follow up with a generous diplomatic initiative. That was to be the American strategy toward Anwar Sadat twenty years later. In 1955, the democracies chose the opposite tactic: they tried hard to conciliate Nasser by meeting many of his demands.

Like mirages in the desert, the hopes of the outside powers evaporated as soon as any effort was made to implement them. Great Britain found that, no matter how it sugarcoated its military presence in the region, it could not make it palatable to the local governments. America's schizophrenic policy of dissociating from Great Britain on Middle Eastern issues in order to enlist Nasser into a partnership with Great Britain in a global anti-Soviet strategy never got off the ground. Nasser had no conceivable incentive to abandon his Soviet ties. His incentive turned out to be the precise opposite, and he sought to balance every benefit from the United States by some move toward either the Soviets or the radical neutrals, and preferably both. The more Washington tried to placate Nasser, the more the wily Egyptian gravitated toward the Soviets, thereby raising the ante and seeking to siphon more benefits out of the United States.

In due course, the Soviet Union too was to experience the frustrations of dealing with the Nonaligned group. In the early stages of Soviet penetration of the Middle East, all was net gain. At a negligible cost to Moscow, the democracies were thrown on the defensive. Their internal conflicts mounted while a Soviet presence was forged in areas heretofore consigned to the Western sphere of influence. As time passed, however, the Soviets' passionate Middle Eastern clients involved Moscow in risks which were out of proportion to any conceivable Soviet gain. And whenever the Soviet Union tried to relate these risks to its own national interest, it incurred the displeasure, if not the contempt, of its newfound clients. This enabled Western diplomacy to demonstrate the Soviets' inability to fulfill their clients' goals—culminating in Sadat's turn away from Moscow starting in 1972.

Great Britain was the first to be forced to abandon its illusions about the Middle East. Its military base along the Suez Canal was one of its last significant imperial outposts, garrisoned by some 80,000 troops. Yet Great Britain was in no position to maintain a large force in the Canal Zone in the face of Egyptian opposition and without American support. In 1954, pressed by the United States, Great Britain agreed to withdraw forces from its Suez base by 1956.

American leaders were striving to combine two incompatible policies:

to end Great Britain's imperial role exploiting the remnants of British influence to build a structure of containment in the Middle East. The Eisenhower Administration devised the concept of the Northern Tier of nations—to be composed of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Pakistan, with Iran as a possible participant later on. A Middle Eastern version of NATO, its purpose was to contain the Soviet Union along its southern borders.

This concept came to fruition in the British-sponsored Baghdad Pact, but it proved flawed on several counts. For an alliance to be effective, it must reflect some sense of common purpose, a perception of common danger, and the capacity to pool strengths. None of these elements applied to the Baghdad Pact. The divisions and animosities among the nations in the area were greater than their mutual fear of Soviet expansion. Syria refused to join the Pact; Iraq, even while serving as its headquarters for two years, was far more concerned about fending off Arab radicalism than about Soviet aggressiveness; Pakistan viewed threats to its security as coming from India, not the Soviet Union.

Nor were the military forces of the various members of the Baghdad Pact designed to assist neighbors in the event of aggression by a superpower; their basic purpose was domestic security. Above all, Nasser, as the most dynamic force in the area, was determined to wreck the Pact, which he viewed as a devious maneuver to refurbish colonial domination of the Middle East and to isolate him and his fellow radicals.

Too divided to design punitive measures to counter the Soviet influence in the region, Great Britain and the United States next tried to coax Egypt away from Moscow by demonstrating the advantages of adhering to the Western camp. They pursued two policies to this end—promoting peace between Egypt and Israel, and helping Nasser to construct the Aswan Dam.

The peace initiative was based on the belief that the establishment of the Jewish state by force of arms in 1948 was the principal source of Arab radicalism. An honorable peace, it was thought, would remove that humiliation. But at that point, Arab radicals and nationalists were not seeking peace with Israel, honorable or otherwise. To them, the Jewish state was an alien presence injected into traditionally Arab lands on the basis of a 2,000-year-old claim and to expiate the Jews' suffering, which the Arab peoples had not caused.

If Nasser had made a genuine peace with Israel—that is, had settled for coexistence—he would have forfeited his claim to leadership of the Arab world. Determined not to be embarrassed before his Arab constituency, Nasser proposed that Israel give up the entire Negev, the southern desert region which it had conquered in 1948 and which constituted well

over half of Israel's territory, and that the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees evicted in 1948 be given the right to return.[3]

Israel would never agree to give up half of its territory or permit a repatriation of all Arab refugees, which would have swamped what was left of the state. Israel's way out was to insist on a formal peace agreement with open borders—a harmless-sounding request, but also the one demand Arab leaders found the most difficult to meet because it implied their permanent acceptance of the new state. Between Israel's demand for peace without offering territory and the Arab countries' demand for territory without defining peace, deadlock was inevitable. The first negotiation gave rise to a script that would be adhered to until Sadat's advent in Egypt, and for another twenty years in the rest of the Arab world—until the agreement between the PLO and Israel in September 1993.

By now, the United States and Great Britain were at loggerheads over a variety of issues. Though Dulles favored the Northern Tier policy, he was annoyed that Great Britain should have assumed its leadership, and wanted the Baghdad Pact to be centered on Egypt; which, in turn, fought the Pact tooth and nail. Great Britain would have preferred to overthrow Nasser; America, however uncomfortable with the Soviet arms deal, thought it wiser to propitiate him.

Anxious to restore their tattered unity, the Anglo-American leaders next turned their attention to the vast construction project of the so-called Aswan High Dam: 365 feet high and three miles long, it was to be built on the Upper Nile, near Egypt's border with the Sudan. It would regulate the irrigation of the Nile Valley, on which the subsistence of the Egyptian population had depended since time immemorial, and would free it from its annual dependence on the flooding of the Nile.

Anthony Eden, Nasser's most implacable foe, had first raised the prospect of joint Anglo-American support for the High Dam, with America bearing the lion's share (about 90 percent) of the burden. Why Eden, who was eager to get rid of Nasser, turned into the Aswan Dam's principal advocate can only be explained by his desire to be perceived as bestriding Mideast diplomacy and forestalling any Soviet attempt to follow up military assistance with economic penetration. On December 14, 1955, Great Britain and the United States made a formal offer to build the dam in two stages: some limited funds were made immediately available for the preparatory stage, during which a determination would be made of the extent and nature of assistance for the second stage, which involved the actual construction of the dam.[4]

It was a strange decision. Two governments were committing themselves to a monumental engineering and financial undertaking even though both preferred to see Nasser replaced and were deeply con-

cerned about his drift toward the Soviet orbit. The two discordant allies consoled themselves with the belief that, even if the original grant did not win Nasser over, the second stage would make Egypt financially dependent on them in much the same way that the building of the Suez Canal had given the West financial control over Egypt in the nineteenth century.

Far from moderating Nasser, the Aswan Dam project aroused in him a sense of his importance. In order to preserve his bargaining leverage, he moved rapidly to undertake a series of compensatory moves. Haggling tenaciously over financial terms, he rejected American entreaties to help facilitate Arab-Israeli negotiations. When Great Britain tried to persuade Jordan to join the Baghdad Pact, pro-Egyptian riots broke out, which obliged King Hussein to dismiss Glubb Pasha, the British commander of the Arab Legion, in March 1956.[5]

On May 16, Nasser withdrew recognition from the government of Chiang Kai-shek, and established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. This was a direct rebuke to the United States but especially to Dulles, who was deeply committed to Taiwan. In June, the new Soviet Foreign Minister, Dmitri Shepilov, came to Egypt with a Soviet offer to both finance and build the Aswan Dam, enabling Nasser to engage in his favorite pastime of playing the superpowers off against each other.

On July 19, Dulles decided to put an end to the charade. The Egyptian leader's recognition of Communist China had been the final straw that convinced Dulles to teach him a lesson. When the Egyptian Ambassador returned from Cairo with instructions to accept all American technical proposals, Dulles replied that Washington had come to the conclusion that the dam was beyond Egypt's economic capabilities. No aid would be forthcoming.

Dulles had thought himself quite prepared for a strong Egyptian response. He told Henry Luce, publisher of *Time,* that the Aswan Dam decision was "as big a chess move as US diplomacy has made in a long time." Nasser, he argued, was "in a hell of a spot and no matter what he does, can be used to American advantage. If he turns to the Russians now and they say 'No,' this will undermine the whole fabric of recent Soviet economic carpet-bagging all over the world. . . . If the Soviets agree to give Nasser his dam, then we are working up plans to lay it on thick in the satellite countries as to why their living conditions are so miserable with the Soviets dishing out millions to Egypt."[6] What was conspicuously lacking in Dulles' observation was a willingness to back up a "big move" with a readiness to run big risks. It was but another example of Dulles' congenital tendency to overestimate the role of propaganda, especially behind the Iron Curtain.

However flimsy the political rationale for the dam had been in the first place, the manner in which the American offer of aid was withdrawn courted a major crisis. The French Ambassador to Washington, Maurice Couve de Murville (who would later become de Gaulle's Foreign Minister), accurately predicted what was about to happen: "They will do something about Suez. That's the only way they can touch the Western countries."[7]

Before a vast crowd in Alexandria on July 26, 1956, Nasser gave his answer to Dulles, couching his riposte in an appeal to Arab nationalism:

> This, O citizens, is the battle in which we are now involved. It is a battle against imperialism and the methods and tactics of imperialism, and a battle against Israel, the vanguard of imperialism. . . .
>
> Arab nationalism progresses. Arab nationalism triumphs. Arab nationalism marches forward; it knows its road and it knows its strength. Arab nationalism knows who are its enemies and who are its friends. . . .[8]

Deliberately challenging France, he told the crowd: "We can never say that the battle of Algeria is not our battle." In the middle of his speech, Nasser pronounced the name of Ferdinand de Lesseps, the Frenchman who had built the Suez Canal. It was the code word for Egyptian military forces to seize control of the Canal. This enabled Nasser, near the end of his delivery, to announce to the frenzied multitude: "At this moment as I talk to you some of your Egyptian brethren . . . have started to take over the canal company and its property and to control shipping in the canal —the canal which is situated in Egyptian territory, which . . . is part of Egypt and which is owned by Egypt."[9]

The differences in perspective among the democracies which had characterized the prelude to the Suez crisis now blighted their reaction to it. Eden, who had risen to the position of Prime Minister the year before, after too long a wait, was temperamentally unsuited to make decisions under pressure. Being Churchill's immediate successor would have proved enough of a burden, but it was compounded by Eden's having acquired a reputation for strength that was entirely at variance with his psychological and, indeed, physical frailties. Only a few months earlier, he had undergone a major operation, and was in constant need of medication. Most of all, Eden was the captive of his formative years. A fluent Arabist, he had grown up in the period of British domination of the Middle East, and was determined to stop Nasser, single-handedly if necessary.

France was even more hostile to Nasser. Its major interests in the Arab

world were in Morocco and Algeria, the former a French protectorate, the latter a department of Metropolitan France containing a million Frenchmen. Both North African countries were in the process of seeking independence, for which Nasser's policies provided emotional and political support. The Soviet arms deal raised the prospect that Egypt would become a conduit for Soviet arms to the Algerian guerrillas as well. "All this [is] in the works of Nasser, just as Hitler's policy [was] written down in *Mein Kampf*," declared France's new Prime Minister, Guy Mollet. "Nasser [has] the ambition to recreate the conquests of Islam."[10]

The analogy to Hitler was not really on the mark. Implying that Nasser's Egypt was determined to conquer foreign nations, it ascribed a validity to Middle Eastern borders that the Arab nationalists did not recognize. The borders in Europe—except for those in the Balkans—reflected in the main a common history and culture. By contrast, the borders of the Middle East had been drawn by foreign, largely European, powers at the end of the First World War in order to facilitate their domination of the area. In the minds of Arab nationalists, these frontiers cut across the Arab nation and denied a common Arab culture. Erasing them was not a way for one country to dominate another; it was the way to create an Arab nation, much as Cavour had built Italy, and Bismarck had created Germany out of a plethora of sovereign states.

However inexact their analogy, once Eden and Mollet had nailed their flag to the anti-appeasement mast, it should have become clear that they would not retreat. They belonged to the generation, after all, that viewed appeasement as a cardinal sin, and Munich as a permanent reproach. Comparing a leader to Hitler or even to Mussolini meant that they had moved beyond the possibility of compromise. They would either have to prevail or lose all claim to governance—most of all in their own eyes.

The reaction of Eden and Mollet to the nationalization of the Suez Canal was violent. Eden cabled Eisenhower the day after Nasser's speech: "If we do not [take a firm stand], our influence and yours throughout the Middle East will, we are convinced, be finally destroyed."[11] Three days later, in the House of Commons, he cut off any possibility of retreat:

> No arrangements for the future of this great international waterway could be acceptable to Her Majesty's Government which would leave it in the unfettered control of a single Power which could, as recent events have shown, exploit it purely for purposes of national policy.[12]

France was no less firm. On July 29, the French Ambassador to London informed the British Foreign Secretary that France was prepared to put its forces under British command and to pull troops out of Algeria for joint action against Egypt.[13]

When Dulles appeared in London on August 1 for consultations, he seemed to share these views. Proclaiming that it was not acceptable for any one nation to control the Canal, especially if that nation was Egypt, he insisted that:

> A way had to be found to make Nasser *disgorge* what he was attempting to swallow.... We must make a genuine effort to bring world opinion to favour the international operation of the canal.... It should be possible to create a world opinion so adverse to Nasser that he would be isolated. Then if a military operation had to be undertaken it would be more apt to succeed and have less grave repercussions than if it had been undertaken precipitately.[14]

He proposed that a Maritime Conference composed of twenty-four of the principal maritime nations meet in London in another fortnight to devise an international system of free navigation through the Canal.

Dulles' call for a conference was the beginning of a puzzling and, for Great Britain and France, maddening, and ultimately humiliating process. Even Dulles' opening shot was an effort to couple tough language with a time-wasting diplomacy. In no time at all, it became apparent that the allies were not of one mind about the crisis. Eden and Mollet saw the overthrow or humiliation of Nasser as an end in itself, whereas Eisenhower and Dulles looked at the crisis in terms of long-range relations with the Arab world. Both sides operated from flawed preconceptions: Eden and Mollet acted as if the end of Nasser would restore the situation which had existed prior to his accession to power; Eisenhower and Dulles seemed to believe that, if not Nasser, then some other nationalist leader in the region might yet be induced into a NATO-like Middle East security system. It was also their view that military action against Nasser would so inflame Arab nationalism that Western influence would be ruined for a generation—a far darker scenario than losing control over the Canal.

Neither assumption proved correct. Pre-Nasser Egypt was gone forever. The other nationalist leaders who had modeled themselves after Nasser were immune to the siren songs of containment. Their main bargaining chip was the Cold War itself, which they exploited to the same degree that they condemned it. And the real issue was what would inflame Arab nationalism more—Nasser's victory or his defeat.

From a strictly analytical point of view, America ought to have shared the British and French perception that Nasser's brand of militant nationalism represented an insuperable obstacle to a constructive Middle East policy. A demonstration that reliance on Soviet arms served no positive purpose might have obviated decades of upheaval in the developing world. From that point of view, it would have been desirable to face down Nasser. But, having accomplished his defeat, the United States could not participate in a restoration of British and French colonial dominance. Where America should have separated from its allies—if it were absolutely necessary—was not at the beginning of the Suez Crisis, but upon its successful conclusion. A demonstration that reliance on Soviet support was disastrous for Egypt should have been followed by support for the reasonable nationalistic aims of a moderate successor to Nasser—much as America reacted to Sadat in the 1970s.

The democracies, however, were not ready for so complicated a strategy. Great Britain and France did not accept that the precondition for overthrowing Nasser was their being prepared to grant many of his demands to a more moderate successor. America did not understand how important it was for its policy that two close NATO allies be permitted to adjust to the new circumstances without undermining their image of themselves as Great Powers. For once a nation's image of itself is destroyed, so is its willingness to play a major international role. This was why Harold Macmillan, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, told Ambassador Robert Murphy, a Dulles emissary, that, if Great Britain did not confront Nasser now, "Britain would become another Netherlands."[15] America's leaders, however, opted for a chance to win over the radical nationalists, first by dissociating themselves from Great Britain and France diplomatically, later by publicly opposing them and demonstrating the limits of their capacity to shape Middle East events—in other words, bringing home to them the end of their roles as Great Powers.

Treating the Canal regime as a legal issue, Dulles focused on the potential disruption of the sea-lanes and was fertile in coming up with legal formulae to get around possible obstacles to free transit through the Canal. Eden and Mollet, however, were determined not to accept nationalization of the Suez Canal; they tried to turn it into a pretext for bringing down Nasser or, at a minimum, for humiliating him. Nasser finally played for time, as revolutionaries often do after a *fait accompli.* The longer their action stands, the more difficult it becomes to reverse it—especially by using force.

Eisenhower was passionate in his opposition to the use of force, even for the purpose of upholding the principle of free passage through the

Suez Canal, which Dulles had publicly supported in London. Dulles had brought with him a letter from the President to Eden stressing the "unwisdom even of contemplating the use of military force at this moment. . . ." Eisenhower went so far as to imply that unilateral British action would risk America's willingness to sustain NATO and, by implication, might leave America's allies at the mercy of Moscow. If war broke out, the letter read, before Great Britain had clearly demonstrated that it had exhausted every peaceful means of settling the crisis, it "could very seriously affect our peoples' feelings towards our Western allies. I do not want to exaggerate, but I could assure you that this could grow to such an intensity as to have the most far-reaching consequences."[16]

On the face of it, no two countries seemed less likely to clash than Great Britain and the United States, led by men who shared so many wartime experiences. Eden could not believe that Eisenhower might transform his misgivings about unilateral British and French actions into open opposition. And Eisenhower was convinced that, at the end of the day, France and Great Britain would not dare to act without America's support. British and American leaders prized their "special relationship," which was reinforced by wartime partnership and personal friendship. But during the Suez Crisis, they were thwarted by a fundamental clash of personalities. The British leaders found Dulles a prickly interlocutor, and Eden came to regard him with distaste.

By family tradition and personal avocation, John Foster Dulles seemed exceptionally well-suited for the office of Secretary of State. His grandfather, John Foster, had served as Secretary of State under President Benjamin Harrison; his uncle, Robert Lansing, had been Wilson's Secretary of State at the Versailles Peace Conference. Although John Foster Dulles had been a corporate lawyer until well into his middle age, his enduring preoccupation was with foreign policy.

American secretaries of state have traditionally affirmed America's exceptionalism and the universal validity of its values. Dulles was no different except that his form of exceptionalism was religious rather than philosophical. His first experience with international affairs had been as head of a Protestant commission engaged in promoting world peace. He once stated proudly, "Nobody in the Department of State knows as much about the Bible as I do."[17] And he sought to apply the principles of his stern Presbyterian faith to the conduct of day-to-day American foreign policy. "I am convinced," he wrote in 1950, "that we here need to make our political thoughts and practices reflect more faithfully a religious faith that man has his origin and destiny in God."[18] Though Dulles represented a classic American phenomenon which Gladstone's generation of Englishmen would have easily recognized, the postwar generation of British

leaders resented his righteousness and thought him duplicitous rather than spiritual.

Unfortunately, Dulles' tendency to deliver sermons to his interlocutors too often overshadowed his superb knowledge of foreign affairs and, in particular, his thoughtful analysis of the dynamics of the Soviet system. Churchill described Dulles as "a dour Puritan, a great white bespectacled face with a smudge of a mouth," and, in lighter moments, occasionally referred to him as "Dullith." Eden had little confidence in Dulles from the very beginning. In 1952, before Eisenhower had appointed Dulles as Secretary of State, Eden voiced his hope for some other counterpart: "I do not think I would be able to work with him."[19]

Dulles had many qualities which made him vastly influential. His work ethic and devotion to principle had impressed Eisenhower. Konrad Adenauer regarded Dulles as "the greatest man" he had ever known, and one who "kept his word."[20] Dulles' rigid conception of a bipolar world, his wariness of letting himself be cajoled or pressured into concessions to Moscow, and his dour resolve endeared him to Adenauer and other leaders who feared a separate Soviet-American bargain.

In London, however, Dulles' invocations of a higher morality accentuated the increasingly incompatible perspectives of London and Washington. Throughout, Dulles vociferously supported the stated objectives of Great Britain and France while just as consistently resisting the use of force to vindicate them. He was extraordinarily creative about coming up with ideas to overcome the crisis, but, on closer examination, these dissolved into a time-consuming stalling action to blunt the Anglo-French rush to war. Had Dulles been prepared to insist on his own proposals, they might well have served as a practical solution to the Suez crisis—perhaps not the preferred outcome for Great Britain and France, but one they could have lived with.

Yet Dulles had barely returned to the United States before he disavowed the use of force, even if his own proposals to the Maritime Conference were rejected by Nasser. On August 3, he said:

> We do not . . . want to meet violence with violence. We want, first of all, to find out the opinion of the many nations vitally interested because we believe that all the nations concerned, including Egypt, will respect the sober opinion of the nations which are parties to the internationalizing treaty of 1888, or by its terms, entitled to its benefits.[21]

Moralistic rhetoric would not alter the reality that Dulles' refusal to consider force was pointing allied diplomacy toward a dead end. The only way to induce Nasser to accept Dulles' proposed Canal regime was by

threatening him with British and French military intervention if he refused. Yet Dulles balanced each of his schemes for international control of the Canal with some statement emphatically abjuring the use of force, which practically invited Nasser to reject them.

Dulles had joined Great Britain and France in calling for a conference of the twenty-four principal users of the Suez Canal, including the eight countries that had signed the Constantinople Convention of 1888 establishing the regime Nasser was attempting to abrogate. The United States voted with the majority of eighteen nations to propose a new Canal regime, which accepted Egyptian sovereignty and participation by Egyptian personnel, but also established the Conference participants as *de facto* administrators of the Canal. However fertile in coming up with expedients, Dulles proved unwilling to employ sanctions other than public opinion to implement them. Denying that there was any inconsistency between his proposals and what he seemed to be prepared to do about them, Dulles insisted that, in the end, moral persuasion would convince Nasser to yield. In his view, most people:

> . . . pay decent respect for the opinions of mankind. . . . And because I believe that, I am confident that out of this conference there will come a judgment of such moral force that we can be confident that the Suez Canal will go on, as it has for the last 100 years, for the years in the future to serve in peace the interests of mankind.[22]

As it happened, moral pressure proved insufficient in precisely the same proportion to which physical force had been ruled out. On September 10, Nasser rejected the proposals of the London Maritime Conference.

Three days later, Dulles came up with another ingenious proposal. This time he proposed a Users' Association to operate the Canal and to collect dues by a kind of picket line of ships off the ports of Port Said and Suez, at either end of the Canal just outside of Egypt's territorial waters. If Nasser did not yield, the Users' Association would go ahead without him; if he went along, he would abdicate control over Canal revenues to an international body. The intricate scheme might well have worked had not Dulles, as he did with the Maritime Conference, undercut his own proposal. At a press conference on October 2, Dulles once again disavowed the use of force. He used the occasion as well to lecture Eden on the inappropriateness of the proposition that NATO should deal with Suez-type crises:

> There is some difference in the approaches to the Suez Canal problem. That difference relates perhaps to some rather fundamental things. In

> some areas the three nations are bound together by treaties, such as the Atlantic pact area. . . . In those the three . . . stand together.
>
> Other problems relate to other areas and touch the so-called problem of colonialism in some way or other. On these problems the United States plays a somewhat independent role.[23]

Dulles' legal interpretation was valid enough, though, in the future, the shoe would turn out to be on the other foot. For America's allies would invoke the same argument when America needed their support in Vietnam and in other so-called "out of area" scenarios. Thus during the 1973 Middle East War, the European allies refused to permit the American airlift to Israel to overfly their territories, reversing the Suez script. Henceforth, it would be America's allies which would refuse to apply NATO obligations outside the strictly defined treaty area. What infuriated Great Britain and France in 1956 was not so much the legal interpretation as Dulles' strong implication that, in the Middle East, the United States defined its vital interests substantially differently from the way its European allies did.

This proved especially galling to London, because, only the day before Dulles' press conference, Eden had cabled Eisenhower that the issue was no longer Nasser but the Soviet Union:

> There is no doubt in our minds that Nasser, whether he likes it or not, is now effectively in Russian hands, just as Mussolini was in Hitler's. It would be as ineffective to show weakness to Nasser now in order to placate him as it was to show weakness to Mussolini.[24]

To Eden, Dulles' statement meant that the United States did not accept his proposition that the ultimate threat to Egypt came from the Soviet Union. He had wanted to frame the Egyptian issue in terms of the containment policy, whereas Dulles seemed to be writing off the whole affair as a colonial imbroglio which the United States, determined to preserve its image of moral purity, would not touch.

It is difficult to believe that Dulles was unaware of how dangerous a game he was playing. Though he acted as if he believed that the American public would respond best to lofty, self-righteous, and moralistic pronouncements, Dulles also had vast practical experience. He has left no explanation for his actions during the Suez crisis. It is plausible, however, that he was torn by two contradictory impulses. Given his attitude toward communism, he in all likelihood concurred with Eden and Mollet's analysis of the dangers of Soviet penetration of the Middle East. This would

explain why his interpretation of Nasser's motives was indistinguishable from Eden's, and why the abruptness of his rejection of the Aswan Dam took even the British Cabinet (which had had a general warning) by surprise.

At the same time, Dulles was Secretary of State to a President who was passionately opposed to war in the way only an experienced military man can be. Eisenhower was not interested in the nuances of the balance of power; even if a long-range danger to the global equilibrium did exist in the Middle East, he concluded that America was strong enough to resist later on, and well before its actual survival was at stake. To Eisenhower, the Suez crisis was not sufficiently threatening to merit the use of force. His friendly grin notwithstanding, he had a very strong personality and a not very pleasant one when crossed.

As Dean Acheson once said, the effectiveness of a secretary of state depends on knowing who the president is. Dulles certainly knew, but Eden and Mollet, who believed Eisenhower to be an amiable figurehead, did not. They chose to ignore the implications of a letter Eisenhower had written to Eden on September 2 about the Maritime Conference, in which he warned once more against the use of force:

> . . . the peoples of the Near East and of North Africa and, to some extent, of all of Asia and all of Africa, would be consolidated against the West to a degree which, I fear, could not be overcome in a generation and, perhaps, not even in a century particularly having in mind the capacity of the Russians to make mischief.[25]

Dulles was caught between an adamant Eisenhower and an outraged group of European allies. Eden and Mollet were beyond the point of retreat, and were infuriated by the incongruity between the toughness of Dulles' stated objectives and his repeated disavowal of the practical means for achieving them. They never understood how strongly Eisenhower was opposed to the use of force, or how dominant his views were. For Dulles, the gap between his allies and Nasser was less of a problem than the one between his President and the President's personal friends in Europe. He gambled on closing that gap with his dexterity, hoping that time might alter either their position or Eisenhower's, or lead Nasser into making some mistake that would solve everyone's dilemma. Instead, Dulles caused France and Great Britain to risk everything in a desperate throw of the dice.

The dilemma of Dulles' tactics was summed up in a journalist's question at a press conference on September 13: "Mr. Secretary, with the

United States announcing in advance it will not use force, and with Soviet Russia backing Egypt with its propaganda, does that not leave all the trump cards in Mr. Nasser's hands?"[26] Though Dulles replied vaguely that moral force would prevail, the question was right on the mark.

The growing rift among the democracies encouraged the Kremlin to raise the stakes. Stunning Washington, it replaced Western aid to the Aswan Dam with its own, and stepped up arms shipments to the Middle East. A boisterous Khrushchev told the Yugoslav Ambassador: "Don't forget that, if a war starts, all our support will be with Egypt. If my son were to come to me to volunteer to fight for Egypt, I would encourage him to go."[27]

After Dulles' October 2 press conference abjuring the use of force a second time, a desperate Great Britain and France decided to go ahead on their own. British and French military intervention was now only a few tactical moves away. One of these was a final appeal to the United Nations, which had played a curious role throughout the whole affair. At first, Great Britain and France had sought, with American backing, to avoid the United Nations altogether, fearing the Nonaligned group's solidarity with Egypt. As they edged closer to the end of their diplomatic tether, however, France and Great Britain did appeal to the United Nations as a sort of last perfunctory gesture to demonstrate that, because of the world organization's futility, they had no other choice than to act alone. The United Nations was thus transformed from a vehicle for solving international disputes to a final hurdle to be cleared before resorting to force, and, in a sense, even as an excuse for it.

Unexpectedly and for a brief moment, the United Nations rose to the occasion. Private consultations among the Egyptian, British, and French foreign ministers produced agreement on six principles which were very close to the majority view of the Maritime Conference. An Egyptian operating board and a supervisory Board of Users were established. Disputes between the two boards were to be settled by arbitration. Eisenhower was elated as he spoke before a television audience on October 12:

> I have an announcement. I have got the best announcement that I think I could possibly make to America tonight.
>
> The progress made in the settlement of the Suez dispute this afternoon at the United Nations is most gratifying. Egypt, Britain and France have met, through their foreign ministers, and agreed on a set of principles on which to negotiate; and it looks like here is a very great crisis that is behind us.[28]

Though Eisenhower had not exactly said, "Peace is at hand," the celebrations his statement evoked turned out to be premature. The very next night, on October 13, the Security Council was asked to endorse the Six Principles and encountered an unpleasant surprise. In two separate votes, the Principles were unanimously approved but their implementing measures were vetoed by the Soviet Union.

The Six Principles had been the last chance to settle the crisis peacefully. American pressure on Egypt might have induced it to ask the Soviet Union to withdraw its veto—assuming that veto had not arisen from the collusion of these two countries in the first place. Then too, American pressure on the Soviet Union in the form of a warning that, in a showdown, the United States would stand with its allies, might have kept the Soviets from casting the veto. But the United States was determined to maintain the friendship of its allies *and* to keep open its option toward the Nonaligned group. America's attempt to straddle incompatible policies made war inevitable.

Eden and Mollet had gone along with every formula for avoiding war: the Maritime Conference, the Users' Association, and now the Six Principles. In each case, a promising beginning had run aground; in no case had America used its diplomatic influence on behalf of proposals Dulles had either devised or endorsed. But even though Great Britain and France had many understandable reasons to go to war, they imposed a fatal burden on themselves by using a ridiculously obvious stratagem as a pretext. Concocted by France, the ploy required that Israel invade Egypt and advance toward the Suez Canal, whereupon Great Britain and France would demand, in the name of freedom of navigation, that both Egypt and Israel withdraw to a distance of ten miles from the Canal. In the event of Egypt's refusal, which was fully expected, Great Britain and France would occupy the Canal Zone. What was to be done afterward remained vague. The plan would be triggered a week before the American presidential election.

Everybody lost by this convoluted scheme. For one thing, it was totally inconsistent with the diplomacy in train since Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal, which had been geared to establishing some sort of international regimen over the operation of the Canal. Since the various internationally endorsed schemes to guarantee free navigation had aborted, the logical next step would have been for Great Britain and France to impose one of them by force. Though their unilateral action would no doubt have been widely opposed, it would at least have been comprehensible in light of the preceding diplomacy. By contrast, the actual French and British maneuver was too transparent and too cynical.

Each of the partners would have been better off pursuing its objectives independently. Great Britain and France undermined their claim to be major powers by seeming to need Israel's help to take on Egypt. Israel lost the moral advantage of its neighbor's refusal to discuss peace by allowing itself to appear as a tool of colonialism. Great Britain's position in Jordan and Iraq, its key Middle East bastions, was weakened. Eisenhower was deeply offended by a maneuver so seemingly geared to his presumed reluctance to antagonize Jewish voters in the last week of an election campaign.[29] It takes perseverance to find a policy which combines the disadvantages of every course of action, or to construct a coalition that weakens every partner simultaneously. Great Britain, France, and Israel managed just that feat.

Seemingly oblivious to the international outrage awaiting them, Great Britain and France compounded their political problems by adopting a military strategy so deliberate as to give the appearance of procrastination. On October 29, Israel invaded the Sinai. On October 30, Great Britain and France demanded that both sides withdraw from the Canal, which Israeli troops had not yet reached. On October 31, Great Britain and France announced that they would intervene on the ground. Yet British and French troops did not land in Egypt for another four days, and never fulfilled their mission to seize the Canal in the few days they were on the ground.

What no one had counted on was America's aroused sense of righteousness. On October 30, twenty-four hours after Israel's initial attack, the United States submitted a tough resolution in the Security Council ordering Israeli armed forces "immediately to withdraw . . . behind the established armistice lines."[30] No demand was made to condemn Egyptian-sponsored terrorism or the illegal Arab blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba. When Great Britain and France entered the conflict on October 31, Eisenhower turned on them as well in a television address on the same day:

> As it is the manifest right of any of these nations to take such decisions and actions, it is likewise our right—if our judgment so dictates—to dissent. We believe these actions to have been taken in error. For we do not accept the use of force as a wise and proper instrument for the settlement of international disputes.[31]

So absolute a renunciation of force was not a principle the Eisenhower Administration had ever applied to itself—for example, when it arranged the overthrow of the Guatemalan government two years earlier. Nor was it followed two years later, when Eisenhower ordered American troops

into Lebanon. This was the first and only time that the United States was to vote with the Soviet Union against its closest allies. Eisenhower told the American people that, in view of the expected British and French veto in the Security Council, he would take his case to the General Assembly, where their veto would not apply.

On November 2, the General Assembly demanded an end to the hostilities by an overwhelming vote of sixty-four to five. At an overnight session on November 3–4, it passed an even stronger resolution and began to discuss a United Nations peacekeeping force for the Canal—a token move to facilitate British and French withdrawal, since United Nations forces are never kept on the soil of a sovereign country against its wishes, and Nasser was certain to demand their removal.

By November 5, a United Nations peacekeeping force was established. That same day, Great Britain and France announced that their troops would withdraw as soon as the United Nations force was in place—perhaps with the *arrière pensée* that their forces could be part of the United Nations contingent. Adding to the poignancy of America's collusion in the humiliation of its closest allies, Soviet forces crushed Hungarian freedom fighters that very day, in the face of what can only, and with excessive charity, be described as token United Nations opposition.

On the night of November 5, a week after the British and French ultimatum and twenty-four hours after Soviet tanks had begun to crush the Hungarian uprising, the Soviet Union was heard from. The obvious split between America and its allies enabled Moscow to pose as Egypt's protector at minimal risk, unleashing a veritable blizzard of communications. Foreign Minister Shepilov wrote to the President of the Security Council; Prime Minister Bulganin addressed himself to Eden, Mollet, Eisenhower, and David Ben-Gurion, the Israeli Prime Minister. The theme in all five messages was the same: "predatory" aggression against Egypt must cease; the United Nations needed to organize a joint effort to that end; the Soviet Union would cooperate by making its naval and air forces available.

As if all these pronouncements were not menacing enough, Bulganin's letter contained warnings that were tailored to each of the separate addressees. Eden, for instance, was vouchsafed the first explicit Soviet threat of rocket attacks against a Western ally, albeit in the guise of this rhetorical question:

> In what situation would Britain find herself if she were attacked by stronger states, possessing all types of modern destructive weapons? And such countries could, at the present time, refrain from sending

> naval or air forces to the shores of Britain and use other means—for instance, rocket weapons.[32]

Lest the query be misunderstood, Bulganin inserted one more menacing sentence: "We are fully determined to crush the aggressors by the use of force and to restore peace in the East."[33] Similar warnings were issued to Mollet. Though less specific, the letter to Ben-Gurion was even more threatening, because it stressed that Israeli actions were putting "in jeopardy the very existence of Israel as a state."[34]

Finally, in his letter to Eisenhower, Bulganin proposed joint Soviet-American military action to put an end to the hostilities in the Middle East. He went so far as to hint at a third world war: "If this war is not curbed, it is fraught with the danger of, and can develop into, a third world war."[35] Coming from the only other country in a position to start such a war, this was ominous indeed.

The Soviet threats featured that extraordinary bravado which was to become the distinguishing feature of Khrushchev's diplomacy. At the precise moment that Soviet troops were brutally suppressing freedom fighters in Hungary, the Soviet Union had the temerity to bemoan the fate of alleged victims of Western imperialism. Only a reckless nature could have permitted Khrushchev to voice the threat of a third world war in 1956, when the Soviet Union was incomparably weaker than the United States, especially in the nuclear field. The Soviet Union was not only in no position for a showdown but, as it became imminent, Khrushchev would have been obliged to retreat as ignominiously as he in fact did six years later over the Cuban missile crisis.

Eisenhower indignantly rejected joint military action with the Soviet Union and warned that the United States would resist any unilateral Soviet military move. At the same time, the Soviet warning intensified Washington's pressure on Great Britain and France. On November 6, a run on the pound sterling took on alarming proportions. Contrary to previous practice, America stood at the sidelines and refused to step in and calm the market.

Battered in the House of Commons, finding little support in the Commonwealth, and utterly abandoned by the United States, Eden threw in the towel. On November 6, he agreed to a ceasefire starting the next day. British and French forces had been on the ground for less than forty-eight hours.

The British and French expedition had been ham-handedly conceived and amateurishly implemented; designed in frustration, and lacking a clear-cut political objective, it doomed itself to failure. The United States

could never have supported so flawed an enterprise. Yet the gnawing question remains whether America's dissociation from its allies needed to be quite so brutal. Did the United States really have no other choice than either to support the French and British adventure or to oppose it outright? Legally, the United States had no obligations toward Great Britain and France beyond the clearly defined NATO area. But the issue was not strictly legal. Was the United States' national interest really served by bringing home in so ruthless a fashion to two of America's most indispensable allies that they had lost all capacity for autonomous action?

The United States was under no obligation to push United Nations deliberations at the extraordinarily rapid pace that it did, or to support resolutions which ignored the sources of the provocation and focused entirely on the immediate issues. The United States could have called attention to all the various international schemes to insulate the operation of the Canal, to the illegal Arab blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba, or to Nasser's encouragement of terrorist raids against Israel. Above all, it could, and should, have linked its condemnation of British and French actions with condemnation of Soviet actions in Hungary. By acting as if the Suez issue were entirely moral and legal, and as if it had no geopolitical basis, the United States evaded the reality that an unconditional victory for Nasser—an outcome in which Egypt gave no guarantees with respect to the operation of the Canal—was also a victory for a radical policy encouraged by Soviet arms and sustained by Soviet threats.

The heart of the problem was conceptual. America's leaders put forward three principles during the Suez crisis, each of which reflected long-standing verities: that America's obligations toward its allies were circumscribed by precise legal documents; that recourse to force by any nation was inadmissible except when narrowly defined as self-defense; and, most important, that the Suez crisis had provided America with an opportunity to pursue its true vocation, which was leadership of the developing world.

The first point was made in Eisenhower's address of October 31, in which he threw America's full diplomatic weight against Great Britain and France: "There can be no peace—without law. And there can be no law —if we were to invoke one code of international conduct for those who oppose us—and another for our friends."[36] The notion that international relations could be exhaustively defined by international law had roots deep within American history. The assumption that America should act as the impartial moral arbiter of the behavior of nations, unaffected by national interest or geopolitics or alliances, is part of that nostalgia. In the

real world, however, diplomacy involves, at least in part, the ability to discriminate among cases and to distinguish friends from opponents.

The strict constructionist view that the sole legitimate cause for war is self-defense was put forward in December 1956 by John Foster Dulles, who interpreted Article 1 of the NATO treaty as creating that obligation:

> . . . the point was that we considered that such an attack under the circumstances would violate the charter of the United Nations, and would violate article 1 of the North Atlantic Treaty itself, which requires all the parties to that treaty to renounce the use of force, and to settle their disputes by peaceful means. That is our complaint: that the treaty was violated; not that there was not consultation.[37]

Nobody had ever interpreted Article 1 of the North Atlantic Treaty in so pacifist a way; no one would do so again. The idea that the charter of a military alliance contained a binding obligation for the peaceful resolution of all disputes was surely mind-boggling. In any event, the real issue was not legal, but whether an alliance does not include the tacit obligation to show some understanding for an ally's definition of its vital interests even outside a strictly defined treaty area, and perhaps a little compassion for an occasional difference in judgments.

George Kennan and Walter Lippmann, the two great adversaries in America's earlier debate over containment, clearly thought so. George Kennan urged forbearance:

> We have fumbled on certain past occasions; and our friends have not turned against us. Moreover, we bear a heavy measure of responsibility for the desperation which has driven the French and British Governments to this ill-conceived and pathetic action.[38]

Walter Lippmann went further and argued that America had a stake in British and French success:

> The Franco-British action will be judged by the outcome. . . . The American interest, though we have dissented from the decision itself, is that France and Britain should now succeed. However much we may wish they had not started, we cannot now wish that they should fail.[39]

The third premise of America's policy, its secret dream of emerging as the leader of the developing world, proved impossible to fulfill. Richard Nixon, probably the most sophisticated student of the national interest among America's postwar leaders, placed America into the vanguard of

the anticolonial struggle on November 2, four days before the election, when he proclaimed:

> For the first time in history we have shown independence of Anglo-French policies toward Asia and Africa which seemed to us to reflect the colonial tradition. That declaration of independence has had an electrifying effect throughout the world.[40]

In the light of Nixon's later pronouncements, it is hard to believe that he was doing anything other than following instructions.

Yet that was not at all what actually happened. Nasser did not moderate his policies toward either the West or its Arab allies. His radical constituency would not have permitted him to admit that he had been saved by American pressures even if he had been inclined to do so. On the contrary, to impress that very constituency, he accelerated his attacks on moderate, pro-Western governments in the Middle East. Within two years of the Suez crisis, the pro-Western government of Iraq was overthrown and replaced by one of the most radical regimes in the Arab world, eventually giving rise to Saddam Hussein. Syria too turned increasingly radical. Within five years, Egyptian troops entered Yemen in what turned into a futile effort to overthrow the existing regime. Since, in the end, the United States inherited the strategic positions abandoned by Great Britain, the full fury of Nasser's radicalism was unleashed against America, culminating in a break of diplomatic relations in 1967.

Nor did America improve its standing among the rest of the Nonaligned. Within a few months of the Suez crisis, America was no better off among the Nonaligned than Great Britain. It was not that the majority of the Nonaligned had suddenly become ill-disposed toward the United States, only that they had come to understand their leverage. What these nations remembered most about the Suez crisis was not America's support of Nasser but that Nasser had achieved major successes by his dexterity at playing the superpowers off against each other. The Suez crisis also served as the Nonaligned nations' first exposure to another seminal truth of the Cold War: that applying pressure on the United States generally elicited protestations of good faith and efforts to alleviate the stated grievance, whereas applying pressure on the Soviet Union could be risky, because the Soviets' invariable response was a tough dose of counterpressure.

In the decades following the Suez crisis, these tendencies became magnified. Castigation of American policies turned into the ritual of Nonaligned conferences. Condemnation of Soviet actions in declarations published at the end of periodic Nonaligned meetings was extremely rare

and circumspect. Since it was statistically unlikely that the United States was always wrong, the Nonaligned's tilt had to reflect a calculation of interest, not a moral judgment.

The most profound consequence of the Suez crisis ran along both sides of the fault line through Central Europe. Anwar Sadat, then chief propagandist for Egypt, wrote on November 19:

> There are only two Great Powers in the world today, the United States and the Soviet Union. . . . The ultimatum put Britain and France in their right place, as Powers neither big nor strong.[41]

America's allies drew the same conclusion. The Suez crisis brought home to them that one of the premises of the Atlantic Alliance—the congruence of interests between Europe and the United States—was at best only partially valid. From this point on, the argument that Europe did not need nuclear weapons because it could always count on American support ran up against the memory of Suez. Great Britain, of course, had always had an independent deterrent. As for France, an article of November 9, 1956, in the French daily *Le Populaire* expressed what was to become a fixed French attitude: "The French government will without doubt take the decision shortly to manufacture nuclear weapons. . . . The Soviet threat to use rockets has dissipated all fictions and illusions."[42]

The Suez players were not alone in feeling the jolts of America's disavowal of its closest allies. Chancellor Adenauer, as good a friend of America as there was in postwar Europe, vastly admired Dulles. Yet even he viewed America's Suez diplomacy as a potential precursor of some kind of global arrangement between the United States and the Soviet Union for which Europe would end up paying the price.

Adenauer happened to be in Paris on November 6, the day Eden and Mollet decided they would have to yield to American pressures. According to French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau, Adenauer said:

> France and England will never be powers comparable to the United States and the Soviet Union. Nor Germany, either. There remains to them only one way of playing a decisive role in the world; that is to unite to make Europe. England is not ripe for it but the affair of Suez will help to prepare her spirits for it. We have no time to waste: Europe will be your revenge.[43]

This statement illuminates the reasoning behind later Franco-German policy, culminating in de Gaulle's 1963 treaty of friendship and consultation with Adenauer.

Great Britain, drawing many of the same analytical conclusions as France had about its own relative weakness, put them in the service of quite a different policy. Turning away from European unity, Great Britain opted for permanent subordination to American policy. Before Suez, Great Britain had already become well aware of its dependence on the United States, though it had continued to conduct itself as a Great Power. After Suez, it interpreted the "special relationship" with America as a means of gaining maximum influence over decisions which were essentially made in Washington.

The most pernicious impact of the Suez crisis was on the Soviet Union. Within a year of the "spirit of Geneva," the Soviet Union had managed to penetrate the Middle East, to put down a revolt in Hungary, and to threaten rocket attacks against Western Europe. Throughout, international opprobrium had focused on Great Britain and France, while much more brutal actions by the Soviet Union in Hungary had received at best perfunctory condemnation.

Khrushchev's ideology and personality caused him to ascribe American conduct to weakness rather than to high principle. What had begun as a tentative Czechoslovakian arms deal with Egypt had turned into a major Soviet strategic breakthrough which divided the Atlantic Alliance and caused developing nations to turn to Moscow as a way of increasing their bargaining power. Khrushchev was euphoric. His high spirits propelled him onto a roller-coaster ride through one confrontation after another, starting with his Berlin ultimatum of 1958 and ending with his humiliation during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

For all the pain it caused, the Suez crisis had marked America's ascension into world leadership. With a sigh of relief, America used the occasion of Suez to cut itself loose from allies it had always held accountable for the blight of *Realpolitik* and for their flawed devotion to the balance of power. But, life being what it is, America would not be permitted to remain pristine. Suez turned out to be America's initiation into the realities of global power, one of the lessons of which is that vacuums always get filled and that the principal issue is not whether, but by whom. Having evicted Great Britain and France from their historic roles in the Middle East, America found that responsibility for the balance of power in that region had fallen squarely on its own shoulders.

On November 29, 1956, the United States government, hailing the recent Baghdad Pact summit of the leaders of Pakistan, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran, declared: "A threat to the territorial integrity or political independence of the members would be viewed by the United States with the utmost gravity."[44] It was the diplomats' way of saying that the United

States would undertake the defense of the Baghdad Pact states, a role for which Great Britain was now too weak and too discredited.

On January 5, 1957, Eisenhower sent a message to the Congress asking for approval of what came to be known as the Eisenhower Doctrine—a threefold Middle East program of economic aid, military assistance, and protection against communist aggression.[45] In his State of the Union Address of January 10, 1957, Eisenhower went even further by proclaiming America's commitment to the defense of the entire free world:

> First, America's vital interests are worldwide, embracing both hemispheres and every continent.
>
> Second, we have community of interest with every nation in the free world.
>
> Third, interdependence of interests requires a decent respect for the rights and the peace of all peoples.[46]

America's attempt to dissociate from Europe had landed it in the position of having to assume by itself the burden of protecting every free (that is, noncommunist) nation in every region of the globe. Though during the Suez crisis America was still attempting to deal with the ambiguities of equilibrium in the developing world via the United Nations, within two years American forces would be landing in Lebanon in pursuit of the Eisenhower Doctrine. A decade later, America would be grappling with it all alone in Vietnam, most of its allies having dissociated from it by invoking many an argument from the days of Suez as scripted by America itself.