

## The Architect of Peacekeeping

### ■ Synopsis



21 minutes

“The Architect of Peacekeeping” begins with the Suez Crisis of 1956 in which Egypt responds to the withdrawal of British and American financing for the Aswan High Dam project by nationalizing the Suez Canal Company. It includes:

- the subsequent Israeli, British and French invasions of Egypt;
- the proposal for the creation of a United Nations emergency peacekeeping force;
- Ralph Bunche’s role in designing and implementing the peacekeeping plan;
- the successful resolution of the crisis through the deployment of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) and the reopening of the Suez Canal by the U.N.

## ■ Historical Background

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States and its allies (the Western bloc) vied with the Soviet Union and its allies (the Eastern bloc) for the allegiance of the non-aligned nations around the world. At stake was control of the raw materials and resources of the so-called Third World. For the most part, these resources remained in the hands of the old European colonial powers with the Eastern bloc jockeying for an opening, determined to upset the status quo by siding with the independence movements taking place within the colonies. The power struggle between East and West quickly evolved into a nuclear arms race that for almost four decades after World War II threatened the entire world with death and destruction. During this period, the world faced a series of international crises and small wars that often ended up on the doorstep of the United Nations. The Suez crisis of 1956 was one of the major crises involving the struggle between East and West and emerging nationalism in the Third World.

## ■ Relevant Standards

### National Council for the Social Studies Strands

#### Strand II. Time, Continuity, & Change

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *the ways human beings view themselves in and over time*, so that the learner can: (b) apply key concepts such as time, chronology, causality, change, conflict, and complexity to explain, analyze, and show connections among patterns of historical change and continuity.

### In This Module (in order of appearance)

#### TERMS TO KNOW

nationalize, Secretariat, Secretary-General, UNEF (United Nations Emergency Force)

#### PEOPLE REFERENCED

Gamal Abdul Nasser, Moshe Dayan, David Ben Gurion, Anthony Eden, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lester B. Pearson, Dag Hammarskjöld, Golda Meir, Abba Eban, E. L. M. Burns

#### PLACES REFERENCED

Suez Canal, Israel, Egypt, Gaza Strip

#### PEOPLE ON SCREEN

Sir Brian Urquhart, Abdeen Jabara, Dr. David Levering Lewis, Abba Eban, Dr. M. T. Mehdi

**Strand III. People, Places, & Environments**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *people, places, and environments*, so that the learner can: (i) describe and assess ways that historical events have been influenced by, and have influenced, physical and human geographic factors in local, regional, national, and global settings.

**Strand IV. Individual Development & Identity**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *individual development and identity*, so that the learner can: (e) examine the interactions of ethnic, national, or cultural influences in specific situations or events.

**Strand VI. Power, Authority, & Governance**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance*, so that the learner can: (f) analyze and evaluate conditions, actions, and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among nations.

**Strand VII. Production, Distribution, & Consumption**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services*, so that the learner can: (d) describe relationships among the various economic institutions that comprise economic systems such as households, business firms, banks, government agencies, labor unions, and corporations.

**Strand IX. Global connections**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of *global connections and interdependence*, so that the learner can: (d) analyze the causes, consequences, and possible solutions to persistent, contemporary, and emerging global issues, such as health, security, resource allocation, economic development, and environmental quality; (f) analyze or formulate policy statements demonstrating an understanding of concerns, standards, issues, and conflicts related to universal human rights.

**National Center for History in the Schools Standards****Standard 1. Chronological Thinking**

The student thinks chronologically:

Therefore the student is able to

- C. Establish temporal order in constructing their [the students'] own historical narratives: working forward from some beginning through its development, to some end or outcome; working backward from some issue, problem, or event to explain its origins and its development over time.

**Standard 3. Historical Analysis and Interpretation**

The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation:

Therefore the student is able to

- A. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions by identifying likenesses and differences;
- B. Consider multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears;
- E. Compare competing historical narratives.

**Standard 5. Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making**

The student engages in historical issues-analysis and decision-making:

Therefore, the student is able to

- A. Identify issues and problems in the past and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation;
- E. Formulate a position or course of action on an issue by identifying the nature of the problem, analyzing the underlying factors contributing to the problem, and choosing a plausible solution from a choice of carefully evaluated options.

### ■ Map Connection

On a map of the world, locate the Suez Canal, note the nearby countries, and identify the canal's strategic position connecting the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

### ■ Before You Watch

For suggested preview strategies and activities, see page 4 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

If this is the first module screened, ask the students: Have you ever heard of Ralph Bunche? What do you know or think you know about Ralph Bunche? What do you predict you might find out about him in the video you are about to watch?

**OPINION** Who should control a resource or passageway that is needed by everyone? (Think of canals, oceans, airspace as well as natural resources used in industry and transportation such as oil, water, minerals, and precious metals.)

**RECALL** What honor did Dr. Ralph Bunche win in 1950, and why?

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT** Who owned the Suez Canal prior to Nasser's nationalizing it? Why was it important to so many nations? How did the crisis in the Suez fit into the overall Cold War?

■ **While You Watch** (with teacher's answer key)

For suggestions on how to use these questions, see pages 4-5 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

1. Why does President Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt nationalize the Suez Canal?  
*[To pay for the cost of constructing the Aswam High Dam after Egypt loses major financing from Western powers for the dam's construction.]*
2. How do Israel, Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union respond initially?  
*[Israel invades Egypt, the United States introduces a motion for a ceasefire in the U.N. Security Council and, when France and England veto it, remains initially uninvolved; Britain and France threaten military intervention and invade Egypt while the Soviet Union threatens to come to the aid of Egypt.]*
3. What proposal does Canada make to the U.N. General Assembly?  
*[Lester B. Pearson, the head of the Canadian delegation to the U.N., proposes the creation of an international emergency force under U.N. control to be deployed to the area, separating the combatants and allowing the invading forces to leave Egypt.]*
4. What are the two main challenges to this idea?  
*[Israel's refusal to allow U.N. troops to be deployed on Israeli territory; obtaining Nasser's consent to deploy U.N. troops on Egyptian soil, and negotiating with Egypt regarding the rules of conduct for the peacekeeping forces that would be stationed on Egyptian soil.]*
5. What role does Bunche play in UNEF?  
*[Answers may include the following: He is in charge of organizing the peacekeeping forces and working out the details of the operation; he works closely with Dag Hammarskjöld; he lays down the basic rules of conduct that all U.N. peacekeeping troops must observe.]*
6. Why does the U.N. send Bunche to negotiate with Nasser?  
*[He is highly respected in the Arab world.]*
7. What aspect of international peacekeeping did both the media and the soldiers have difficulty accepting at first?  
*[The idea that military contingents from national armies would not be allowed to use their weapons except in self-defense.]*
8. What are some of the conventions invented during this time to distinguish the peacekeeping forces from the fighting forces?  
*[Blue berets, blue helmets; U.N. markings on vehicles]*

9. President Eisenhower initially stayed neutral in the dispute. What does he finally do?  
*[He speaks to the American people, asking for support for the U.N. peacekeeping operation.]*
10. How does Golda Meir, Foreign Minister of Israel, respond?  
*[She presents a plan to the U.N. for withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza.]*
11. How long does it take Bunche to work out the basic rules of conduct and organization for peacekeeping operations that would last for decades?  
*[Ten days.]*
12. How does Bunche refer to himself in his peacekeeping role at the U.N.? What does Bunche consider to be his most lasting achievement?  
*[Chief Troubleshooter; the United Nations peacekeeping force.]*

## ■ After You Watch

### Post-Viewing Discussion Questions

For suggestions on how to structure post-viewing discussions or activities, see page 5 of the general reference section of the *Guide*.

1. What were the risks and rewards for the U.N. in attempting to resolve the Suez crisis?
2. In what way was the dispute over the Suez Canal a microcosm of the Cold War?
3. How was this dispute a critical test of the United Nations? Was the dispute successfully resolved?
4. What qualities and experiences did Dr. Bunche have that made him an effective mediator in this crisis?

## ■ Digging Deeper—Activities and Research Projects

1. President Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal when Western nations withdrew financing for the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Ask students to research why the financing was withdrawn. Have them research the events that led to this situation and create a timeline that summarizes their findings, showing historical causes and effects that led up to the Suez crisis.
2. Ask students to create a persuasive speech, to be given to the United Nations General Assembly, voicing the point of view of one of the following nations concerning the situation affecting the Suez Canal: England, United States, Israel, Egypt or the Soviet Union. Convene a mock General Assembly in which each point of view is expressed. You can find information at

<http://www.nmun.org/> (colleges)

<http://www.nhsmun.org/> (high schools)

3. Ask students to create a “T chart” describing the value of the Suez Canal then and now, and to answer the following question using their research: “Would the world react in the same way today as it did in 1956 to the closure of the Suez Canal?” Ask them to explain in 500-750 words.
4. Assign individuals or groups of students to research a situation in which the resources of a country have been the source of disputes between public and private interests. For example, water rights in Cochabamba, Bolivia; nationalization under Allende, and privatization under Pinochet, of mines and mills in Chile; nationalization of oil in Iran under Mossadeq; Castro’s nationalization of sugar plantations in Cuba; nationalization of banks in India; land nationalization in Zimbabwe; privatization of seed pollination—even accidental—of genetically modified crops in Canada. Have students find contrasting points of view in news coverage of the situation they have chosen to research and compare and contrast the different accounts, both in regard to the specific issue and in regard to the general question of the appropriate balance between public and private interests.

For Internet research, help students formulate effective search strings by identifying key words, such as “nationalization,” “privatization,” “water rights.” Be sure they understand that “water” and “rights” as separate terms will yield vast numbers of irrelevant results; searching for an entire phrase (often by using quote marks) is much more efficient. (See **A Note on Internet Resources**, page 37, in general reference section of the *Guide*.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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What does Bunche consider to be his most lasting achievement?