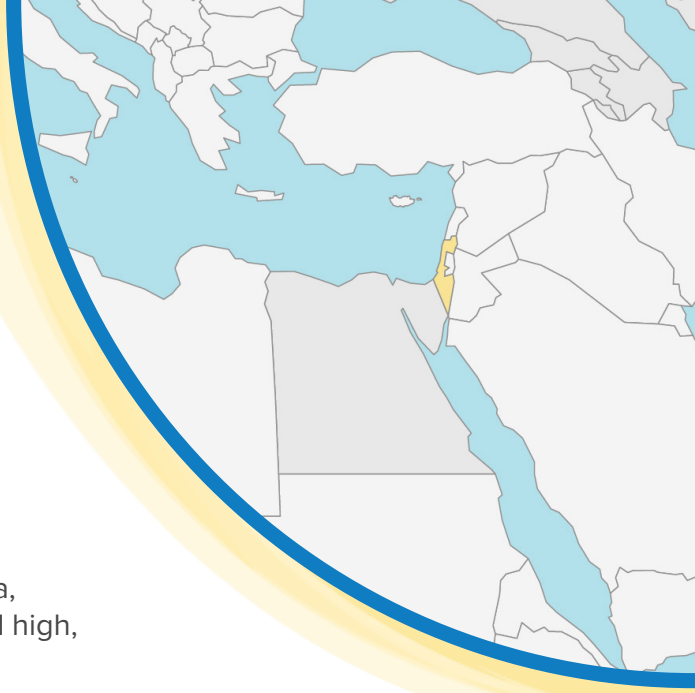

The State of Israel

The declaration in 1948 that established Israel as a Jewish state in the Middle East was greeted with invasion by its Arab neighbors. While many Middle Eastern countries were gaining their independence from European powers, the state of Israel maintained close ties to the United States and the West. Israel fought wars with neighboring countries to establish its independence from 1947 to 1949. Treaties signed in 1949 between Israel and Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan ended the fighting but tensions remained high, especially with Egypt.

A series of events continuously escalated tensions between the two countries. In 1950, Egypt closed the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping. Later in 1956, Egypt blockaded the Straits of Tiran. This act prevented ships from reaching the Israeli Port of Eilat, the only Israeli port on the Red Sea. Further, Egypt signed an arms deal with Czechoslovakia in 1955. Israel worried this action indicated that Egypt planned to start another war, and Israel began to increase its own arms supply in response. France agreed to sell Israel weapons, which led to a closer relationship between the two countries.

When Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal Company in 1956, Israel was not directly involved nor considered a major player in the situation, but it saw the action as a threat to its ability to trade and increase its advantage over a key rival.

Questions to Consider:

- What does Israel stand to gain in a conflict between Egypt and Great Britain or France?
- How can Israel strengthen its claim to independence?
- How does Israel benefit from an open Suez Canal?

Israel's Position:

- Maintain your allegiance with Britain and France.
- Prevent Egypt from growing stronger.
- Ensure Egypt does not get arms via the Soviet Union.
- Seek access to the canal for trade purposes.

What can Israel negotiate with?

Remember that you don't have to offer these right away in a negotiation.

- Promise no military action will be taken against Egypt.