

Constantinople Convention, 1888

Convention between Great Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Spain, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Russia and Turkey, respecting the free navigation of the Suez maritime canal signed at Constantinople, October 29, 1888.

Article I:

The Suez Maritime Canal shall always be free and of commerce or of war, without distinction of flag.

Consequently, the High Contracting Parties agree not in any way to interfere with the free use of the Canal, in time of war as in time of peace.

The Canal shall never be subjected to the exercise of the right of blockade.

Article II:

The High Contracting Parties, recognizing that the Fresh-Water Canal is indispensable to the Maritime Canal, take note of the engagements of His Highness the Khedive towards the Universal Suez Canal Company as regards the Fresh-Water Canal; which engagements are stipulated in a Convention bearing the date of 18th March, 1863, containing an expose and four Articles.

They undertake not to interfere in any way with the security of that Canal and its branches, the working of which shall not be exposed to any attempt at obstruction.

Article III:

The High Contracting Parties likewise undertake to respect the plant, establishments, buildings, and works of the Maritime Canal and of the Fresh-Water-Canal.

Article IV:

The Maritime Canal remaining open in time of war as a free passage, even to ships of war of belligerents, according to the terms of Article I of the present Treaty, the High Contracting Parties agree that no right of war, no act of hostility, nor any act having for its object to obstruct the free navigating of the Canal, shall be committed in the Canal and its ports, even though the Ottoman Empire should be one of the belligerent Powers.

Vessels of war of belligerents shall not re-victual or take in stores in the Canal and its ports of access, except in so far may be strictly necessary. The transit of the aforesaid vessels through the Canal shall be affected with the least possible delay, in accordance with the Regulations in force, and without any intermission than the resulting from the necessities of the service.

Their stay at Port Said and in the roadstead of Suez shall not exceed twenty-four hours, except in case of distress. In such case they shall be bound to leave as soon as possible. An interval of twenty-four hours shall always elapse between the sailing of a belligerent ship from one of the ports of access and the departure of a ship belonging to the hostile Power.

Article V:

In time of war belligerent Powers shall not disembark nor embark within the Canal and its ports of access either troops, munitions, or materials of war. But in case of an accidental hindrance in the Canal, men may be embarked or disembarked at the ports of access by detachments not exceeding 1,000 men, with a corresponding amount of war material.

Article VI:

Prizes shall be subjected, in all respects, to the same rules as the vessels of war of belligerents.

Article VII:

The Powers shall not keep any vessel of war in the waters of the Canal (including lake Timsah and the Bitter Lakes). Nevertheless, they may station vessel of war in the ports of access of Port Said and Suez, the number of which shall not exceed two for each power. This right shall not be exercised by belligerents.

Article VIII:

The agents in Egypt of the Signatory Powers of the present Treaty shall be charged to watch over its execution. In case of any event threatening the security or the free passage of the Canal, they shall meet on the summons of three of their number under the presidency of their Doyen, in order to proceed to the necessary verifications. They shall inform the Khedivial Government of the danger which they may have perceived, in order that that Government may take proper steps to insure the protection and the free use of the Canal. Under any circumstances, they shall meet once a year to take note of the due execution of the Treaty.

The last mentioned meetings shall take place under the presidency of a Special Commissioner nominated for that purpose by the Imperial Ottoman Government. A Commissioner of the Khedive may also take part in the meeting, and may preside over it in case of the absence of the Ottoman Commissioner.

They shall especially demand the suppression of any work or the dispersion of any assemblage on either bank of the Canal, the object or effect of which might be to interfere with the liberty and the entire security of the navigation.

Article IX:

The Egyptian Government shall, within the limit of its powers resulting from the Firmans, and under the conditions provided for in the present Treaty, take the necessary measures for insuring the execution of the said Treaty.

In case the Egyptian Government shall not have sufficient means at its disposal, it shall call upon the Imperial Ottoman Government, which shall take the necessary measures to

respond to such appeal, shall give notice thereof to the Signatory Powers of the Declaration of London of the 17th March, 1885, and shall, if necessary, concert with them on the subject.

The provisions of Articles IV, V, VII and VIII shall not interfere with the measures which shall be taken in virtue of the present Article.

Article X:

Similarly, the provisions of Articles IV, V, VII and VIII shall not interfere with the measures which His Majesty the Sultan and His Highness the Khedive, in the name of His Imperial Majesty, and within the limits of the Firmans granted, might find it necessary to take for securing by their own forces the defense of Egypt and the maintenance of public order.

In case His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, or His Highness the Khedive, would find it necessary to avail themselves of the exceptions for which this article provides, the Signatory Powers of the Declaration of London shall be notified thereof by the Imperial Ottoman Government.

It is likewise understood that the provisions of the four Articles aforesaid shall in no case occasion any obstacle to the measures which the Imperial Ottoman Government may think it necessary to take in order to insure by its own forces the defense of its other possessions situated on the eastern coast of the Red Sea.

Article XI:

The measures which shall be taken in the cases provided for by Article IX and X of the present Treaty shall not interfere with the free use of the Canal. In the same cases, the erection of permanent fortifications contrary to the provisions of Article VIII is prohibited.

Article XII:

The High Contracting Parties, by application of the principle of equality as regards the free use of the Canal, a principle which forms one of the bases of the present Treaty, agree that none of them shall endeavor to obtain with respect to the Canal territorial or commercial advantages or privileges in any international arrangements which may be concluded. Moreover, the rights of Turkey as the territorial Power are reserved.

Article XIII:

With the exception of the obligations provided for in this treaty, no encroachment is legalized on the rights of sovereignty or prerogatives deriving from the firmans.

Article XIV:

The High Contracting Parties agree that the engagements resulting from present Treaty shall not be limited by the duration of the Acts of Concession of the Universal Suez Canal Company.

Article XV:

The stipulations of the present Treaty shall not interfere with the sanitary measures in force in Egypt.

Article XVI:

The High Contracting Parties undertake to bring the present Treaty to the knowledge of the States which have not signed it, inviting them to accede to it.

Article XVII:

The present Treaty shall be ratified, and the ratifications shall be exchanged at Constantinople, within the space of one month, or sooner, if possible. In faith of which the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Treaty, and have affixed to it the seal of their arms.

Done at Constantinople,
29th. of October, 1888.