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THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT OF JUNE 1967: A LIMITED WAR

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26 March 1973

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26 March 1973

MONOGRAPH

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By

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A MONOGRAPH

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Transportation Corps

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ABSTRACT

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The primary question is whether or not the war in the Middle East in June 1967 was a limited war. Data was gathered from a variety of literary sources, but much of the material and interpretation was based on the author's personal experience as the Operations Officer of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization-Palestine from 1966 to 1970. The background of the situation prevailing in the Middle East, and the major events preceding the war are reviewed in order to examine the question of whether this war was part of a grand strategy on the part of either side. Both Arab and Israeli strategy and defense plans are reviewed. It is concluded that this war, like so many others, was not inevitable, but resulted from a series of miscalculations and over-reactions by all parties concerned. The Arab states entered the war lacking clearly defined national goals, and a supporting military strategy. Israel, however, had clearly established political objectives, which were both realistic and attainable, and possessed detailed military plans to achieve these goals. The author concludes that although Israel mobilized her maximum military strength, its application was limited by considerations of time, geography, political constraints, and the desire to limit the level of the conflict. It is concluded that the conflict of 1967 was a limited war in pursuit of limited political goals, and while the Israelis won a complete military success, battlefield accomplishments contributed little in solving the underlying political issues.

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INTRODUCTION

At 1630 hours, 10 June 1967, a United Nations ceasefire resolution brought to a close one of the most rapid and dramatic military campaigns in modern history. In less than 130 hours, Israel had thoroughly defeated a four-nation military alliance, severely damaged Soviet prestige in the Middle East, conquered territories four times her size, and seized weapons, vehicles and equipment valued at two billion dollars.

The Egyptian army alone had lost 10,000 troops and 1,500 officers in the fighting; an additional 5,000 soldiers, including eleven generals, had been taken prisoner. Of Egypt's seven divisions in the Sinai, four had been completely shattered, and three rendered ineffective. The Israelis had destroyed or captured some 700 tanks--60 percent of Egypt's total armored force. The percentage of artillery lost was even higher. Egypt's air force had been virtually demolished--338 out of 425 jet aircraft destroyed.[1] Charles Douglas Home, writing in "The Times" on 11 June 1967, described the Sinai as follows: "There must be at least 10,000 vehicles abandoned; some are total wrecks, others untouched . . . . In the Mitla Pass, two miles of vehicles, soft-skinned and armoured, nose to tail, had been wrecked and wrecked again by air attack. Other convoys lay like broken-backed snakes across the desert roads. At other times it was like flying over a sand-table exercise, with whole tank squadrons in formation knocked out."

The Jordanian army fared little better. Nine Jordanian brigades had fought in western Jordan. Of these, two infantry and one armored brigade were almost completely destroyed, and the remainder badly damaged. Some 8,000 soldiers were killed or wounded, and the Jordanian air force wiped out in its entirety. The Syrians were less badly hit, but nevertheless, two brigades had been virtually destroyed and three were rendered ineffective; at least 100 tanks were destroyed and captured.[2]

Far worse from the Arab point of view was the territorial metamorphosis that had occurred during these six days. On 5 June Jordanian forces in the Judean Hills were only 11 miles from Tel Aviv; Syrian forces in the Golan Heights dominated the Hula Valley; and an Egyptian force was prepared to cut across the narrow stretch of land dividing Egypt from Jordan, thus isolating the port of Eilat from the rest of Israel. On 10 June these threats had not only been removed, but Israeli forces were within easy striking distance of Damascus, Amman and Cairo.[3] Israeli forces had captured the Gaza Strip, overrun the entire Sinai peninsula, and advanced to the Suez Canal; gained control of the Old City of Jerusalem for the first time in nearly 2,000 years; gained control of all of Jordan west of the Jordan River; and captured the Golan Heights in Syria.

This conflict will undoubtedly be a classic for students of military history, and be studied for many years in military academies and general staff schools. During the intervening six years since the UN ceasefire arrangement, there have been

literally hundreds of books and thousands of articles written concerning the tactics and other factors which contributed to Israel's swift and conclusive military victory. As in earlier wars, the Israelis started with excellent military intelligence, supply, and communication services; well-trained and disciplined soldiers with esprit and the skill to make full use of modern weapons and techniques; highly-skilled military leaders who had effectively coordinated air and ground units into a single mobile striking force; and an established strategy with detailed tactical plans, all of which benefitted from short lines of communication. Lastly, the element of surprise established by their preemptive air strike enabled Israel to destroy the greater part of Arab air power on the ground. Within six hours, Israeli pilots were in complete command of the skies, a decisive contribution to winning the ground war.

But after the sand settled, and the ceasefire agreements were signed, were all the questions answered? How did the war really start, and once started, what type of war was it? Was it a conspriacy by Arab leaders to launch an all-out war to wipe Israel off the map and drive her population into the sea? Or, conversely, was it a part of Israel's overall grand strategy to expand her territorial boundaries to the biblical frontiers between the Nile and the Euphrates, often quoted by Zionist leaders? Or was it a war stumbled into through a series of miscalculations and misjudgments by all concerned, and once started, limited by political constraints, time, geography, and objectives?

The answers to these questions are not to be sought in the crisis itself, but in an analysis of the events which immediately preceded the war and in the overall strategy of the parties concerned.

BACKGROUND

A war between the Arab states and Israel was a possibility that existed for many years. There were mutual fears and suspicions; the unsettled problems of refugees and boundaries; the questions of infiltration, navigation rights, and water disputes; the Arab urge to avenge the humiliation of past defeats; and the agitation of regional problems by conflicting big power interests--all of these were issues which could easily lead to war.

Yet, the war that came in June 1967 was by no means inevitable, nor was it anticipated by the belligerents themselves a scant few weeks before it occurred. For almost all the tensions and potentials for hostility had fallen into a checkerboard of threat and deterrence that effectively checked open warfare since 1956. Despite border incidents and various other types of engagements, both Egypt, the chief Arab protagonist, and Israel seemed to be in agreement that full-scale war was not likely so long as the current state of politico-military balance prevailed.

EGYPT

In the spring of 1967 the Arab world was deeply divided, and Egypt, its leader, was a country with increasing internal problems amid growing tensions with its fellow Arab states. Its economy was crumbling, and there had been little advancement toward Nasser's goals of progress and industrialization. The enduring problems of overpopulation and under-employment continued--the population was growing at the rate of one million people a year, and several people continued to do the job of one. The country could not repay its debts, and its credit was running out. Western loans had been cut off, and the buying power of the Egyptian pound was sinking. Aid from communist countries was barely able to cover the costs of a burgeoning army and an expeditionary force of 60,000 men in Yemen. There was little left over to support a sagging economy. Yet, Nasser refused to cut his expenditures on defense, and continued to spend 13 percent of the nation's gross national product in support of the armed forces. Inflation became the dominant feature of Egypt's economy, and in 1966 prices were spiraling at an annual rate of 40 percent.[4]

Among the Arabs, Nasser was also losing his prestige and leadership. Tunis broke diplomatic relations with Egypt in October 1966, and Jordan recalled its ambassador in February 1967. There were accusations that Nasser was using the Arab League as a tool for his own personal aggrandizement. Nasser suspected

that the Ba'ath Party in Damascus was trying to outflank him from the left in the struggle for leadership of the Arab world. More important, Egyptian involvement in the Yemeni civil war had become inconclusive and embarrassing, and was contributing to growing discontent at home. But what irritated Nasser most were the attacks from Amman and Riyadh, claiming that he was a coward, afraid of the Israelis, and unwilling to honor his defense commitments to Syria.[5] Nasser had lasted longer than any Arab military ruler because he combined daring with caution. He was a master at playing the East against the West, and maneuvering in a world where small and weak countries could blackmail the big powers. He had been very successful for a long time, but economic problems and frustrations within the Arab world were to form the background for his actions in May of 1967.

ISRAEL

If Egypt was a country beset with troubles, Israel was certainly its counterpart in early 1967. It presented an unhappy picture of unemployment, bankruptcies, emigration and weak government--a country undergoing a deep ideological, social and economic crisis. Underlying all these factors was the fact that Israeli society had entered a stage of transition. The old values were disappearing with the old "elite"--the Zionists who emigrated to Palestine from the east European countries in the early 1900s were now a small minority in Israel. The new dominant

element was the "sabra" (Israeli-born), whose knowledge of the long Zionist struggle came mainly from a history book. In addition, the Oriental Jews from Yemen, Iraq, Morrocco, etc., were growing at a rapid rate. The population of this new Israel was thus composed of a heterogeneous mixture whose ideals were far different from the early "elite" who had created the Zionist state. Whereas in 1948, 55 percent of the Jewish population of Israel had been born in Europe, and less than 10 percent in North Africa or Asian countries, by 1967 the European-born Jews had dropped to 25 percent, the Orientals had risen to about 30 percent, and the "sabras" were now the most populous group.[6] Yet the "elite" remained in power, and between them and the larger part of the population, there was a widening gap of understanding and ideals. In the political arena the old-timers maintained almost complete control. Premier Levi Eshkol, successor to Ben Gurion, had almost complete power. But unlike Ben Gurion, Eshkol was a colorless man of compromise who preferred to delay, compromise and procrastinate rather than make a hard decision.

By early 1966 a deep depression hit the country. Reparation payments from West Germany ended, the balance of trade gap was unbridgeable, and workers were continually striking for higher wages. With the enactment of tougher credit policy legislation and the liquidation of many businesses and banks, the inevitable result was soaring unemployment--hardest hit were the new immigrants, especially those from the Oriental countries. The net result was a polarization of views between the immigrants and the "elite."

Thus, the crisis was not only economic, but it also had serious social overtones. Israel presented an unhappy picture--a country divided among itself, marked with a weak government, unemployment, bankruptcies, and emigration. This change of image was not lost on the Arabs, and it was this picture that Arab leaders bore in mind in early 1967.

PRELUDE TO WAR

FATAH ATTACKS AND ISRAELI RETALIATION

In February 1966 a new regime had taken over in Damascus, one of the most fanatic and extreme left-wing regimes the Syrians and the Arab world had yet experienced. This new regime differed markedly with Nasser regarding the means and timetable for the overthrow of Israel. It was their view that Israel must be weakened and harrassed by constant terror attacks which would prepare the ground for the final battle. This difference in attitude was one of the prime causes for the 1967 war. In July 1966 the Syrians took charge of the Fatah--the chief Palestinian guerrilla organization. Throughout the summer and fall of 1966 the campaign of violence increased in intensity. The Fatah now was under the full control of Syrian authorities, whose officers planned the infiltration missions, organized special units to implement them, and provided the necessary intelligence and arms. Most of these raids were made from Jordanian territory since the Syrian frontier with Israel was much shorter and therefore more difficult to cross undetected.

In the late fall of 1966, in a series of sorties, they dynamited houses in the outskirts of Jerusalem, derailed trains on the main Tel Aviv-Jerusalem line, mined roads and attacked isolated settlements. This infiltration campaign was in addition to almost daily shooting incidents between Syrian and Israeli troops over infringements of cultivation rights perpetrated by both sides in the demilitarized zones along their borders.

Israeli authorities finally decided that retaliation was necessary; the question was whether to strike Jordan from where the attacks originated, or go into Syria from where they were directed. Mr. Eshkol chose the easier way out, a retaliatory raid on Jordan. It was much easier to cross into Jordanian territory than into the well-fortified Golan Heights of Syria, and since the raiders came from Jordan, retaliation was meant to be a warning to the inhabitants of these border villages not to harbor or assist Fatah members. It was also hoped that a retaliatory raid would pressure the Jordanian government to take preventive measures.[7]

On 13 November 1966, an Israeli force supported by tanks crossed the border into Jordan with the objective of destroying the houses of the village of Samu, some four miles distant. They were under orders to avoid taking human lives, and everything went according to plan until a Jordanian motorized battalion blundered into the Israeli tanks ringing Samu. In the first Israeli salvo, 15 trucks were hit, 18 Legionnaires and civilians were killed, and 54 wounded.[8]

Tension between Israel and Syria continued to increase in early 1967 with more frequent exchanges of fire between Israeli and Syrian border troops, and Fatah attacks into Israel became almost daily occurrences. On 7 April there was a heavy exchange of fire by tanks and artillery, and when Israeli Mirages attacked Syrian gun positions they were challenged by Syria's new MIG-21s. The short sharp battle was a rebuff for the Syrians who lost six aircraft.[9]

At Samu and in the air battles in April, Israeli forces had engaged in "massive retaliations" which were disproportionate in size, visibility, and political impact. The next Israeli "over-reaction" was by senior officials between 7 and 14 May when they publicly and privately threatened more drastic retaliation against Syria in the near future.[10] While these threats were undoubtedly designed to deter further raids, they had the effect of convincing leaders in Moscow, Cairo and Damascus that such an attack was imminent. The Egyptians had remained passive during the Samu raid on Jordan, and during the air battles with their Syrian partners, and were being publicly scorned by other Arab countries. Radio Amman had repeatedly accused Nasser of being a paper tiger "hiding behind the skirts of the United Nations Emergency Force."[11] Nasser was now convinced that he could not sit idle any longer, but must take some action. It was his belief that the Israelis were acting so forcefully in the north against Syria because he couldn't bring Egyptian strength to bear

on their southern border in the Sinai. Over 60,000 Egyptian troops were in Yemen, there was only one division of Egyptian troops in the Sinai, and the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) buffer existed between Israel and Egypt. In order for the Egyptian army to become a deterrent to Israeli aggressions, the last two of these factors had to be altered.

The feeling of an impending crisis between Israel and Syria was growing. As noted, Premier Eshkol had warned Syria that unless they ceased their acts of aggression, the Israeli army would strike back in a manner, place, and time of their choosing. On 13 May a Soviet message delivered to Cairo and Damascus reported that the Israelis were massing troops on the Syrian border.[12] An attack appeared imminent. (At that time, UN reports revealed that there was no Israeli build-up on the Syrian border, and in fact, Israel had not as yet mobilized its reserves which account for 80 percent of its armed forces. The purpose of the Soviet alarmist, and false, report was probably to curb Syrian terror attacks, and also to prod Nasser to urge restraint on the leaders in Damascus.) The actual result, however, was Nasser's decision to put his deterrent theory to the test.

NASSER REINFORCES THE SINAI

At this stage Nasser had only limited objectives. The size of the force he moved to the Sinai--two divisions to reinforce the one division stationed there--was not sufficient for a full-scale contest with Israel. In addition, the elaborate publicity

which accompanied the move did not indicate offensive intentions. Nasser's motives were probably twofold: first, to act as a deterrent to any Israeli plan of attack in the north, and second, to make a move which would regain the prestige and initiative in the Arab world which he had all but lost.

When high Israeli officials first became aware of the Egyptian troop movements to the Sinai beginning 14 May, Premier Eshkol and other cabinet members were not unduly concerned, and considered the troop moves a show of force. Their confidence was based on the evaluation of their army that Nasser would not be ready to start another war before 1970 at the earliest, and would be in no position to seriously threaten Israel as long as he maintained 60,000 troops in Yemen. As the Egyptian troops flowed eastward, the Israelis remained unconcerned and did little more than order a very limited mobilization of the reserves.[13]

President Nasser did not seem to envisage actual war at this point, and apparently had no plans for such an eventuality. In a speech on May 22, Nasser said, "I say that the sequence of events determined the plan. We had no plan before May 13."[14] (The date he received the Soviet warning.) But he had been aware that in order to fully regain respect and prestige among the Arab nations, he would have to neutralize the inherent protection provided by the UNEF stationed along his frontier with Israel.[15] Other Arab leaders continued to openly ridicule his claims of leadership: "Nasser is making war-like noises behind the protective screen of UNEF," jeered radio Amman.[16]

On 16 May, Egyptian military representatives requested that the UNEF commander withdraw his forces from the Gaza Strip and Sinai. No mention was made of the UN contingent at Sharm-el-Sheikh, at the mouth of the Straits of Tiran. However, UN Secretary General U Thant forced Nasser's hand; he would not agree to either a temporary or partial evacuation. Once his hand was forced, Nasser could not back down without a tremendous loss of face. He, therefore, demanded total UN evacuation of all positions, to include those at Sharm-el-Sheikh; on 19 May the UN flag was lowered at UNEF headquarters in Gaza, and its 3,400 troops withdrew from the stations they had held for ten years.[17] It is doubtful that Nasser had really foreseen or wanted this abrupt end. His initial moves were probably not planned as a real military challenge, but as a deterrent, and as a political demonstration of Egyptian support for other Arab countries.

NASSER CLOSES THE STRAITS

With the withdrawal of the UNEF buffer, Israeli officials began to take seriously the possibility of an imminent Egyptian military challenge. The civilian leadership hesitated until 19 May when it fully mobilized its reserves, and its armed forces then expanded from between 60,000 - 75,000 to 260,000 troops.

Nasser probably had no intention of closing the Straits of Tiran before the total UN evacuation forced his hand, but the Arab propaganda campaign continued to intensify from Cairo,

Damascus, and other Arab capitals. The Israelis had warned repeatedly that closure of the Straits would be tantamount to war, but after his initial success it became increasingly difficult for Nasser to follow a less extreme line.[18] Domestic difficulties probably gave the initial impetus to Nasser's belligerent moves, but the general desire of the Arab world for revenge now began to influence and propel him toward further action. The propaganda machines had pushed this theme so hard for twenty years that it began to assume a momentum of its own. There were demands that his troops at Sharm-el-Sheikh were now in a position to close the Straits to the Israelis. But Nasser was cautious as he well knew that the closure of the Straits would risk war. He stayed his hand and waited.

While the Israelis likely had envisaged some type of action against Syria in mid-May, they were surprised when Nasser marched his troops into the Sinai and demanded the withdrawal of UNEF. They had not foreseen a showdown with Egypt, and the press and government officials who formerly were espousing retaliatory action, now spoke of means of defusing the crisis. This appeasement mood reached its climax on 22 May with a speech by Premier Eshkol, his first policy announcement since the crisis began. He made no threats, disclaimed any aggressive intentions on the part of Israel, and proposed a mutual withdrawal of troop concentrations. The speech almost appealed for restraint and was disappointing to the Israeli army and public.[19]

To Nasser this was a green light, and confirmed his suspicions that Israel did not want war. He scrapped his limited objectives and within hours of Eshkol's speech, announced the closure of the Straits to Israeli shipping. At the same time, he began increasing Egyptian strength in the Sinai from three to seven divisions. This was the old confident Nasser, the recognized leader of the Arab masses, who was certain he assessed correctly the probable Israeli reaction to his moves. At this stage he was probably carried away by the general enthusiasm his moves had generated from Algiers to Baghdad; once again he was the undisputed leader of the Moslem world. He continued to use extravagant propaganda and on 29 May announced, "Tiran was not the issue, but the existence of Israel."[20] He now felt he had within his grasp at least a great political victory, if not a limited military one. In the week following the closure of the Straits, his statements and actions tended to indicate that he was no longer directing the situation, but rather, that the situation was directing him.

Both the Egyptians and Israelis sought US or UN intervention to prevent a war in the days immediately preceding 5 June, but both were now caught in the developing situation and events carried them quickly to its culmination. On 2 June Nasser briefed his senior officers that "we must expect the enemy to strike a blow within 48 to 72 hours and no later."[21] The attack came, and Egypt and Syria were not prepared for the war into which they had stumbled; they were without objectives or a coordinated plan of action, somehow hoping Israeli forces would crumble.

ARAB STRATEGY

Prior to 1956, the Egyptian army had been almost exclusively intended to serve internal security purposes. It was only after the British withdrawal from Suez and the Sinai campaign of 1956 that a full strategy developed. This conception identified four specific tasks for the Egyptian armed forces: (1) preparing to confront Israel, (2) preparing against outside attacks, (3) conducting expeditionary operations in other Arab countries, and (4) internal security.[22]

Derived from their experience in the Suez War, the Egyptian armed forces developed according to the following principles: (1) steady long-range programming for acquisition of the latest equipment, and phasing out of obsolescent material, instead of improvisation, (2) heavy emphasis on armor and air power to meet the requirements of fighting on the Israeli front, (3) the development of greater capacity to mount expeditionary operations across air and sea routes, and (4) general quantitative expansion. In most respects Egypt, as well as Syria and Jordan, envisaged a brief war of movement in which armored and motorized columns and air forces were expected to be the decisive factors. To support this concept, between 1956 and 1966 Egypt doubled the number of its troops, increased its tanks by 90 percent, and increased its aircraft by 60 percent.[23]

Information concerning Arab tactical plans to carry out their overall strategy is sketchy at best, but a number of captured documents

indicate that while the Arab armies had plans for military action against Israel, their objectives were rather modest in scope and far less ambitious than their propaganda would have indicated. There is no evidence that there was an Arab master plan for a concerted campaign against Israel in May or June 1967. Arab actions between 5 and 7 June would tend to corroborate this contention. While their strategy envisioned a war of movement, their troop deployments were almost exclusively defensive in nature.

Nasser recognized the value of a pre-emptive air attack, but did not want to initiate a war. He had been warned by the major powers not to do so, and did not want to estrange world opinion. It was Nasser's expectation that if Israel attacked, he could block their advance in the Sinai, and then launch a counter-offensive. He was certain that six Egyptian divisions, manning prepared fortifications in the northern Sinai, could effectively control the two main roadways into the Sinai and prevent an Israeli breakthough. Once the Israelis were contained, Egyptian forces could then counterattack. But even the Egyptian leaders did not believe that their army was strong enough to overrun Israel, or even to reach Tel Aviv.[24] In their view, a complete victory was not necessary, and they would achieve their aims with a stalemate. If they could block the Israeli forces in the Sinai, the Straits would remain closed, and Israel would have to bargain on their terms. From the beginning, their tactical deployment was defensive, with the exception of an armored task force in the eastern section of the Sinai whose mission was to isolate the Israeli port of Eilat from the rest of Israel.[25]

While the Egyptian army looked strong on paper, the situation on the ground was much different. Hasty deployment of six divisions of troops to the Sinai had resulted in chaos and confusion in the forward positions. Units were being continually switched, and follow-on supply and administrative support was marginal at best.

In the north the situation was much the same. Although both Jordan and Syria had offensive plans, their troop deployment was completely defensive. When the war began in the Sinai, neither of them engaged in a war of movement; they were content to sit back and shell Israeli positions along their borders. During the first two days of the war the Syrians enjoyed a large superiority in numbers, but a serious offensive never materialized.

Because, in permitting Israel to begin the war with her pre-emptive air attacks, and in thereafter being completely unable to gain the offensive, the Arab military forces never achieved the opportunity to implement any planned strategies, it is unnecessary to consider the relationship of those strategies to the limited war concept under discussion in this paper.

ISRAELI STRATEGY

Israel had recognized since the Sinai campaign of 1956 the general strategy which must guide the development of her armed forces. Unlike Egypt, which had multiple objectives, Israeli strategy had the advantage of having a single purpose--to defend her people and territory from attack by neighboring Arab states.

In this single purpose, Israel confronted two basic problems--the answers to which provide the main elements of Israel's strategy and the principles guiding the development of its armed forces.

First, there is the problem of limited manpower. Israel, a nation of three million, has a combined Arab population of 44 million along her immediate borders. Egypt alone has a population ten times greater than Israel's population. To meet a wartime threat, Israel must mobilize its total resources. Once mobilized, over 10 percent of its total population, and over 20 percent of its work force is devoted to the armed forces. To provide a proper defense force, Israel chose to maintain a small 60,000 regular member armed force, and a well-trained reserve force of 200,000 which could be mobilized in 24 hours and be in the field in 48 hours.[26] All Jewish Israeli men, and about 25 percent of the women, are conscripted into the army at age 18. After 30 months of active duty for enlisted personnel, and 42 months for officers, each man becomes a member of the active reserve until age 45, at which time he is transferred to the Civil Defense Force. Each reservist trains one day a month on weapons and field operations, and devotes a minimum of one month a year to intensive field training. Women in the reserve receive essentially the same type of training until age 29 or until married. In effect, the Israeli regular army is composed of a number of full strength brigades, and provides officers and NCO's to man the professional and technical services, train recruits, and provide cadre for the reserve units.

The second basic problem that confronted Israeli defense planners was the irregualr size and shape of the country. Without entering into details, it should be noted that its small size, 11 miles in width at its narrowest point, left little room for strategic retreat, and its long unobstructed frontiers ruled out a strategy of static defense. To overcome these problems, the Israelis adopted a general strategy providing for point defense, and an offense that would rely on the reserve system. The backbone of the defense was to be the kibbutzims, or border settlements. These defenses were to be manned by the year around inhabitants and supported during periods of emergency by reserve units of older personnel, equipped with heavy and crew-served weapons. These settlements were meant to bear the brunt of an attacking force, to slow it down, and disperse it if possible. This would then free the main portion of the armed force from border defense duties, and permit them to attack or counterattack at the time and place of their choosing.

Military thinking in Israel was governed by three main premises: (1) that control of the air was essential; therefore, more than half of the total defense expenditures during the early 1960s went to the air force, and between 1956 and 1965 Israel increased its aircraft by almost 200 percent; (2) that armor should be the primary ground element, and the armored force was developed from a small nucleus in 1956 to a significant force of over 1,000 tanks by 1967; and (3) that once an offensive breakthrough had been achieved, it should be rapidly exploited.[27] In every plan speed and flexibility were essential factors.

Israel suffers most of the problems common to artificially created states--it is small, with no natural obstacles guarding its borders. Clearly, geography dictated that there be no military mistakes. Because of the small room for strategic retreat and maneuver, and the conviction that control of the air is essential, Israeli planners have always been inclined to favor the strategy of pre-emptive attack.

LIMITED WAR

Historically, military power has been the primary instrument to achieve political goals. When negotiation and bargaining fail, the application of military force becomes the final arbiter among nations. In this writer's opinion, the determining factor between general and limited war in a non-nuclear conflict is not how much military power a nation mobilizes, but rather, how this strength is applied, and the objective sought. For this discussion, limited war will be defined as follows:

> "Armed conflict in which at least one protagonist intentionally restricts his objectives and/or means to accomplish those objectives. Intentional restriction can be self-imposed or induced by an opponent or another nation or nations."[28]

There is little doubt that Israel mobilized her maximum military power to fight in June 1967. But her military objectives were in direct support of political goals, and these goals were reasonable and attainable.

ISRAELI OBJECTIVES

From the outset of the crisis in mid-May, Israel recognized that the real threat was from Egypt in the Sinai. It was Egypt which possessed the bulk of Arab armed forces and modern equipment. Without Egypt in the military equation, Israel enjoyed a distinct military superiority over the combined armed forces of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan: 2.2:1 in military strength after mobilization; 1.3:1 in tanks and assault guns; and 3:1 in supersonic aircraft. However, with Egyptian forces in the equation, Israel was at a numerical disadvantage: 1:1.2 in military strength; 1:2 in tanks and assault guns; and 1:2.6 in supersonic aircraft.[29] In the face of this equation, Israeli planners hoped to limit the fighting to the southern front, and in accordance with their overall strategy massed the bulk of their forces in the Sinai. Their objectives in this sector were twofold: first, to reopen the Straits of Tiran, and second, to destroy the Egyptian army which was rapidly massing along the southern border.

Israel was fairly certain that Lebanon, other than offering verbal support for the Arab cause, would not intervene militarily. She was equally hopeful that Jordan, despite its recent military alliance with Egypt, would remain quiet. Therefore, only minimal forces were planned for the Lebanese and Jordanian sectors, and these were in a defensive deployment; initially, there were no Israeli offensive plans for these two fronts.

The Israelis, however, had little doubt that Syria would enter the conflict once the war began, and had afforded this front second priority. Their main objective in this sector, dictated by heavy pressure from the powerful kibbutz organizations, was to secure an enclave in the Golan Heights which would free the fertile Hula Valley from the threat of Syrian guns.

It is this writer's contention that Israeli objectives in June 1967 were limited by time, geogrpahy, and level of conflict, in an atmosphere of constraining political pressures.

LIMITATIONS OF TIME

From the outset, speed was a fundamental factor in all Israeli tactical plans. Military leaders knew from the start that they would not only be fighting the Arabs, but also the clock. It seemed unlikely that a war would last much longer than three or four days. It was logical to expect that by that time the UN would intervene and impose a ceasefire. Even in the event the UN did not intervene, Israeli planners assessed that Israel could only sustain the offensive for a limited period. It was essential that Israeli forces did not get bogged down in the Sinai, as it could be expected that the Soviets would reinforce Egypt after a short period. In addition, a quick victory was necessary to deter promised aid to Egypt and Jordan from the Arab states of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Sudan, Algeria, and Morrocco--many of which had forces already on the move the morning of 5 June. The key tactical objective to Israeli plans in the south was the triangle

of complex fortifications which the Egyptians had built in the northern Sinai between Rafa, Abu Ageila, and El Arish. Despite the difficulties in overcoming these prepared positions, the Israelis could not afford to bypass them. An imposed ceasefire with Israeli forces in the Sinai, while leaving these fortifications still in Egyptian control, would place the Israelis in a precarious position. In addition, the two major access routes to the Sinai passed through this fortified triangle and control of these roadways was essential to a plan based on speed of execution.

Limitations of manpower and money also made speed an essential factor. When Israel mobilized on 19 May 1967, her armed forces expanded from 60,000 to approximately 260,000. At that time over 10 percent of her total population and 20 percent of her work force were in the military. Truck drivers became tank drivers, teachers and farmers turned riflemen, and businessmen became brigade commanders overnight. With mobilization complete, nonessential factories closed their doors,buses stopped running, crops remained unharvested, and schools shut down to permit children to carry out certain essential public services. Under these conditions, Israel cannot remain fully mobilized for long periods of time. Once mobilized, its forces must fight quickly, as a lengthy mobilization would severely cripple the economy. This consideration also pertains to the post-war era, and thus is one of the largest limiting factors on territorial objectives sought in conflict. Soon after the fighting ends, Israel must demobilize and the regular force of 60,000 must be capable of controlling any enemy territory occupied.

LIMITATIONS OF GEOGRAPHY

Jordan

Israeli action toward Jordan was a classic attempt to limit the area of conflict. From the beginning, Israeli officials recognized that the primary political and military threat was in the Sinai, and if a conflict started there, the Syrians in the north would likely join in. Jordan, sitting in the middle, was of the utmost strategic importance. Israel planned for minimal forces in this area, but at the same time recognized that this was the most vulnerable front--only 11 miles separated Jordanian positions and the sea north of Tel Aviv. The Israelis were hopeful and somewhat optimistic that Jordan would not enter the war, and on the morning of 5 June sent a note through the UN Truce Supervision Organization in Jerusalem to King Hussein which read: "We are engaged in defensive fighting on the Egyptian sector and we shall not engage ourselves in any action against Jordan, unless Jordan attacks us. Should Jordan attack Israel, we shall go against her with all our might."[30]

In addition to the desire to maximize forces in the Sinai, there were other factors in the Israeli desire to exclude Jordan from the conflict. Jordan, like Lebanon, was a moderate Arab state firmly in the western camp, and Israel did not wish to exacerbate relations with her western supporters. Another consideration was the obvious post-conflict requirement for large numbers of troops to control any territory taken in the heavily-

populated West Bank, including the cities of Arab Jerusalem, Jenin, Jericho, Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron. Finally, there was the fervent desire to have sufficient forces available to strike hard at the Syrians, whom most Israelis consider their most vindictive enemies.

Minimal troops were assigned to the Jordanian front--four brigades in defensive positions. But as Jordanian artillery started to fire into the Jewish section of Jerusalem, Israeli authorities quickly adjusted their operational plans. While they had originally afforded the Syrian front second priority, they now considered the Jordanian front much more critical. Four brigades originally intended for Syria were quickly sent to this front, and a paratroop brigade scheduled for action in the Sinai was rushed to Jerusalem.[31] Israeli objectives in this sector quickly materialized from long-held desires to first, control the Arab sector of Jerusalem--a coveted goal--and second, to eliminate the West Bank salient and straighten the Jordanian-Israeli border. The Jordan River would make an excellent geo-political boundary, and an easily defended barrier which would effectively block the advance of four Iraqi brigades then moving through eastern Jordan. These objectives were unexpected bonuses in what turned out to be a war of opportunity on the central front.

Lebanon

Israeli thinking toward Lebanon was similar to that concerning Jordan. Lebanon, however, was not of strategic or critical importance,

and her army of 11,000 did not pose a serious threat along Israel's northernmost border. Again, Israeli authorities sent a message through the UN Truce Supervision Organization to the Lebanese government to the effect that Israel would not attack if Lebanese forces were held in check.

Over the years the Lebanese had come to rely almost exclusively on diplomacy for external defense. Lebanon counted heavily on the good will of outside power, particularly the western nations, to preserve its sovereignty and integrity; at the same time, it avoided any actions or alliances that might antagonize any of its quarrelsome neighbors. This policy was well-suited to Lebanon's internal need to maintain harmony between its Moslem population (50 percent), which generally supported the more radical Arab causes in the area, and its Christian population, which generally was sympathetic to the West and the moderate Arab states. It also provided a number of economic advantages. By avoiding the arms race, it could concentrate on being the financial center of the Arab world. Considering the small size of Lebanon's armed force, and her lack of enthusiasm for military involvement, it was not surprising that she remained on the sideline.

Syria

As noted earlier, most Israelis considered the Syrians to be the primary cause of the trouble which threatened war. In contrast to the situation with Jordan and Lebanon, they had no wish to limit the conflict in this sector. Initially, Israel had planned to

provide six brigades to this front, but the entry of Jordan into the war temporarily diverted most of these forces. It was not until fighting on the West Bank had ceased that forces could be shifted to the Syrian sector to attack the well-defended Golan Heights. Here again, their objectives were limited by time as pressure for a UN ceasefire was growing, and by the necessity to keep occupied territory to a minimum. The eventual enclave taken varies from 10 to 20 kilometers in depth, is anchored to good defensible terrain, and is just eastward far enough to encompass the only north-south road net in southern Syria. This area was not heavily populated, having a total pre-war population of 80,000, and the bulk of these inhabitants who did not voluntarily flee were forced from the area by the advancing Israeli troops. This practical, but ruthless, action provided a trouble-free buffer-zone which would be easy to supervise with a minimum of troops. The Syrian sector was the only one in which the Israelis found it necessary to delay accepting the proposed UN ceasefire until they had fully accomplished their objectives.[32]

Egypt

In this most important sector, the Israeli military command limited their objectives to the minimum essential to achieve their stated political aims--the reopening of the Straits of Tiran and the defeat of the Egyptian army in the Sinai. The Israelis' assessment was that even if Sharm-el-Sheikh was retaken by an airborne or sea force, it could only be retained for a limited

time unless the adjoining Sinai was also under their control. Thus, defeat of the Egyptian army and the capture of the whole of Sinai became essential objectives.[33] In this respect, the Sinai was an ideal battleground for the Israelis. It was a vast expanse of desert and mountains inhabited by very few people. The Sinai has approximately 50,000 people; 20,000 of these are in the El Arish area, and the remainder are Bedouin tribes spread throughout the peninsula. Even though the Sinai accounts for 95 percent of the newly occupied territory, the lack of populated centers makes it an easy area to control. Once the complete Sinai was under their control, the Israelis quickly negotiated a ceasefire arrangement with Egypt. Israeli ground forces did not attempt to cross the Suez Canal and attack or occupy the large Egyptian cities of Suez, Ismailia, or Port Said. Once again, the Israeli forces limited the area of conflict to that necessary to achieve political goals.

LIMITATIONS ON LEVEL OF VIOLENCE

The contestants in the June 1967 war did not possess a nuclear capability. But the Israelis were well aware that their conflict with the neighboring Arab states would run the risk of involving other nations which possessed nuclear weapons--both the US and USSR had vital interests in the area. From the outset, their military objectives were the minimum consistent to assure achievement of national political objectives. It is also highly probable that Israel was given to understand by the US that any offensive actions were to be limited to only necessary objectives.

In the Sinai and the Golan Heights Israeli military power was directed almost solely toward military targets. Where possible, population centers were avoided, and there was no attempt to occupy or threaten an Arab capital. Restriction on the level of violence is best seen in the use of Israel's air power. Basic to their entire concept of rapid warfare was the need to control the air, and after the first few hours, they were free to attack any target they desired. But throughout the six days, their air power was constrained to military targets and forward lines of communications. During the first two days the Israeli targets were airfields, radar installations, and SAM-2 sites. Only after air superiority was assured, did the Israeli air force switch their emphasis to support of ground operations and the interdiction of lines of communications. At no time during the war was air power directed at civilian targets, factories, shipyards, or other strategic or military-related targets.

CONCLUSION

It is the thesis of this article that no government plotted or intended to start a war in the Middle East in the summer of 1967. It seems more likely that the parties blundered into conflict through a series of gross miscalculations and over-reactions by all concerned. But when the war began, the Arab states had no clearly defined political objectives, and there was no evidence of a combined strategy or coordinated plan for military action. Israel, on the other hand, had definite national objectives and

a supporting military strategy to achieve these political goals. These goals were realistic and attainable, and necessarily limited by considerations of time, geography, level of conflict, and constraints imposed by the major powers. Israeli military strength and strategy was disciplined accordingly.

There was no attempt to destroy the economic or political infrastructure of the surrounding Arab states--civilian industries, transportation and communication facilities, and populated centers were spared from military activity. In Egypt and Syria the fighting was confined to sparsely populated border areas, and perhaps less than five percent of the populace of these militarily defeated countries heard a shot fired or a bomb explode. Not a single Arab government fell as a result of defeat in war, and within 18 months Egypt was sufficiently resupplied to engage in major exchanges of fire with Israeli forces in the Suez Canal sector involving artillery, rockets, aircraft and surface-to-air missiles.

If war and defeat are classic causes of social and political change, the conflict in June 1967 must be regarded as a limited war, in pursuit of limited national objectives. For Israel there was no peace in victory. Battlefield achievements contributed little to solving the underlying political issues. The fundamental issues left open have come no nearer to settlement in the six years following this conflict. The area remains a most disorderly part of the world--geographically, racially, culturally, economically, and above all politically.

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FOOTNOTES

1. David Kimche and Dan Bawly, The Sandstorm, p. 237.

2. Ibid., p. 238.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., pp. 34-36.

5. Walter Laqueur, The Road to Jerusalem, p. 92.

6. Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Facts About Israel, 1971, p. 42.

7. Fred J. Khouri, The Arab-Israeli Dilemma, p. 234.

8. Charles W. Yost, "The Arab-Israeli War: How It Began", Foreign Affairs, January 1968, p. 305.

9. Khouri, p. 243.

10. Ibid., pp. 244-245.

11. Kimche and Bawly, p. 83.

12. Nadav Safran, From War to War, p. 274.

13. Ibid., p. 307.

14. Ibid., p. 272.

15. Khouri, pp. 245-246.

16. Kimche and Bawly, p. 92.

17. UN Document, General Assembly, A/6730/add. 1, 2, 3, Report of the Secretary-General on the Withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Force, pp. 1-18.

18. Khouri, pp. 208-210.

19. Safran, p. 269.

20. Laqueur, p. 99.

21. Ibid., p. 108.

22. Safran, p. 211.

23. Ibid., p. 252.

24. Kimche and Bawly, p. 162.

25. Laqueur, p. 108.

26. Safran, p. 220.

27. Ibid., p. 254.

28. U.S. Army War College, Military Strategy Textbook, Vol. III. ch. VIII.

29. Safran, p. 319.

30. Kimche and Bawly, p. 191.

31. Safran, p. 360.

32. Khouri, pp. 264-265.

33. Kimche and Bawly, pp. 174-175.

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