The Six Day War:
The Victory that Spurred a Fixed Mindset

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Background

The period immediately prior to the Six Day War was marked by anxiety over the State of Israel's ability to survive a war in which it was attacked by the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian militaries, assisted by reinforcements from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and possibly Libya, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. There was a sense of an existential threat to the state, whose narrowest point at the Tulkarm-Netanya line was not more than 14 kilometers wide, and as a result the Israeli leadership attempted repeatedly to avoid the war by diplomatic means. When efforts to do so were exhausted, the IDF launched a preemptive air attack (Operation Moked) against Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq and achieved air superiority, which was a decisive factor in the Israeli victory.

The spectacular and quick victory led to the expansion of Israel's borders to the Jordan River, the liberation of Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria, the removal of the Syrian threat from the Golan Heights and the Egyptian threat from the Sinai Peninsula, and the deployment of the IDF on the banks of the Suez Canal. All this contributed to a sense of exhilaration and even euphoria among Israeli society, the IDF command, and the political leadership. The expanded State of Israel after the war hardly resembled the tiny state prior it.

The status of the IDF in the eyes of the Israeli public peaked following the war, to the point that its commanders were idolized and considered "gods." The sense of security among much of the public grew and inspired

the belief that this would be the last war, since it seemed logical that after such a victory the Arabs would not again challenge Israel, and if they did, they would suffer another defeat. This feeling was expressed by General Ezer Weizman, who was the head of the Operations Directorate during the Six Day War:

> I think that the Arabs have a lot of positive characteristics . . . but with respect to their military abilities—that is something else. I am sure that in their education and way of living and in the mentality of their leadership, the time has come that they understand that war is not for them . . . When we are positioned today on the Jordan and on the Suez and on the Golan Heights—I think that for the first time war is preventable . . . It is appropriate to say that peace is a great thing, but the problem is not peace or war, but what do we want in this country? . . .We have never been in such a positive security situation, and the IDF's capability was not diminished in the war, but already today you see Jews here and there who are afraid of other nations. For once we need to stop being afraid of other nations and start to understand that the world is more scared of us, because it recognizes our greatness even more than we do.[1]

This essay argues that the victory in the Six Day War and the subsequent sense of security led to a degree of stagnant political and military thinking in Israel, which later led to the failure of early warning and the military-strategic and operational strategy in the Yom Kippur War. Of the numerous studies and books written about the war, many have dealt with the intelligence surprise, with emphasis on the "conception" that became embedded in the minds of the analysts. Others have related to the "political conception," and some have examined the "military-operational conception."

To anyone who has been involved in war, and certainly anyone who has commanded military battles, it is clear that the conception is a vital component in achieving a common language between the government and the military, and between the military-strategic echelon and the operational and tactical echelons. The complexity of managing a battle, in which there are

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1   Ezer Weizman, head of Operations Directorate during the war, interviewed by Geula Cohen, *Maariv* July 14, 1967 [Hebrew].

some ten levels (from the cabinet down to the individual soldier), including coordination and synchronization, is a major challenge that cannot be met without a shared conceptual language. The development of a conception is a crucial means of managing a war event.

At the same time, someone who is involved in the management of a war event must be aware of the very existence of the conception and the imperative to evaluate it constantly, to determine whether its basic assumptions and underlying conditions have changed. This includes, for example, the enemy's order of battle, its abilities, its interests, its goals, and its view of the existing situation. If these have changed, then changes must be made to the conception, sometimes to the point of developing a new one.

There is naturally a reluctance to reexamine the conception, since habit provides a feeling of certainty and confidence. Therefore, it is also difficult to digest information that contradicts the conception and, all the more so, to criticize it or abandon it. Indeed, it is the experience of the old and the familiar that becomes "like riches kept by the owner to his detriment" (*Ecclesiastes* 5:12).

The conception alone is not sufficient to explain the deficiencies that surfaced in the Yom Kippur War. Nonetheless, the blind adherence to the conception illustrates the fixed mindset that prevailed throughout the political and military leadership of Israel before the war. Thus, it was, in fact, the euphoria of the spectacular victory in the Six Day War that led to the cognitive stagnation on the political, military-strategic, and military-operational levels and in turn to the surprise of the Yom Kippur War.

Fixed Political Thinking

There is no doubt that the decision of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat to go to war in 1973 was the result of his understanding that there was no chance of regaining Egyptian sovereignty over the Sinai Peninsula through political means. His attempts to launch a political process with the United States in order to achieve this goal (by means of US Secretary of State William Rogers and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger) failed. Some have claimed that as a result of infighting in the US administration between the National Security Advisor and the Secretary of State, the United States did

not give sufficient priority to the Egyptian initiatives.[2] On the other hand, some claim that the political domestic circumstances in Israel did not allow Prime Minister Golda Meir to respond to the Egyptian proposals.[3]

Even today, the question of the Israeli government's responsibility for the fixed mindset is the subject of controversy. In her speech to the closing session of the Knesset some ten weeks prior to the Yom Kippur War, Prime Minister Meir claimed:

> During all the years of my service in the government we did not miss or reject any possibility of serious contact with our neighbors on the issue of peace and the path to achieve it. We made proposals and inquiries about open contacts and even secret contacts, which for obvious reasons I will not describe in public. We responded to every reasonable proposal, even if it had little weight behind it. I will not list the proposals that we responded to until it became clear that they were not serious, that they were like lights going on and off that turned out to be false signals.[4]

Between February and April 1973, there were failed attempts to launch a peace process. Some believed that Israel's military superiority would deter Egypt from going to war even in a situation of no progress toward peace negotiations. Moreover, the Israeli leadership was sure that even if war broke out, Egypt would be so badly defeated that it would subsequently not be able to demand the return of the Sinai.[5] Meanwhile, it was clear among the Israeli leadership that the failure of a peace process would likely lead to war, even if the result would be an Egyptian defeat and important achievements for Israel.[6] Similarly, many senior political and military figures in Israel of

2   Boaz Vanetik and Zaki Shalom, *The Yom Kippur War: A War that Could Have Been Prevented* (Tel Aviv: Ressling, 2012) [Hebrew].

3   See, for example, Yossi Beilin, *The Price of Unity: The Labor Party up to the Yom Kippur War* (Tel Aviv: Revivim, 1985) [Hebrew].

4   Knesset Records, July 25, 1973, p. 4275 [Hebrew].

5   Sharon Mankovitz, "Political Responses to Peace Initiatives: Israeli Policy toward Egypt, 1969–1973," (PhD thesis, Haifa University, 2005), pp. 147–159. [Hebrew]

6   Uri Bar Yosef, "Historiography of the Yom Kippur War: A Renewed Discussion of the Operational and Intelligence Failure," *Studies in the Establishment of Israel* 23 (2013): 1–31 [Hebrew].

that period felt that a war would look like the "seventh day" of the Six Day War, a prime example of the fixed mindset, or in other words, "preparing for the previous war."

Fixed Military-Strategic and Military-Operational Thinking

In retrospect, and as someone who has tried to "prepare for the next war," I have no doubt that the symptom of preparing for the previous war was prevalent among the IDF leadership in the years following the Six Day War. The spectacular military victory of June 1967 led the military leadership to think in terms of that war and even plan to recreate a similar victory in the next event. The fixed military mindset and the preparation for the last war were reflected in the underestimation of the enemy; in the lack of revision to the security concept and IDF tactics in accordance with the changes on the ground as a result of the Six Day War, first and foremost, Israel's strategic depth and the change in thinking among the Arab armies; and in the translation of the policy of not returning captured territory into a military strategy, thus leading to many unnecessary casualties among the regular army, which had to ensure that the "point of contact was where the enemy was stopped."

A prime example of the attempt to win the next war in the same way that victory was achieved in the Six Day War can be seen in the desire of the IDF leadership to recreate the success of Operation Moked. However, after the Six Day War, there were operational changes in the Egyptian and Syrian militaries, such as the acquisition of effective anti-aircraft systems. These undermined the superiority of the Israeli Air Force and its freedom of action. It appears that there was also a political constraint that did not allow for a preemptive strike similar to that of the Six Day War. At the same time, the ground-to-air missiles in Egypt and Syria and the anti-tank weapons acquired by Egypt were known to Israel and the lacuna was not on the intelligence-technical level but rather in the lack of an up-to-date combat doctrine in the IDF and the neglect of intelligence information on the force buildup.[7]

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7   Gideon Hoshen, "Intelligence for the Development of Weaponry," in *Intelligence and National Security*, ed. Zvi Ofer and Avi Kober (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 1987), pp. 527–534 [Hebrew].

Uri Bar Yosef described how before the Yom Kippur War, IDF commanders viewed the success of Operation Moked as follows:

> [It was] an event that more than any other affected the way of thinking in Israel and Egypt regarding the next war. During the subsequent five years, the two sides would view the achievement of Egyptian capability to attack Israeli air bases from the air as the main litmus test—for several analysts in Israel the only one—in assessing the likelihood of an Egyptian initiative to capture the Sinai. [However,] the Egyptians stopped thinking in those terms in the autumn of 1972 and decided to try to offset their air inferiority by other means, primarily the limiting of their territorial objectives. The assessment of the Intelligence Directorate, on the other hand, remained unchanged, and it was convinced that the Egyptians would not go to war unless they achieved the capability to attack deep inside Israel or at least the ability to limit the IDF's freedom of action in the skies of Egypt.[8]

The fixed military mindset was clearly reflected in the IDF's defense concept and in its tactical thinking early in the war. These were appropriate for the border prior to the Six Day War and ignored the most important strategic and operational change from Israel's perspective as a result of that war, namely the creation of strategic depth. The offensive approach, whereby the fighting must be taken to the enemy's territory as quickly as possible while the enemy advances are blocked until the mobilization of reserves (which in part involves preemptive attack), was developed by David Ben-Gurion in order to deal with the IDF's numerical inferiority and the lack of strategic depth. Therefore, it was to be expected that as a result of the change in Israel's borders after the Six Day War, a new defensive strategy would be developed that would exploit the strategic depth in order to withdraw to the extent necessary to control positions in order to halt the enemy attack. Such a defensive doctrine was not developed, and instead "forward defense" was adopted. The policy of no territorial concessions on the political level was translated into its military counterpart, namely "the front line is where the enemy must be stopped." This led to many casualties among the regular

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8   Uri Bar Yosef, *The Watchman Fell Asleep* (Lod: Zmora-Bitan, 2001), p. 28 [Hebrew].

army, which, instead of exploiting the strategic depth in order to absorb the Egyptian penetration and reorganize on a new line, had to prevent the penetration or the crossing of the border itself.

The feeling among the IDF leadership that the intelligence early-warning capability could be relied upon and the reserves could be called up in time (as in the Six Day War) also illustrates the lack of understanding of the intelligence and logistics implications of the new strategic depth. The ability to provide early warning was now more limited, since as a result of the proximity of the new border to the enemy's cities its forces were deployed along the border permanently, and in contrast to the period prior to the Six Day War, it was no longer possible to rely on the massive movement of Arab forces from the rear to the front as an indicator of early warning. At the same time, from a logistical viewpoint, there was, in fact, a need to increase the lead time of a warning, since the large amount of captured territory significantly lengthened the supply lines to the front and the time needed to call up the reserves was much longer than in 1967.[9]

Added to the fixed conceptual, strategic, and operational mindset is the underestimation of the fighting ability of the Arab soldier, which was demonstrated again by the performance of the Egyptian and Syrian soldiers during the Six Day War. This assessment was proven wrong in the Yom Kippur War. Henry Kissinger recounted that he heard Defense Minister Moshe Dayan say that he was surprised by "the fanaticism of the Arab fighting" in the Yom Kippur War, which reminded him of "jihad fighters."[10]

The self-confidence of IDF commanders was also reflected in the words of Ariel Sharon, commander of the Southern Command until not long before the Yom Kippur War. Two and a half months prior to the war, he was asked in an interview whether he accepted the opinion of foreign military experts that Israel was a mid-size superpower in global terms. In his answer, Sharon described Israel's military power on the same level as Britain and France. As to the price that Egypt would pay if it started a war, Sharon answered: "A terrible price—terrible! A price that Egypt will not be able to endure. During the Six Day War, Egypt had where to withdraw to—namely, the

9   Hanan Shai, "It is Not the 'Conception': Why did the IDF Fail in the Yom Kippur War?" *Mida*, September 21, 2015, http://goo.gl/s6PIFv [Hebrew].

10   Shlomo Aronson, "The Yom Kippur War – American Documents" in *40 Years After*, ed. Yoram Dinstein and Avraham Zohar (Tel Aviv: Institute for the Study of Israel's Wars, Contento De Semrik, 2013), p. 74 [Hebrew].

Canal. In the next war, the line of retreat will be Cairo. They have no other line. And that will involve terrible destruction in Egypt. Total destruction. That is unnecessary in my view. We don't need this. But we will never go back to the War of Attrition, even though we won it. The Egyptians will receive a terrible blow."[11]

General (res.) Meir Amit claimed after the Yom Kippur War that the roots of the failure early in the war were a result of the fact that "all of us built for ourselves a situation or stance or approach of exaggerated self-confidence, of a feeling of power, of 'me and nothing else.'"[12] A similar conclusion was reached by Eliot Cohen and John Gooch, who claimed that an atmosphere of exaggerated self-confidence—the rotten fruit of the Six Day War—caused the military and political leadership in Israel not to understand correctly the significance of the changes that occurred in the Egyptian and Syrian armies between the wars. This created the conceptual deficiency in the understanding of the significance of the balance of forces on the frontline prior to the Yom Kippur War.[13]

The premise that the IDF leadership thought of the next war as the "seventh day" of the Six Day War is apparently correct. This was a convenient approach, and it made it easy to ignore the development of the Arab armies and their arms buildup, particularly in the case of the Egyptian army, as well as the development of military thinking on the other side and Sadat's adoption of a strategically limited war whose goal was to initiate a peace process.

Naturally, all this had an effect on the intelligence assessment as well. Nonetheless, the surprise of the Yom Kippur War should not be viewed only as an intelligence failure but also a strategic and operational failure that was the result of the fixed conceptual mindset, which was undoubtedly rooted in the spectacular victory of the Six Day War. After that victory, the necessary lessons were ignored and there were no revisions of the security concept and IDF tactics. The lack of the necessary intelligence-operational discourse encouraged adherence to an outdated offensive strategy and emphasis on

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11 Ariel Sharon in an interview with Dov Goldstein, *Maariv*, July 20, 1973 [Hebrew].

12 Quoted from Hanon Bartov, *Dado – 48 Years and 20 Days* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2002), p. 247 [Hebrew].

13 Eliot Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), pp. 124–125.

a preemptive strike like Operation Moked, which proved irrelevant in the unique circumstances of the Yom Kippur War.[14]

The problem of deficient planning was made clear by Mordecai Gazit, the Director of the Prime Minister's Office during the Yom Kippur War. He claimed that the IDF's operational premise—whereby it would be able to repel or at least stop any attack, even on two fronts such as Egypt and Syria, and even if the attack was simultaneous and a surprise—rested on the feeling of depth that the post-Six Day War borders had created.[15] This planning assumption was proven wrong in the Yom Kippur War, in part as a result of the fact that the policy of no territorial concessions and a forward defense line essentially neutralized the structural advantage provided by the strategic depth of the new borders. Colonel (res.) Yaakov Hasdai, who was a researcher in the Agranat Commission, believed that the deficiencies of the IDF in the Yom Kippur War were not, in fact, the result of the surprise (which was due to the intelligence failure) but rather the reduced standard of military thinking.[16]

Conclusion

Against the background of the conceptual failures that led to the intelligence, strategic, and operational surprise in the Yom Kippur War, it is, in fact, the Israeli victory of the 1973 war that stands out. This victory can be attributed to the bravery, determination, and professionalism of the fighters on the battlefield. Nonetheless, several important lessons from this bitter experience remain:

a. There is a need to avoid euphoria and complacency after a victory.
b. There is a need to avoid a fixed mindset as a result of success, which is liable to lead to "preparing for the previous war." Instead, attention

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14 Itai Brun, *Intelligence Research—Understanding Reality in an Era of Change* (Glilot: Israeli Intelligence Heritage Center, The Institute for Study of Intelligence and Policy, 2015) [Hebrew].

15 Mordecai Gazit, "Was it Possible to Prevent the War?" in *The Yom Kippur War: A New Perspective*, ed. Haim Ofez and Yaakov Bar Siman Tov (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, The Public Relations Center, 1999), p. 12 [Hebrew].

16 Yaakov Hasdai, *Truth in the Shadow of War* (Zmora-Bitan Modan, 1978), pp. 10–23 [Hebrew].

should be devoted to studying and revising the security concept and IDF strategy in view of the changing reality and its characteristics.

c. There should be ongoing discourse between the government and the military and within the military establishment, as well as between the various hierarchical levels, while always questioning the familiar and entrenched conception, based on the knowledge that the only thing in life that does not change is that things change.

A reality of frequent changes on the various levels—geopolitical, economic, social, and technological—requires conceptual renewal, the encouragement of a critical organizational culture, and the challenge of what is familiar and accepted at all levels, as well as encouragement of creative thinking in both the government and the army. Such an organizational culture has the power to prevent failures, such as that in the early stages of the Yom Kippur War, and to ensure the achievement of goals in every battle, as in the Six Day War.

The Effect of the Six Day War on Arab Security Concepts

Ephraim Kam

Background

The Six Day War ended with a resounding military defeat for the Arab states. Indeed, in Israel's War of Independence, the Arab armies failed in their efforts to stop the creation of the State of Israel, which at the end of the war held a larger area than it had been allotted by the UN Partition Plan. However, the Arab armies at that time were weak, and the lack of agreement among the Arab countries, which were ruled by the old regimes, prevented effective cooperation between them. In the 1956 Sinai Campaign, the Egyptian army was defeated and the entire Sinai Peninsula fell to the IDF within four days. Yet in all fairness to the Egyptian army, it was forced to fight simultaneously against British and French forces that had penetrated into the northern Suez Canal.

In contrast to these two conflicts, the Six Day War was a total military failure for the Arabs. Within six days, the three most powerful Arab armies were defeated; the IDF captured large expanses of territory from three Arab countries; and the State of Israel now possessed natural borders—the Suez Canal, the Jordan River, and the Golan Heights—while creating a threat to the strategic depth of the Arab countries. This time there were no justifications for defeat: The Egyptian army was a product of the Free Officers Movement; the Egyptian and Syrian armies were equipped with up-to-date Soviet weapons; and since 1964, there was a joint Arab command and initial cooperation between the armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, with

an Egyptian commander in charge of the eastern front. Although in both 1949 and 1956 Israel captured Egyptian territory, these areas were returned to Egypt within a few months. This time, it would take years (and the Yom Kippur War) until the Sinai Peninsula was returned, and until today the Golan Heights and the West Bank remain under Israeli control.

This time, the Arab leadership did not try to embellish the reality. The shock of the defeat in the Six Day War forced the leaderships of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan to admit their failure and reexamine their security concepts; consider how they were applied before and during the war; and reevaluate their attitudes to Israel, the Arab world, and the superpowers. Common to the three countries were two main changes in their security concepts. First, in their view, the results of the war increased the Israeli threat, particularly in light of the surprising speed of the Israeli victory on the three fronts; Israel's air superiority, which left the Arab armies unable to respond and saddled them with a sense of helplessness; and the new deployment of the IDF forces, which reduced the Arab threat against Israel, gave Israel strategic depth, and increased the Israeli threat against Arab strategic targets. The second change was that Arab leaders were convinced that Israel had achieved overall military superiority over every Arab country and over every relevant coalition of Arab states. This sense, which began to form already in the 1950s following the Sinai Campaign, became even stronger as a result of the growing commitment of the United States to the existence and security of Israel, which since the early 1960s was also reflected in the supply of American weaponry. This understanding led to a less ambitious Arab objective with regard to Israel. Thus, whereas until the mid-1960s Arab leaders defined their objective as the "elimination of the 1948 outcome," i.e., the destruction of the State of Israel, after the Six Day War, their defined objective was the "elimination of the 1967 outcome," or in other words, the return of the territory captured by Israel in that war.

This essay seeks to examine the effects of the Arab defeat in the Six Day War on the security concepts of the three main countries that took part in the war: Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. The focus is on changes that occurred in their perception of the Israeli threat; in the definition of their strategic objectives, primarily with respect to Israel; and in the response that they sought to construct with respect to Israel, including their ability to rely on the Arab world and the superpowers.

The Implications for Egypt's Security Concept

Egypt suffered the worst defeat in the Six Day War, the second war in which the entire Sinai Peninsula had been captured by Israel. However, while in 1956 international pressure led to a rapid resolution whereby Sinai was returned to Egypt in exchange for its demilitarization, in 1967 it was not possible to reach such a resolution. Israel was prepared to withdraw from Sinai only in exchange for a peace agreement, and the United States refrained from pressuring Israel to make concessions, since it was Egypt that undermined the previous arrangement. Other channels were likewise closed to Egypt: Its army was not prepared for an all-out war against Israel with the goal of forcing it to withdraw from Sinai, or even for a limited engagement.[1] On the other hand, Nasser had ruled out making peace with Israel, and it was clear that this option could not be considered after such a humiliating defeat. Yet as leader of the Arab world, Nasser could not allow himself to refrain from any type of military confrontation with Israel, as Jordan and Syria did during the initial period following the war.

Nasser was forced to choose a way that was summed up as "what was taken with force will be returned by force." The statement ruled out both a negotiated solution with Israel and a policy of passivity. However, any military option had to overcome serious problems. The Egyptian army had lost much of its weaponry in the war; it suffered extensive casualties; and no less important, its fighting spirit was broken. The Egyptian leadership had also lost much of its potency: Nasser after 1967 was not the same Nasser; his minister of war committed suicide; and senior officers were put on military trial for their behavior during the war. Another major problem facing Egypt was that any military effort to capture Sinai, or parts of it, would involve crossing a major water barrier, i.e., the Suez Canal, a feat that even more experienced armies would find difficult and at this point was beyond the capability of the Egyptian army.

These considerations led the Egyptian command to decide on a limited military move, which would not require crossing the canal, but would begin to rebuild Egyptian military power, renew the Egyptian army's fighting spirit, and wear down the IDF. The operation had four stages: (a) the "firm stance" stage (June 1967–August 1968), during which the Egyptian army

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1 Saad al-Din el Shazli, *Crossing the Canal* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 1987), pp. 11–17 [Hebrew].

aimed to restore its capability and strengthen the defensive positions on the west side of the Suez Canal, while in general maintaining quiet on the front; (b) the "active defense" stage (September 1968–February 1969), in which the Egyptian army opened fire from across the canal in order to cause IDF casualties; (c) a war of attrition (March 1969–August 1970), which aimed to cause heavy IDF casualties and strengthen the Egyptian army's fighting spirit and its self-confidence; and (d) preparations for war (August 1970–October 1973), in which the Egyptian army would prepare for crossing the canal and destroying the Bar Lev Line.[2]

There was disagreement among the Egyptian leadership as to the value of the War of Attrition, primarily since Israel had, during the war, managed to surprise the Egyptians by attacking deep within its territory. This changed the balance of power and forced Egypt to request the Soviet Union to send squadrons of fighter aircraft and air defense systems manned by Russian teams in order to bolster the defense of the Egyptian rear. Others in the Egyptian leadership viewed the War of Attrition as essential since it demonstrated Egypt's determination and made a critical contribution to the preparation for war in 1973.[3]

The Six Day War was an important contribution to Egypt's realization of the problematic nature of military cooperation with the Soviet Union and the Arab world. Egypt's military reliance on the Soviet Union began in 1955 and ended in 1974 when Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, began moving toward the United States as part of a comprehensive strategic policy change. The turn westward was seen more clearly after the Yom Kippur War, but its origins can be found already in the Six Day War. The Soviet Union was unable to deter Israel from going to war against two of its allies, Egypt and Syria; it was not able to prevent the defeat of the two Arab armies during the war; and it did not make any real effort to have the captured territory returned to Arab hands. Egypt still maintained a close military relationship with the Soviet Union until after the Yom Kippur war, since it needed Soviet military assistance in order to rehabilitate its army, but when that need became less important, it made the final turn toward the United States.

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2   Abed al-Ghani el-Gamasi, *The Memoir of el-Gamasi: The October War 1973* (Internal Publication, Intelligence Corps, IDF, 1994) [Hebrew].

3   Ibid., pp. 97, 105.

The Six Day War also affected Egypt's view of its role in the Arab world. Since 1964, Egypt had tried to build a pan-Arab military coalition, led by a joint command, with the objectives of fostering cooperation, division of efforts, and coordination between the Arab armies against Israel. The test of this coalition was the Six Day War, and it failed. Although toward the Yom Kippur War, another effort was made to carry out a coordinated military move against Israel on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts (during the war, Iraqi and Jordanian forces reinforced the Syrian front when it was in need), during the war, however, the lack of coordination, the conflicting interests, and the lack of trust between the Arab armies was evident. This cooperation, with all of its shortcomings, was the last sign of the joint pan-Arab effort, and no such attempts have been made since.

There were several reasons for the failure of the collective Arab effort since the Six Day War: the crushing defeat of the Arab armies during the war; the lack of a joint military command for the three fronts before and after the war; Nasser's loss of prestige in the Arab world following the war; the separate efforts by Egypt, Syria, and Jordan to regain their territory;[4] Jordan's lack of interest in another war against Israel; the preoccupation of Iraq in the war against Iran starting in 1980; and above all Egypt's change in strategy under Sadat in the conflict with Israel, which in the end led to the signing of a bilateral peace treaty.

There were several motives behind Sadat's decision to abandon the path of war and to sign a peace treaty, which had to do with his personality and his world outlook. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize the contribution of the two wars—the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War—to his decision. The Six Day War convinced Sadat that Israel's military and technological superiority prevented the Arab armies from defeating it on the battlefield, while the Yom Kippur War convinced him that even a limited military campaign, under the best possible conditions, could produce only limited success (the Syrian effort in that war was a complete failure). Nonetheless, the Yom Kippur War restored Egypt's self-respect, which had been lost in the Six Day War, and enabled it to make peace with Israel not from a position of humiliation.

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4 Ibid., pp. 112, 140.

The Implications for Syria's Security Concept

For Syria, the Six Day War caused a major reversal. Until the war, the Syrian deployment on the Golan Heights presented a threat to northern Israel, which involved both the threat of invasion in time of war and the threat, sometimes realized, of artillery fire on the northern settlements. This situation also limited the ability of the IDF to threaten Syria and to deter it from aggressive moves. Israel's capture of the Golan Heights not only removed the Syrian threat from the north of Israel but also created an Israeli threat to Damascus and its environs.

Israel's ability to deter Syria as a result of its control of the Golan Heights was reflected in Syrian policy. Like Egypt under Nasser, Syria advocated a military solution to the conflict with Israel and ruled out any negotiated settlement. However, the weakness of the Syrian army did not allow it to recapture the Golan Heights by military means, and Syria never went to war against Israel without Egypt.

Until early 1969, the Syrian border was quieter than Israel's other borders, and the primary military activity on the Golan Heights involved infiltrations by terrorists from al-Saiqa, a Palestinian organization connected to the Syrian regime. The Syrian army was mainly occupied with rebuilding its defensive ability around Damascus and launching the development of an offensive ability. From early 1969, there were increasing numbers of terrorist attacks on the Golan Heights, and from the summer of that year, the Syrian army also started to heat up the border, following a decision made at a meeting of the Arab chiefs of staff.[5]

When Hafez el-Assad came to power in November 1970, Syria took a new approach, which mainly involved the creation of a pan-Arab front for war against Israel. In this framework, the Syrian army became much stronger, including with the large scale acquisition of arms from the Soviet Union and assistance from Soviet advisors. In parallel, it began preparing for war. Thus, in 1971 plans began for a joint Egyptian-Syrian attack, on the basis of a coordinated effort on two fronts. The planning led to the decision of

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5   Moshe Dayan, *Milestones* (Jerusalem: Idanim, Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1976), p. 549 [Hebrew].

both countries, in February 1973, to carry out a coordinated attack, where Syria's goal was to regain all of the Golan Heights.[6]

While Egypt began to change its strategy after the Six Day War and completed the change after the Yom Kippur War, Syria did not follow suit. Its military weakness and the Israeli threat to the Damascus environs led it to the conclusion that it would be better not to act alone in order to recapture the Golan. Nor did the Syrian regime limit its relations with the Soviet Union, essentially until the Soviet collapse in 1989–1991, even though the Soviet Union opposed any Arab military move to regain Arab territories captured in 1967 and refused some of the Arab requests to purchase arms.[7] Furthermore, Syria refused to join Sadat's peace initiative in 1977. Only in the 1990s, after Syria found itself without any Arab or superpower allies, did it show any willingness to negotiate with Israel for the return of the Golan. However, this effort did not lead to the closing of the gaps between the sides, primarily regarding the future border between them.

The Implications for Jordan's Security Concept

Jordan was dragged into the Six Day War against its will and against its own interests, as a result of pressure from Nasser, the fear of internal unrest, insufficient understanding of the critical situation on the Egyptian front, and a mistaken assessment of the military balance with Israel and the IDF's operational possibilities on the Jordanian front. The immediate objective of the Jordanian regime at the end of the fighting was to regain the West Bank. However, from the outset, it was clear to Jordan that the return of the West Bank by military means was not practical, neither in the short run nor in the long run, not by a pan-Arab effort, and certainly not an operation by Jordan alone, after Israel had just demonstrated its military superiority. Based on this assumption Jordan occupied itself in rehabilitating its army for defensive purposes, in part in view of the fear in Amman after the war that Israel would try to capture additional territory in the Kingdom on the east side of the Jordan and primarily in the northern part of the East Bank. At the same time, Jordan needed to improve its ability to deal with Arab enemies,

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6   Danny Asher, ed., *The Syrians on the Fences* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 2008), pp. 17–18, 22 [Hebrew].

7   Gamasi, *Memoirs of el-Gamasi*, p. 121.

mainly Syria and Palestinian organizations that had set up strongholds in various regions of the Kingdom since 1967.

Thus, Jordan never attempted to construct a military offensive option in order to regain the West Bank, nor was it asked to do so by Egypt or Syria. The relations between King Hussein and Nasser, which were tense before the Six Day War, improved to a great extent subsequently, since Nasser was grateful to the king for joining him in the fighting on the morning of June 5 and having paid a high price for doing so. The Egyptian respect for Jordan's participation, which also contributed to Jordan's status in the Arab world, alongside recognition of the Jordanian army's weakness, led to the situation in the autumn of 1973 in which Egypt and Syria refrained from putting pressure on Jordan to join them in the Yom Kippur War.

In view of the lack of a military option, King Hussein tried to promote a negotiated settlement that would return most of the West Bank to Jordan. The effort relied on three elements: American mediation; Egyptian support; and the secret diplomatic channel that existed with Israel. Hussein's proposal was to create an arrangement based on the return of the West Bank, with small modifications of the border made on a mutual basis. In the end, this effort failed since the gap between Jordan and Israel remained too large.

As time passed, a number of developments led Hussein to understand that the West Bank would not return to Jordanian control: The Jordanian regime increasingly lost the support of the traditional power brokers in the West Bank for continuing the relationship with Jordan; the Palestinian organizations, led by Fatah, gained power on both sides of the Jordan River and competed with Jordan for stature; and there was growing influence among the Jordanian leadership of individuals who, in contrast to the king's opinion, preferred to give up the West Bank and build a more homogeneous kingdom on the East Bank. These developments compounded the fact that the Arab world never supported the rule of the Hashemite Kingdom in the West Bank. Hussein tried again in 1972 to propose a plan for Jordanian-Palestinian federation, but it did not gain the support of the Arab world or the Palestinians. In July 1988, the king came to the conclusion that he must abandon the West Bank and declared the end of Jordan's responsibility there.

The loss of the West Bank in the end was outweighed by the benefit in terms of security and internal stability. This is primarily due to the fact that its annexation in 1949 was a burden on the Hashemite Kingdom, and the addition of its population—all of it Palestinian—to the Kingdom upset

Jordan's demographic balance. The increasing strength of the Palestinian organizations from 1965 endangered the stability of the Hashemite Kingdom, and had it continued to rule the West Bank, it was not guaranteed that Jordan could have held on to it over time. Its participation in the Six Day War and its separation from the West Bank helped improve the Kingdom's position in the Arab world, and after 1967 the charge that Jordan is an artificial creation without any inherent right to exist was sounded less often. Furthermore, the presence of the Jordanian army in the West Bank until 1967 contributed to recurring confrontations with the IDF. The end of its presence in the West Bank, and subsequently the repression of the Palestinian organizations in Jordan in late 1970, led to peaceful coexistence between Jordan and Israel, which was highlighted by King Hussein's decision in 1994 to follow in the footsteps of Egypt and sign a peace agreement with Israel.

The Pan-Arab Coalition

The Six Day war led to two additional changes in Arab strategy. The first was the role of pan-Arab unity in the conflict with Israel. After the Arab world failed in its efforts to prevent the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Egypt tried in the 1960s to build a pan-Arab alliance under its leadership that would provide a response to Israel's capabilities. This attempt essentially met with failure in the Six Day War, and even in the Yom Kippur War, its success was limited primarily to the war's opening stages. Subsequent to 1973 (and until today), there were no further attempts to build a united pan-Arab coalition against Israel.

The Six Day War contributed to the disillusionment of the Arab countries with the superpowers' willingness to assist them in the struggle against Israel. This was specifically the result of the Soviet Union's limited willingness and ability to provide assistance to Egypt and Syria during the war, in part because events proceeded too quickly for it to intervene in the conflict beyond the supply of arms. Presumably the Soviet Union was hesitant to become overly involved in the Six Day War in order to avoid a confrontation with Israel and perhaps even the United States. Only later, during the War of Attrition of 1969–1970, did the Soviet Union expand its intervention to assist Egypt by sending fighter squadrons and air defense systems manned by Soviet teams in order to protect the Egyptian home front. Yet even these efforts were insufficient in Sadat's view, and as a result he decided to remove the Soviet presence from Egypt in the summer of 1972. Following

the short-lived fighting in the West Bank, Jordan also came to realize that while it was in conflict with Israel, the United States would refrain from intervening against Israel.

Conclusion

A war is one of the prime reasons for important changes in strategy among the sides in a conflict and among other relevant actors, and all the more so in the case of the Six Day War, which had such dramatic outcomes, both for Israel and the Arab participants. Since the war ended in a crushing Arab defeat, which even the Arab leaders acknowledged, they understood that the Arab pre-war security concept was lacking and misdirected, and therefore its main components had to be changed.

The Six Day War led to major changes in the strategies of the three main Arab participants. Of the two most important changes, the first is the Arab recognition of Israel's military and technological superiority over the Arab countries, which prevents them from destroying it. This recognition finally led Egypt and Jordan to sign peace agreements with Israel, which also required significant revisions of their strategies. The crushing defeat in the Six Day War and the willingness of Egypt and Jordan to change their relationship with Israel led Syria to also change its strategy. Thus, particularly after the Yom Kippur War, Syria maintained quiet on the border with the Golan Heights and later even tried to arrive at a negotiated settlement with Israel.

The second change in the strategies of the Arab countries was a result of the loss of territory in the Six Day War. Egypt lost the Sinai Peninsula and only regained it through a peace agreement with Israel; the Golan Heights remains under Israeli control even after fifty years, and it is questionable under what conditions it might be returned, if at all; and the West Bank will not return to Jordanian control even if its fate is settled in a negotiated settlement, since the Kingdom relinquished its responsibility for the West Bank in 1988. Clearly, the states that lost territory in the war have been forced to reexamine their security concepts, just as the peace treaty with Egypt forced it to reconstruct its security concept.

Thus in examining the evolution of the Arab security concepts, it is not correct to consider the effects of the Six Day War on their own. The war initiated a continuum of major developments, which continued for more than two decades and influenced the evolution of Arab strategy. Among these were two additional wars, two peace processes, and changes in the Arab

world and the involvement of the superpowers in the Middle East. Even after these events, additional waves of events influenced the Arab security concepts, such as the rise of the Iranian threat, the three wars in the Gulf, and the upheaval that began with the Arab Spring. Nonetheless, among all these, the Six Day War was undoubtedly fundamental in determining the security concepts of the Arab states that were involved in it, as well as that of Israel.