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The Perils of Victory: 1967–1973

As in 1956, Israel went to war in June 1967 in order to reverse a process whereby, according to the perceptions of its key decision makers, its deterrence was rapidly becoming perilously depleted. Six days later, with close to 900 Israelis and some 15,000 Arabs dead, the main purpose of the war seemed to have been achieved. The Egyptian army, which only a few days earlier had been celebrating what seemed (even to many Israelis) an inevitable victory, was virtually annihilated. Nasser, whose rhetoric and self-confidence had been instrumental in bringing about this calamity, seemed a broken man. He himself proposed to resign, and his minister of war, Field Marshal Abdul Hakim Amar, committed suicide. The Jordanian army suffered an equally humiliating defeat and lost the West Bank, for the acquisition of which it had gone to war in 1948. The Syrian army, whose nagging encounters with the Israelis in the years immediately preceding the Six-Day War had been the principal immediate cause of the war, retreated ignominiously from the edges of the Golan plateau, a huge, heavily fortified citadel that until June 10, 1967, had seemed virtually unconquerable.

The magnitude of the defeat and the fact that it was the third consecutive military humiliation of Arabs by Israelis shook the very foundations of Arab self-confidence. After the *naqba* (Arabic for "disaster") of 1948, the Arabs could blame their failure on the assumption that their regimes were corrupt and that the Jews were tacitly helped by an unholy alliance between these regimes and European imperialism. In 1956 the Egyptians could still invoke the Arab disunity resulting from corruption and imperialist machinations and, above all, the fact that the Israelis were open cohorts of Britain and France. In 1967, however, such excuses were no longer effective. Most Arab regimes had been progressive (in Arab eyes), young, and implacably anti-imperialist. The Arabs went to war united under the leadership of a person who was widely seen as a latter-day Saladin. The evidence of Israeli weakness and isolation before the war was compelling. The Arabs had ample support from the Soviet Union, one of the world's two largest military and political powers.

Against such a background, Nasser's attempt to blame the United States for assisting (and thus, by implication, facilitating) the Israeli victory was not taken very seriously. The resort of this once-proud Egyptian to such arguments appeared pathetic. The reasons for the *naqsa* ("catastrophe") of 1967, some Arab intellectuals argued, had to be sought in Arab politics, education, way of life, perhaps even psyche. The Israelis were successful because they had proved to be superior in these respects. Few Arabs would dare say such harsh things. By suggesting the components of the malaise, however, Arab writings implied also (perhaps inadvertently) what qualities made it possible for the Israelis to succeed so brilliantly.[1]

The Israelis, for their part, followed this process of tormented Arab soul-searching with avid interest and barely concealed satisfaction.[2] Here was affirmation by the Arabs themselves of their own culpability for the conflict. Here, too, was a reassuring torrent of evidence suggesting that quality of spirit, social organization, technology—in fact, all those virtues that the Israelis wanted to see in themselves—could overcome quantity. *The Power of Quality* was the title (in Hebrew, *Otsmata Shel Eichut*) of one widely read book that spelled out the new Israeli gospel of strength based on qualitative superiority.[3] *David's Sling,* Shimon Peres's combination of memoir and political program, was another title that essentially preached the same creed. Such books—and there were many more—contained warnings against euphoria, against complacency, and against condescension toward the Arabs. Mentally, however, such admonitions amounted to little more than prudently going through the motions. After centuries of persecution by Europeans and decades of intimidation by Arabs, the Israelis were incurably possessed by an insatiable, almost overpowering, urge to feel strong. "I feel strong, therefore I am strong" would have been an appropriate epitaph encapsulating the Israeli state of mind during the six years from June 1967 to October 1973. But although such a state of mind is an important source of fortitude, it can also be, and clearly was in this case, the wellspring of self-delusion.

To be sure, not only the Arab defeat in this third round (1948 being the first and 1956 the second) but also important elements in the postwar strategic realities seemed to support the newfound Israeli confidence. The occupation of the Sinai, of the West Bank, and of the Golan seemingly gave Israel one of the assets of deterrence that the Jewish state had lacked most—namely, strategic depth, the advantage of formidable physical barriers, a substantially extended lead time in terms of alert, a priceless inventory of bargaining chips. Moreover, in the same way that the demonstration of military prowess in 1956 had lost Israel a few friends but gained it a larger number of admirers, so the even greater victory of 1967 caused a visible reappraisal of the Jewish state as a strategic factor the world over. Israel lost the friendship of France and formal diplomatic relations with the entire Soviet bloc. At the same time, the United States moved steadily closer to Israel and offered assistance in matters that

previously had seemed not merely unattainable but perhaps even undiscussable. The peripheral powers of the Middle East, whose cooperation had been sought for two decades, were now prepared to tighten relations with Israel further. World Jewry, in Israeli perception the only truly reliable external ally, was virtually overwhelmed with joy and pride and was willing to mobilize substantial resources (financial and otherwise) to support the further strengthening of the emerging Jewish regional power. With its support, the Israeli economy emerged from an agonizing depression and resumed its buoyancy and breathtaking growth.

Yet side by side with these important reasons for reassurance, the Israelis were confronted in quick succession with a host of equally powerful reasons for grave concern. Egypt was not prepared to enter into negotiations under the shadow of a humiliating military defeat. Instead, it led the Arab rejection of a search for a settlement and engaged Israel in a costly, dangerous war of attrition. The Palestinians, who during 1949–67 had ceased to exist in the Israeli cognitive map of the Arab–Israeli conflict, reemerged (to Israel's suppressed but nonetheless palpable chagrin) as a troublesome source of both military and political threats. The Soviet Union deepened its involvement on the side of the Arabs and its commitment to back them up in the event of another war. Gradually, at first imperceptibly, the Israelis were forced to recognize that the Arab oil weapon—for decades a mere bogus—was coming into its own. The spectrum of threats with which Israeli deterrence would have to cope was, in other words, steadily expanding.

In the pre-1967 period, that spectrum could be neatly divided into basic and current security. By contrast, during the 1967–73 period it turned into a complex range. Its less awesome end included guerrilla warfare in occupied territories, small-scale harassment across the boundaries, air piracy in the world's skies, and attempts on the life of Israeli diplomatic and commercial emissaries. Its intermediate level of potential harm included the familiar but ever-more-complex range of conventional threats, attrition strategies, and full-scale surprise attacks. Finally, the most alarming end of this range of threats with which the Israeli deterrent might have to cope included the once remote but suddenly more palpable specter of a nuclear threat, either directly, through Arab acquisition of such weapons, or indirectly, through Soviet extension of a nuclear canopy to Israel's main Arab adversaries.

The calculus of Israeli deterrence, furthermore, became more complicated during the 1967–73 period with two more novel factors. First, the cold war had given way to détente, an occasionally mystifying concept suggesting a less predictable—but not necessarily less dangerous—pattern of superpower relations. From Israel's point of view, the implications were not entirely clear. On the one hand, the United States was drawing ever closer to Israel in ways that had previously been undreamed of. On the other hand, détente implied a mixed-motive U.S. posture—in fact, a degree of mutual interest with the Soviets that set the two superpowers apart from all other nations on earth.

The second factor related to the course of Israeli domestic politics. Israeli society was changing in a manner that increased the inevitable tension between domestic demands and external needs. With a significant change in the social basis of politics also came a gradual change in the political array of forces, in the rules of the game, in the texture and pace of domestic politics. It all added up to an immeasurably greater difficulty in insulating national strategy from the warp and hoof of the domestic political process.

Against such a background of growing strength—but also of breathtaking growth in the complexity of the issues, in the weight of decisions, and in the constraints on rational decision making—the strategic posture that evolved during 1967–73 was less coherent than it was boldly claimed to be. It entailed a gigantic, yet somewhat unimaginative, growth in capabilities; a bolder reliance on threats, but a far less coherent concept of casi belli than before; an abrasive, often self-righteous celebration of the virtues of self-reliance amid a growing dependence on the United States; a lingering preference for first strike and massive retaliation without a levelheaded evaluation of the *political* feasibility of such a posture. The net result of the greatest victory in Israel's history was, accordingly, confusion, conceptual inertia, a visible decline in the quality of strategic thought, and—contrary to the intuitive appraisal of most Israelis at the time—significant depreciation of the efficacy of Israel's conventional deterrence.

Force Structure and Capabilities

In retrospect it appears that four factors shaped the main trends in IDF growth policies during the 1967–73 period. The first was intellectual inertia. The force structure that had brought about the victory of 1956 for the loss of 180 Israeli lives and the more mature and far larger force that obtained the victory of 1967 for the loss of fewer than 900 lives inevitably seemed ideal for the post-1967 period. Large, bureaucratized, and technologically intensive armed forces, to put it bluntly, tend to be conservative. They resist change and very often do not encourage imaginative, unorthodox thinking. This tendency is to be expected when things do not go as well as they should—but even more so when things *do* go well. In this sense the worst thing that can happen to any army is, paradoxically, a total and relatively easy victory, which is almost bound to lead to a strengthened conceptual conservatism.

The IDF was no exception to this iron law. Having won the previous two wars with such ease, it had no readily discernible reason to discard what appeared to be a certain recipe for unqualified success. Accordingly, it was inclined to assume, almost without real questioning, that what would be needed in the future was merely more, and ever more, of the same. In 1967 the IAF had a relatively aging fleet of 460 French-built, Fouga-Magister, Ouragan, Mystère, Votour, and Mirage III trainers, fighers, and fighter-bombers, as well as 35 transport planes and 40 helicopters; by 1973 it had 432 relatively modern, mainly U.S.-built Phantom F-4s and Skyhawk A-4s, as well as 30 transporters and 72 helicopters. In 1967 the armored command of the IDF had at its disposal 990 tanks, 250 cannons, 50 antiaircraft batteries, 4 ancient submarines, 2 obsolete destroyers, and 20 other vessels; by 1973 it could boast of 1,700 tanks, 1,000 APCs, 352 artillery pieces, 48 antiaircraft batteries, scores of short- and medium-range surface-to-surface missiles, 12 latest-model missile boats, 2 submarines, 1 destroyer, and 26 other boats. As a result, the IDF as a whole grew by 10 percent, from a total (regular plus reserve) army of 275,000 to a total of 300,000 soldiers; the defense budget grew (in fixed shekel values) from 3,615 billion shekels in 1967 to 15,980 billion shekels six years later.[4] Yet for all the growth in size, the underlying doctrine guiding training, emergency, and contingency planning remained essentially the same.

To be fair to the IDF, the scope of the growth—as distinct from its content—was largely due to the regional arms race (and to the ever-spiraling price of late-model weapons systems). The routing of the armed forces of Egypt and Syria; the painful wounds inflicted on the Jordanian army; the ripples sent across the Middle East by the spectacular demonstration of Israeli superiority; inter-Arab rivalries; Soviet, French, and—with the rise in oil prices—British, Italian, and U.S. pushing of arms sales to the Arabs; and, finally, the exceedingly escalatory war of attrition between Israel and Egypt along the Suez Canal during 1969–70—all these added a stupendous impetus to the regional arms race. Israel could not escape this trap. It had to struggle to keep a composite, overall approximation of 1:4 ratio—the bare minimum for defensive purposes—between its own capabilities and those of a steadily growing list of adversaries. Thus if in 1967 the military manpower total for Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iraq together, according to Israeli sources, was 370,500 (less than 100,000 more than Israel's, or approximately 5:6 ratio), in 1973 the total for the same countries was 650,000 compared to Israel's 300,000, or approximately a 1:2 ratio. In 1967 these (in Israeli eyes) confrontation states had 680 fighters and fighter-bombers, 73 helicopters, and 1,700 tanks; by 1973 their armories already contained 1,100 fighters and figher-bombers, 300 helicopters, 4,770 tanks, and 4,000 APCs.[5] (See figures 4–1 and 4–2.)

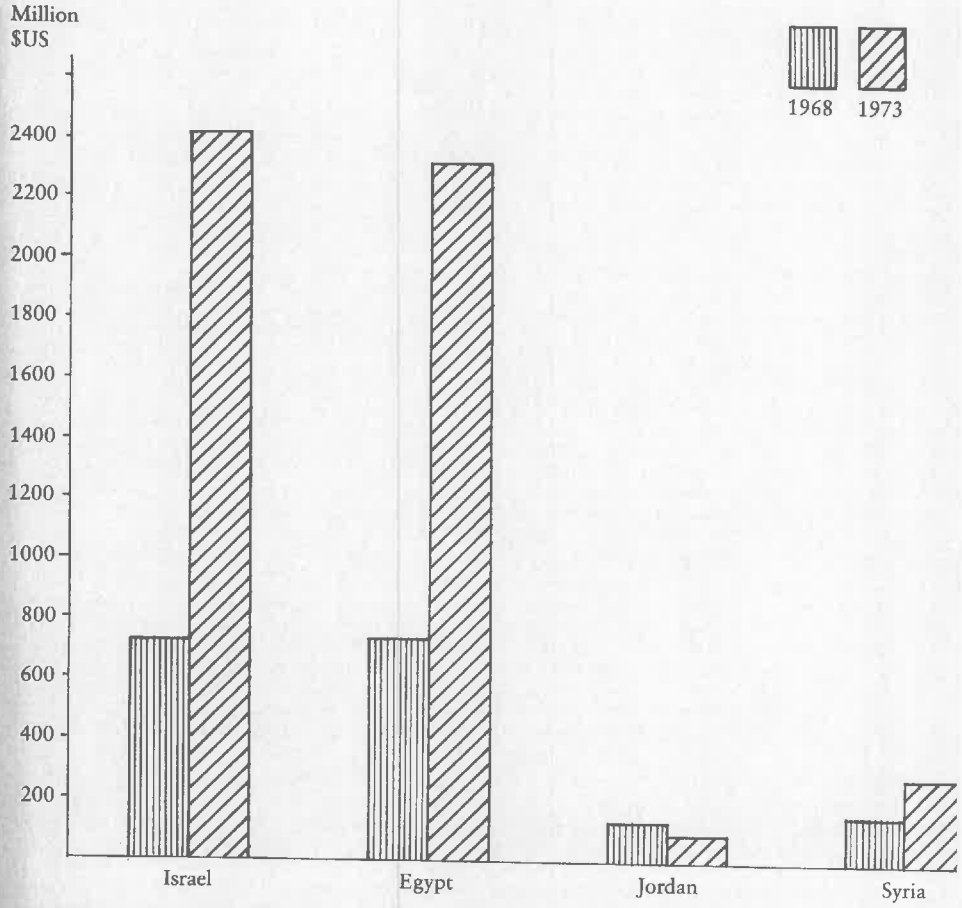
The third factor that had an important bearing on the main trends in the IDF's evolving force structure was, to an extent, fortuitous. Whereas the IDF that fought in the Sinai campaign in 1956 was dominated by infantry officers, the IDF of the mid- and late-1960s became conspicuously dominated by tank experts. To a significant extent, this was the result of the vicissitudes of career patterns in the IDF. The growing emphasis on armor by the late 1950s had created a glittering field of opportunities for up-and-coming officers in the armored corps and related units, such as artillery, ordnance, and communications. This was not the case with the infantry, where the total size of the corps

Source: Based on data in Evron, "Two Periods in Arab–Israeli Strategic Relations," p. 115.

Figure 4–1. Selected Comparisons of Arab and Israeli Military Outlays, 1968 and 1973

did not significantly change for years. Bright infantry officers who wished to advance, therefore, had little choice—even if they detested the thought, as some of them did—but to convert to armor. In turn the preponderance of somewhat schematic and unimaginative armored thinking in the IDF was reinforced as was, inevitably, the tendency to cut appropriations for other arms.

Then came the Six-Day War, in which armor was the very spine of all offensives, including—against all the orthodox rules of warfare—the steep and rocky Golan Heights. The reliance on daring, headstrong, and fast-moving armored fists as the backbone of any significant military operation, the simpleminded assumption, in the words of Major-General Yesha'ayahou ("Shaike") Gavish, that an "armored brigade or division could break through [virtually] anything"



Source: Based on data in Evron, "Two Periods in Arab–Israeli Strategic Relations," p. 115. In constant $US.

Figure 4–2. The Arab–Israeli Arms Race, 1968–1973

and that for this reason there was no longer any need for "ingenious and unorthodox maneuvering," was seemingly further vindicated.[6]

Going along with this transformation was the growth of a romantic ethos exalting the bravery and nonchalant manliness of tank crews—especially of tank commanders, standing, half their bodies exposed, in the turrets of their powerful machines.[7] It was thus hardly surprising that by 1968, the chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Chaim Bar-Lev; his deputy, Major-General David Elazar; members of the General Staff such as Major-Generals Israel Tal, Shlomo Lahat, Shmuel Gonen, Avraham Adan, Dan Lanner, Moshe Peled, Hertzel Shafir, and Menachem Marom (in other words, nine out of a total of eighteen

members of the General Staff); and, beyond them, a burgeoning phalanx of brigadier-generals and colonels were all products of, or at least converts to, *Gyasot Hashiryon*—the armored corps.

The ascent of armor was accompanied by a stagnation of infantry. Exotic, special-operations, air- and helicopter-borne commando-type infantry was further cultivated. A substantial element of APC-mounted infantry as an integral part of the armored task force was introduced, as well. But autonomous infantry formations of the standard type, previously the backbone of the IDF, were gradually relegated in terms of both doctrine and resources to a humble, auxiliary status.

Since this could not but be reflected in the composition of planning bodies at general headquarters (GHQ)-level, both the overall doctrine and the arms procurement philosophy that flowed from it were significantly affected. The next war, it was assumed unquestioningly, would be a vastly expanded version of the previous one. The IAF, which had devastated the air forces of four Arab countries in three hours on June 5, 1967, would have no difficulty in guaranteeing clean skies. Vast, roaring armored columns would smash through enemy fortifications in eager pursuit of a battle of decisions, in which the main force of the adversary would be obliterated. Infantry would follow the advance of armor, deal with built-up areas, and offer the armored columns protection against enemy infantry—as it had done during the Six-Day War in the Gaza–Rafah–El Arish axis. Otherwise infantry had no serious role to play. The tendency that had begun in 1956–55 had thus run its full course. An army that had been at first an infantry force with armor in an auxiliary role had been transformed within a decade (and two campaigns) into a mainly armored force with small relics of infantry, whose exact position within the prevailing war scenario was not entirely clear.

The fourth and last factor affecting the emphases in the development of the IDF's force structure and deployment preferences was a direct consequence of the Six-Day War—namely, the new tasks facing it as a result of the changing geography of Israeli national security with the occupation of vast new territories. Since the topic is too complex to be dealt with in general terms, the discussion that follows will focus separately on each of the fronts—Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian, and Lebanese.

The Egyptian Front

Apart from helping the IDF restore its declining morale during the waiting period preceding the 1967 war, Dayan's return to power resulted in an important change in the war plan. Rabin had strongly supported the idea that Israel should seize the Gaza Strip and hold on to it as long as Egypt refused to lift the naval blockade and withdraw its forces from the Sinai. Dayan, who had an acute sense of an immeasurable loss of credibility (and, therefore, of the

power to deter) argued for a dramatic *spectacle,* an all-out strike leading to the destruction of the fighting ability of the Egyptian army of the Sinai; to the seizure of the Straits of Tiran and Sharm el Sheik; and, as a net result, to the recovery and even the further reinvigoration of Israel's deterrence. Having won the debate on this, Dayan added an important caveat: under no circumstances should the IDF approach the Suez Canal area. The canal should remain open for shipping, and Israeli forces should stop more or less on the western approaches of the Mitle and Gidi passes, some 15 miles east of the canal.

Dayan's orders not to "approach the water" were, however, rescinded. One reason was that Israel anticipated a U.N. order for the forces of both sides to disengage, and, in Dayan's own words, "It was desirable to have what to disengage from."[8] Another, probably more important, reason for the change was the IDF's momentum of hot pursuit of the Egyptians. Captains, lieutenants, sergeants, and corporals competing to see who would reach the canal first engaged in an unruly race during the final chase after the fleeing Egyptian army until they reached the canal.[9] Carried away by the general euphoria that followed the war, the minister of defense simply resigned himself to this outcome. Unbelievable as it may sound, this may have been the most important factor in ultimately determining where the 1967 cease-fire lines would be.

Once the IDF was on the banks of the Suez Canal, two arguments for keeping it there were advanced. The first was political. Israel should hold on to the canal's bank and thus cause Egypt a major loss of revenues. Surely Egypt would want to see the canal reopened and, to obtain this, would agree to deal with Israel. More broadly, the argument was that Israel should hold on to the cease-fire lines on the canal for political bargaining purposes. Once the area was set ablaze by the war of attrition, however, this political-bargaining argument turned into a logical trap. As long as the Egyptians were shooting, Israel could not yield if it was to avoid looking weak. Once the shooting stopped, however, Israel had no reason to withdraw unless and until Egypt agreed to a political settlement. In other words, whatever happened, the IDF should stay on the banks of Suez.[10]

A second argument for staying on the banks of Suez was strategic-military. The canal was a formidable barrier against an Egyptian counterattack. It was, some armor experts argued, a superb tank ditch, capable of making an Egyptian attack so costly that its very possession greatly improved the efficacy of the Israeli deterrent. The other side of the same coin was that by sitting on the exposed banks of the canal in close proximity to the Egyptians, the IDF raised both the Egyptians' ability and (partly as a result) their incentives to keep up their military pressure. Based on a small regular force, the interwar (for peacetime it certainly was not) IDF was too small to be able to hold the line from Kantara on the Mediterranean to Sharm el Sheik at the tip of the Sinai peninsula against an all-out Egyptian attack. If the Egyptians decided to launch a major attack based on an attempted crossing of the canal by the two army

groups that they had between the canal and Cairo, they would be able to seize substantial territory before Israeli reserves could reach the front. Most members of the Israeli strategic political elite considered this argument valid even after the IDF stretched its manpower reserves to the very limit. It extended compulsory military service by six months (to three years); it quadrupled the size of the regular armored force (from five to six battalions to the equivalent of five to six brigades); and it committed permanently 60 percent of this armored force (or a whole armored division) to the Suez front. Nevertheless, even after this gigantic effort (considering Israel's limited resources), the IDF units in forward deployment along the canal were still vastly outnumbered, outgunned, and arguably less capable of deterring the Egyptians than the one regular armored brigade that the IDF had had in rear deployment between 1957 and 1967.

That this was the case was indirectly demonstrated by the difficulties the IDF encountered in its search for an appropriate deployment formula for the supposedly ideal Suez line. Broadly speaking, there were three contending advocacies: static deployment in forward positions, mobile deployment from rear bases, and a partial withdrawal from the waterfront. Concerned with preserving the flexibility and mobility of the IDF, members of the General Staff like Israel Tal and Arik Sharon proposed the concentration of the bulk of the IDF force somewhat in the rear, away from the waterfront. From that vantage point they proposed to employ the IDF for bold strikes in the rear of the Egyptian army across the canal. If an Egyptian intention to launch a major attack was detected, it should be thrown off balance as soon as it began. If there was not enough force to do so, the Israeli force on the east bank of the canal would wait until the main thrust of the Egyptian crossing was detected and then encounter it with vigorous fire and movement by an armored attack in the best IDF tradition. Meanwhile, of course, enough time would be gained to permit the reserves to be called up and transported from the rear to the battlefield.[11]

Temperamentally, Dayan, the minister of defense, sympathized with this concept of rear and flexible deployment. He appears, however, to have extended it to its logical conclusion—namely, a partial withdrawal from the waterfront. In fact, Dayan argued for a return to the original plan on the eve of the 1967 war. The waterfront line of deployment, he thought, was poor strategically and costly politically. Therefore, he contemplated a partial Israeli withdrawal within the framework of a partial agreement with Egypt. As long as Nasser was alive and at the helm, it was clear that there was no partner to any such understanding on the Egyptian side. The war of attrition was raging, and to offer a unilateral withdrawal under the pressure of Egyptian fire made no political sense. But the rise of Sadat after the termination of the war of attrition and the death of Nasser convinced Dayan that the time had come to put forward his proposal.

The Egyptians, with Soviet help, had advanced surface-to-air (SAM) missiles to the waterfront on their side of the canal. That meant that the IDF units deployed

on the east bank waterfront would be exposed to superior Egyptian artillery. The Israeli flying artillery—the IAF—would find it difficult to protect them because of the presence of the Egyptian missiles. Ever conscious of the danger of a clash with the Soviets, Dayan, moreover, was eager to effect a disengagement agreement of some sort that would lessen the danger of such a confrontation. Finally, an Israeli withdrawal to the Mitla and Gidi Passes would greatly improve Israel's ability to deter the Egyptians from launching a major attack.

The passes formed two critical bottlenecks controlling the land access from Egypt to Israel. Because of their physical features, the passes could be held effectively by a small force for as long as it would take Israeli reserves to be mobilized and transported from the Israeli rear. In other words, the same armored division that was too small alone to hold the long and exposed Suez Canal/Gulf of Suez line would be more than adequate if it were deployed in the passes instead of being deployed in the wide open space stretching between the passes and the Suez Canal. If only the Egyptians were to agree to an effective demilitarization of the space lying between the canal and the passes, the IDF would have every reason to withdraw to the passes.

To be sure, this would entail an Egyptian concession in that Egypt would have to agree not to reoccupy the sovereign Egyptian territory that the IDF would evacuate. On the other hand, the Egyptians would be able to reopen the Suez Canal, to restore the cities and villages along the canal that had been destroyed by the war of attrition, and to resettle a population of some 600,000 people who had become refugees in their own land in the course of the fighting of 1968–70. As a result, Dayan apparently figured, the military interface between the Egyptian and Israeli armed forces would become significantly smaller, and the conflict between the two countries would be reduced. There would be a calmer atmosphere in which, he hoped, further negotiations ultimately leading to peace could be conducted. Indeed, the negotiations leading to such a limited agreement could in themselves create the precedent for and the procedure with which to pursue further negotiations in the future.

Dayan's plan for an interim settlement along these lines was presented in March 1971 but was aborted within a few weeks, for complex reasons. In the first place, the Egyptians would agree to a scheme like this only if their troops were allowed to follow the footsteps of the retreating IDF or, alternatively, if Israel agreed to a withdrawal from the banks of Suez to the passes 15 miles to the east only within a larger timetable for withdrawal from the rest of the Sinai. Israel could not possibly agree to either alternative. If it accepted the first option—that the Egyptian army would cross the canal and deploy in the area the IDF would evacuate—the whole idea of a demilitarized belt between the two armies would be compromised. In fact, Egypt would simply be stripping Israel of territorial assets in exchange for nothing of value.

Nor was the second option offered by the Egyptians—encasing an Israeli withdrawal to the passes within a predetermined time frame—any more

acceptable. Israeli thinking on this matter was colored by the experience of 1956, when Israel had withdrawn from the Sinai without any political agreement terminating the state of war between the Jewish state and Egypt. Within a few years the Egyptians had redeployed military forces close to the Israeli border and reimposed a naval blockade. This time the Israelis were determined not to allow that to happen again. Israel would hold the Sinai unless and until Egypt agreed to a full peace agreement. It would not accept an Egyptian demand to view the withdrawal from the pennisula as a precondition to the possible negotiation of peace thereafter.

Because of such dispositions on the Israeli side, which Dayan himself fully shared, the fact that this was the maximum Egypt would contemplate in response to the idea of an interim agreement was the main obstacle to any serious negotiations. Even if the Egyptian response were more flexible than it actually was, Dayan's advocacy of an interim agreement leading to a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the banks of Suez to the Sinai passes still aroused an unenthusiastic response in the Israeli cabinet. His colleagues' reasoning went roughly as follows. Without Egypt, the Arab world would not dare launch a war against Israel. Emasculating Egypt, therefore, was the most important element in Israel's search for deterrence. How, then, could Egypt be emasculated most effectively? Dayan thought that deployment in the passes would be more effective than deployment on the banks of the canal, but many of his cabinet colleagues did not share this view. The canal, they thought, was virtually impassable. The Egyptian army had lost the war of 1967 as well as the war of attrition, at the end of which the whole area between the canal and the Egyptian capital was in ruins. Nasser in his last years in office was a ruined man, and Sadat, who replaced him, was a weak leader, perhaps an interim appointment pending the emergence of a more dominant figure. The IDF, on the other hand, was in excellent shape and could hold onto the canal banks for as long as was politically necessary.

Tacitly, this last assumption was obviously based on an exaggerated sense of superiority—the notion that the IDF was invincible, certainly vis-à-vis the Egyptian army. Dayan's apprehensions that the small force along the canal would be inadequate were not taken too seriously. Since he himself would not stake his career on this issue, his colleagues in the cabinet, led by Prime Minister Golda Meir, Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon, and Minister without Portfolio Israel Galili—and, above all, supported by the expert opinion of the chief of staff, Bar-Lev, and his deputy, Elazar—saw no reason to embrace Dayan's proposals.[12]

In the two and a half years that elapsed between the discussions concerning the interim agreement and the 1973 war, the Egyptian front sank into a deceptive tranquility. Sadat's repeated threats that a prolonged impasse would lead to renewed hostilities were not taken very seriously. The IDF, after intensive deliberations and extensive exercises, was led to believe that it had an adequate solution to

the deployment problem with which the Sinai had faced it. The main force would remain one armored division. In the event of an Egyptian attack, its task would be to hold the line alone for about seventy-two hours—enough time for two more armored divisions, consisting primarily of reserves, to be mobilized and deployed close to the canal. The permanent armored division itself would be deployed astride the canal, with two brigades in the rear and one brigade in forward positions. The tanks of the last would constitute an emergency reinforcement for about one infantry battalion, which would man a line of seventeen fortified positions (*maozim* in Hebrew) right on the waterline. These forces would be able to gather information about Egyptian moves, show the Israeli flag along the canal, prevent small-scale Egyptian encroachments on the east bank, and sustain the initial wave of any large-scale surprise attack.

If it transpired that the Egyptians were planning a truly massive operation, one more of the three armored brigades in the area would be moved forward. Thus, in an emergency, two armored brigades and one infantry battalion, plus one more armored brigade (or a total of fewer than three hundred tanks) should be able—the Israelis assumed—to hold their ground against an Egyptian army of close to half a million soldiers deployed across the canal at a distance of no more than 200–500 yards away.[13]

The most amazing aspect of this strategy was that its explicit prime intention was to deter. It started from assumptions about what would constitute an adequate defense and then proceeded to the conclusion that a form of deployment capable of defending would also ipso facto be capable of deterring. But how could such a thin line of defense deter such a massive Egyptian force in positions of forward deployment and with such a high motivation to retaliate? Clearly it could not. The fact that the Israelis deluded themselves into believing that it could stemmed from their most central error in analyzing what the Egyptians might do: the assumption that as long as Egypt felt unable to reconquer a substantial part of the Sinai in a single military campaign, it would not go to war.

To be sure, Israeli planners took into account the possibility of small-scale warfare, a replay of the war of attrition. The form of IDF deployment described earlier was meant to deal with such a threat and would most probably succeed in obtaining that objective. The military planners also considered the possibility of an all-out Egyptian attempt to reconquer the bulk of the Sinai. But on the assumption that the Egyptians felt—and would continue for a long time to feel—unable to perform such an operation successfully, the Israeli planners did not really prepare for such a scenario. At any rate, they acted on the high-risk assumption that intelligence would offer enough lead time for mobilizing reserves, deploying them close to the Egyptian lines, and thus either deterring the Egyptians or thwarting their design as soon as hostilities began.

What Israeli thinking prior to the 1973 war failed to take into account was the possibility that the Egyptians, precisely *because* they assumed that the

IDF was a mighty military machine, precisely *because* they had been so impressed by the IDF's power of decision, would lower their sights and aim at limited military objectives. They would vastly expand their capabilities and then throw into battle almost everything at their disposal. The purpose, however, at least initially, would be limited: to cross the canal and to establish a firm base on its east bank from which no Israeli counterattack would be able to dislodge them. To such a strategy, the IDF with its less than one armored division could not possibly respond. Its deterrence along the Suez Canal was, in other words, less effective than it had been within the supposedly indefensible 1967 borders. Though entailing an unprecedented cost, though leading to the permanent commitment to one front of a force *four times as large* as the total regular armored force on all fronts together before the 1967 war, it nevertheless failed to dissuade the Egyptians. They were not deterred from launching the war of attrition—and, when it came to the test on October 6, 1973, they were not dissuaded from attempting to cross the canal.

The Jordanian Front

On the Egyptian front the familiar Israeli distinction between *basic* and *current* security sank to the continental shelf of the Mediterranean on October 21, 1967, with the Israeli navy flagship *Eilat.* The war of attrition that raged there for two years (1968–70) was sometimes so fierce that it was merely a question of basic security within a static context. The style, in other words, was different from anything the Israelis had experienced before because it did not involve the actual seizure of territory by either side. But in terms of stakes, scope, objectives, casualties, economic costs, impact on morale, and superpower involvement, the war of attrition with Egypt clearly fell into the category of basic security.

Viewed from such a perspective, Israel's pursuit of deterrence along the Jordan River (the cease-fire line of 1967), did entail the two traditional categories of basic and current security. The IDF had to find an optimal method of deployment with which to deter the Jordanian army from any attempt to recapture the West Bank. Simultaneously, it had to find ways and means of deterring a new force, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), from attempting to ensconce itself in the West Bank or from harassing the Israeli population of the Beit Shean area or from attacking IDF units deployed in the area to deter the Jordanian army. As it turned out, the IDF was exceedingly successful in finding a solution to both problems.

As along the Suez Canal, the formula evolved piecemeal in response to challenges. Immediately after the Six-Day War, the Jordanians appeared so shattered by their defeat, by the manner in which President Nasser had hustled them into the war, and by the extent of their territorial loss (the entire West Bank) that, seen from Israel, they did not constitute a significant threat. As time

passed, the Jordanian army (with U.S. help) gradually recouped from the disaster. Increasingly, however, it was facing imminent danger from within as a result of the growth of the putative power of the PLO. As the point of a showdown between King Hussein's fierce, well-armed, and disciplined Bedouin troops and Yasser Arafat's ragtag and unruly PLO militias was drawing nearer, the hidden but ever-present convergence of Israeli and Hashemite interests resurfaced. Israel deliberately accelerated, through a forceful policy of reprisals, the growth of the conflict between the Hashemites and the Palestinians. The Israeli argument was that from Hussein's point of view the showdown was inevitable: sooner or later he would either clip the wings of the PLO or see his own kingdom go under.

In September 1970 the Israeli thesis was substantiated. Faced with a triple hijacking operation on Jordanian territory, King Hussein could no longer defer an open clash with the Palestinians. His troops crushed the PLO almost to the point of total extinction within a few days. Since then, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has become, for all intents and purposes, Israel's tacit ally—a virtual proxy vis-à-vis the PLO. The latter has not been allowed to return to military activities from Jordanian territory; as a result, the Israeli–Jordanian 1967 cease-fire lines have become the scene of peaceful relations in everything but name.

Beyond the question of how to deal with the Palestinians, an issue on which Israel and Jordan have never been very far apart, there has always lurked the hidden but very important element of deterrence. When King Hussein decided to sign a mutual defense pact with President Nasser and to place the Jordanian army under a joint Egyptian–Jordanian–Syrian–Iraqi command in the last week before the outbreak of the Six-Day War, the king evidently assumed that he was risking less vis-à-vis Israel by joining this Arab alliance than he would be risking vis-à-vis the Arab world if—out of fear of Israeli reaction—he were to decline Nasser's invitation. Israel's ability to deter Hussein was, in this sense, fatally depreciated.

Conversely, Hussein's devastating defeat in the Six-Day War recovered Israel's deterrent from the Jordanian perspective beyond recognition. For one thing, having lost so much, Hussein could legitimately argue from then on that he had sacrificed in the name of Arab unity more than any other Arab state. With the force of such an argument, he could ward off pressures for many years to come that Jordan should engage Israel on the battlefield again. Second, Hussein's ability to keep abreast of the arms race was critically affected by the 1967 war. Whereas Israel, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and—with the beginning of the sharp rise in oil prices—Saudi Arabia all embarked in the aftermath of the 1967 war on a breathtaking arms race, Jordan all but opted out. There were three reasons: (1) shortage of funds; (2) difficulties in obtaining arms from the United States after not having kept a promise to avoid using them against Israel; (3) a mood of near resignation, an unarticulated but strongly suggested assumption that Jordan no longer had any need for arms for the purpose of

Beyond these political ingredients, the Israeli deterrent against Jordanian participation in a future Arab–Israeli war came to be based, after 1967, on three specific strategic elements. The first relates to the future of Aqaba, Jordan's only port. Any attempt by Jordan to attack territory held by Israel could lead the Israelis—as Hussein may have been told in private—to occupy Aqaba. Israel could probably accomplish this in a matter of hours even at a time of distress, as during the most critical hours of the 1973 war. Jordan would then be landlocked, denied an important outlet for trade, and dependent on the goodwill of not entirely predictable neighbors such as Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and for that matter Israel itself.

The second strategic source of effective Israeli deterrence against Jordan has been its patent inability, as a direct result of the 1967 war, to inflict on Israel any unacceptable damage through a brief and decisive fait accompli. Before June 1967 Jordan could, at least in theory, cut Israel in half right through the center of the country, and, since Israel's waistline (in the Kalkilya–Herzliya area) was less than 10 miles wide, Jordanian armor could achieve such an objective within a hour. Since 1967, however, the only Israeli soft underbelly from a Jordanian perspective have been the towns of Eilat (opposite Aqaba on the southern tip of the respective countries) and Beit Shean, south of the Sea of Galilee. Otherwise, a Jordanian military thrust would be complicated, costly, protracted, and fruitless because of the physical features of the terrain. Specifically, the most important area lying astride the Jordan valley (where the cease-fire lines have been located since 1967) is the Judea and Samaria massif, a steep rise of more than 3,000 feet (depending at which point), in which armor can move with great difficulty only on three or four axes. The area is predominantly barren, very rocky, exceedingly hot in summer, and very slippery and muddy in winter. It is also predominantly uninhabited.[14]

These features of the Israeli–Jordanian border since 1967 have made it quite possible for the Israelis to obtain a significant measure of deterrence against Jordan for a very limited investment in manpower and other resources. To block the advance of an armored Jordanian thrust, Israel does not need more than a small number of lookouts for early detection along the Jordan River, extensive mining, and a relatively small force capable of blocking Jordanian entry into the three or four east–west axes. What could make a difference would be the deployment of Jordanian SAMS along the Jordan River; such weapons could neutralize, or at least make more difficult, the intervention of the IAF against an invading Jordanian force. Such a move on the part of Jordan, however, can be effectively controlled through a finely tuned system of Israeli deterrent threats.

For reasons such as these, Israel faced no insurmountable difficulty in deterring Jordan from launching any kind of military attack, even during the first ten days of the 1973 war, when there was virtually no Israeli soldier in sight along the cease-fire lines with Jordan. Indeed, from this perspective it seems almost true to say that the 1967 war eliminated Jordan as an adversary except

if and when Israel should prove incapable of dealing effectively with a war situation begun by other adversaries. Since the 1967 war Jordan has been expected by the Israelis to sit on the fence and watch. If a war is launched against Israel by, say, Syria and Egypt that the Jewish state finds difficult to contain and bring to a decisive resolution within a few days, then and only then do the Israelis expect Jordan to throw its weight behind the Arab war effort. The key to deterring Jordan, therefore, lies less in the actual Israeli military capabilities allocated by Israel for fighting Jordan than in an effective deterrence of the two pivotal neighbors, Egypt and Syria.

This does not apply, however, to the Israeli view of deterrence against small-scale threats to current security emanating from Jordan. At first the reemergence of the Palestinian issue as a major focal point in Arab–Israeli relations did not appear to the Israelis to pose any undue difficulty. The Jordanians, who in 1948 had forcibly imposed themselves on the West Bank Palestinian population, kept a close watch on Palestinian nationalist agitation within their realm. In June 1967 the Israeli occupation authorities managed to lay their hands on much of the information that the Jordanians had assembled on these elements in the West Bank. Consequently, it did not take long for the Israelis to evolve a reasonably effective deterrent vis-à-vis the Palestinians—namely, to demonstrate to the West Bank population that cooperation with the PLO at the risk of suffering Israeli punishment was more hazardous than collaboration with Israel at the risk of PLO punishment. From this point of view—and in terms of the mechanics, this was clearly a problem of deterrence, too—Israel had only a minor problem with the population of the West Bank during the 1967–73 period.[15]

In the Gaza Strip it proved more difficult to obtain the same results. The area, a small, poor zone in which the Palestinian refugees in the camps outnumbered the Palestinian nonrefugees in the towns and villages, was rife with PLO activists (especially radicals from George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or PFLP). Acts of resistance against the Israeli occupation were carried out daily almost from the very beginning of the Israeli occupation. When all this reached a boiling point after a number of particularly vicious killings of Israelis, the Meir government permitted Major-General Ariel Sharon, OC Southern Command, to try a new iron-fist policy in the Gaza area. Moving in bulldozers, which broke open wide avenues in the crowded refugee camps, the IDF and the SHABAK (Hebrew acronym for the plainclothes General Security Service) made hundreds of arrests, carried out numerous manhunts of fleeing PLO activists, and within a matter of weeks had terrorized the population of the Gaza Strip into an attitude of submission that did not wear out even long after Sharon's retirement from the IDF.[16]

The routing of the PLO from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip shifted the weight of the conflict with this organization from the interior of the occupied territories to the cease-fire lines on the rim. Egypt and Syria permitted

no free play by the PLO from their territories and, in any case, held the PLO on such a short leash that it did not behoove that organization to seek to base itself on their territories.[17] Conversely, weaker governments such as those of Jordan and Lebanon had far greater difficulty in restraining the PLO, either for fear of critical Arab reactions—including those of countries that would not allow PLO activities from their own territories—or for fear of domestic repercussions. Thus once the PLO had lost its initial ability to operate against Israel inside the occupied territories, it increasingly based itself on the east bank of the Jordan River and in South Lebanon. As a result, Israel faced the old problem of deterrence against small-scale threats in an entirely new setting.

Insofar as Jordan was concerned, solving the problem proved far easier in the context of the 1967–73 period than it had been during the 1949–56 period. The main reason for the difference was that the Jordan valley was uninhabited by Jews, whose presence could provide marauders with conveniently vulnerable targets, and offered a topographic setting that facilitated effective defensive/preventive/denial strategy. In the 1950s, Dayan, as chief of staff, felt that Israel could not defend every tree, house, or well, and therefore that it was imperative to rely on a harsh punitive policy vis-à-vis the Jordanians in order to force them to restrain the Palestinians under their jurisdiction. In the 1960s, and early 1970s, Dayan, as minister of defense, authorized a more sophisticated policy. It blended a powerful incentive for good behavior in the form of the open-bridges policy, which permitted trade between the east and west banks, with severe punishment—virtually a scorched-earth policy against the population on the Jordanian side of the river—and very effective defensive measures that brought PLO casualty rates per attack to above 90 percent while keeping Israeli casualties very low.

The open-bridges policy enabled Israel to turn on and turn off commercial and civil traffic on the Allenby, Damya, and Abdullah bridges across the Jordan River and thus to affect critically life and trade on both banks. Consequently, this policy gave Israel an effective instrument with which to turn both the Palestinians on the West Bank and the Jordanian government against the PLO. The punitive policy of shelling, bombing, and strafing, along with occasional infantry and light-armor raids on the east bank of the river, led at one point to the complete disruption of life in the whole area. Farmers could not work, fields were set on fire, irrigation canals were destroyed. The population ran away into the Jordanian hinterland and created congested and politically dangerous concentrations of refugees. Finally, the combination of small forts (*moutsavim*), extensive mine fields, barbed-wife fencing, tracking roads, patrols, and other devices along the Jordan River created a situation in which fewer than 400 Israeli soldiers could hold a 250-mile-long line from the Sea of Galilee to Eilat; it enabled the Israelis to capture or kill within several hours every PLO party that succeeded in crossing the mine fields, breaking through the fences, avoiding the ambushes, or bypassing the forts. As a result, by 1970, even before

the ouster of the PLO from Jordan, the latter country had ceased to be an effective sanctuary for PLO operations against Israel.[18]

Lebanon

Achieving the same result on the Lebanese border, however, proved a far more demanding task. The difficulty began with the difference in terrain. Whereas the Jordan valley is for the most part barren—making surveillance, detection, and accurate shooting very easy—the Israeli–Lebanese border is a hilly woodland where small parties can move quite easily without being detected. In addition, the Israeli–Lebanese 1949 armistice demarcation line—unlike the 1967 Israeli–Jordanian cease-fire line—does not run along one distinct ravine. Zionist plans during World War I advocated that the border should run along the Litani, Zaharani, or even Awali River. The final border, however, bore no resemblance to these plans and in fact resulted from British–French negotiations in which neither the Lebanese nor the Zionist interest was an important factor. In the course of the 1948 war, Israel had an opportunity to rectify this artificial border since the IDF was in control of substantial Lebanese territory. The Ben Gurion government, however, decided to return every inch to the Lebanese; therefore, the final border remained exposed, topographically incoherent, and thus difficult to defend—especially against small-scale infiltration.

The most important factor that turned the Lebanese border into a festering wound, however, was the fact that on the Israeli side there was a large, physically vulnerable, and often socially-culturally infirm Jewish population, whereas on the Lebanese side there was no punishable government against which coercive diplomacy could effectively be directed. The Jewish population on the border constituted a soft underbelly—a victim and a hostage that could be subject to daily hit-and-run attacks by ragtag forces that were neither very big nor very well trained nor even very impressively equipped; they were, nevertheless, a very effective instrument of harassment and demoralization. The absence of a Lebanese government capable of being pushed—through punitive Israeli action—into taking disciplinary action against the PLO turned the south of Lebanon into an almost impregnable PLO sanctuary.

Together, the two elements turned the Israeli–Lebanese border into a scene of ever-increasing violence. To deal with this situation, the IDF essentially applied a different mix of the same methods it applied in the Jordan valley and along the banks of the Suez: a combined system (*ma'arechet* in Hebrew) consisting of a chain of small fortified positions, mine fields, patrols, ambushes, day and night raids across the lines and intermittent fire. This mix exacted a high price from the Arab Lebanese population across the border if and when the latter seemed to offer shelter to the PLO. On the Sinai and Jordan fronts these same methods were quite successful (insofar as they led to a cease-fire on the Egyptian front and to the ejection of the PLO from Jordan). On the

Syria

Although tensions on the Syrian border were the immediate cause of the 1967 war, the question of whether or not there would be a war between Israel and the Ba'ath republic was left almost entirely up to Israel. The Syrians, to be sure, did launch a small-scale attack on Tel Dan and did step up somewhat the shelling of Israeli villages in the Huleh valley. Nevertheless, the overall impression was that Syria was neither ready for nor interested in a war with Israel in June 1967. And when Syria accepted a cease-fire *before* Israel's counterattack, it became crystal clear that the Israeli deterrence against a Syrian threat to basic security had been largely successful.[20]

As has been shown before, where Israel had failed abysmally prior to the Six-Day War was in dissuading the Syrians from harassing the population of the Galilee—in other words, in deterring Syria from posing a constant, nerve-racking threat of the low-level, current-security variety. Consequently, Eshkol's government in the course of the 1967 war was split into doves and hawks concerning Syria. To everyone's surprise, Dayan, the minister of defense, was a dove in this regard. Fearing a clash with the Soviets, a division inside Israel, and intensified conflict with the Syrians, he advocated the conquest of the DMZs in order to remove this constant source of trouble from the agenda. But he argued vehemently against a move to seize the Syrian Golan plateau.[21]

Dayan's dovish views were contested vigorously by Yigal Allon. A member of a kubbutz near the Syrian border, Allon was sensitive to the views of the population that had suffered from Syrian fire throughout the previous nineteen years. Above all, he did not particularly fear that Israel might find itself clashing with the Soviets. He also entertained far-flung ideas concerning the future of Israeli–Syrian relations. Born in Kefar Tabor, a village in the Galilee, he knew parts of Syria as well as his own birthplace. This familiarity led to a strong conviction that Syria was not an irreversible political fact. The country was, like Lebanon, a mosaic of rival minorities. It was in the Israeli interest, Allon argued, to try to weaken it by establishing enduring links with some of these minorities. In particular, Allon believed that the Druzes of southern Syria would welcome such contact with Israel. Thus when the Six-Day War began, Allon was convinced that this was a unique opportunity to capture from Syria an area astride the Israeli border that could be turned into a security belt, as well as to make a bold attempt to link up with the Druzes further east, in the Hawran. In his own words, "considering Syria's role in fomenting the [Six-Day] war, and its fierce shelling of the [Israeli] villages and attempt to perform an armoured incursion—it was imperative to open an offensive on the Syrian front as soon as the IAF had vanguished Arab air forces . . . in order to uproot Syria from the [Golan] mountain, obliterate her forces, and force the remains of Syrian army to concentrate on the defense of Damascus—without letting the IDF move too closely to [this town]—and conquer the whole of south Syria, including the Druze Mountains."[22]

Though Allon's far-reaching ideas had virtually no support in Eshkol's cabinet, he did succeed in presenting a strong case for an Israeli-controlled security belt on the Golan. Since Dayan opposed this, Allon had to bypass him and twist the prime minister's arm. Leading a deputation of the population of the Galilee Finger virtually into the prime minister's office, Allon succeeded in bringing Eshkol to overrule Dayan's objections and to authorize the conquest of the Golan. What undoubtedly helped this pressure along was the fact that the IDF Northern Command, under Major-General David Elazar, was also pressing for action. Allon and Elazar together advanced many reasons that the conquest of the Golan would contribute to Israel's security. It is difficult to avoid the impression, however that their most important reason for advocating the assault on the Syrian Golan was sheer ambition: General Elazar and his staff, too, wished to participate in what was rapidly developing into a spectacular victory.

Dayan, the main opponent of the idea of expanding the war against Syria, was being surrounded by an ever-growing demand to authorize a redefinition of war aims to which he was opposed. Probably out of fear of domestic criticism if and when the Syrians were to resume their fire some time after the opportunity to seize the Golan had slipped away, Dayan yielded (as he yielded against his own better judgment to the pressure to allow the IDF to reach the Suez Canal); within forty-eight hours the IDF had captured a sizable chunk of sovereign Syrian territory.[23]

This acquisition seemingly strengthened the Israeli deterrent beyond recognition. Deterrence against current security threats was improved, since Syrian artillery and light firearms could no longer shoot at Israelis living and working the valley right below them. Deterrence against basic security threats was also improved because the Syrians lost their immense topographic advantage; because the IDF suddenly was barely twenty-five miles from the Syrian capital; and because the IDF captured Mount Hermon, a ridge rising to more than 6,000 feet at its peak and offering a position from which virtually anything that moved on the Syrian side could be seen. Such a narrowly pitted cartographic-topographic and military calculus of deterrence failed, however, to place the issue in the appropriate psychological context. Specifically, it failed to take into account what the loss of this important piece of territory would do to the Syrians' motivation to participate in future wars with Israel. In 1948 the Syrians noisily advertised ambitious war aims but settled for the conquest of three minuscule enclaves on the Israeli side of the border. In 1956 the Syrians were loud again, but they let Egypt take a painful beating from the French, the British, and the Israelis without lifting a finger to help them. In 1967 Syria dragged Egypt into war, but when it came to the test the Syrian army fought gingerly and seemed far more preoccupied with defending the regime in

Damascus than with engaging the IDF. Nevertheless, eager to settle the score with Syria once and for all, those members of Eshkol's cabinet who advocated the capture of the Golan exaggerated the extent of Syria's involvement in the 1967 war. They won the day but, in the process, created a situation in which Syria was intimidated, but its national pride and its position and status in its Arab peer group were so badly hurt that its commitment to the struggle against Israel may have been transformed from something vague and not entirely serious to a specific, powerful, galvanizing national purpose. By conquering the Golan, then, Israel may have appreciated its *defense* against Syria *in relative terms*. But it almost certainly depreciated its *deterrence in absolute terms*. The full scope of this miscalculation unfolded in October 1973, when a huge Syrian force broke through the Israeli lines on the Golan and stopped only on the edge of the plateau, at a point from which the lush valley below—with its multitude of Israeli villages and towns—could be seen.

Even during the first two years after the 1967 war there were moments at which holding on to the Golan appeared as complex a proposition as holding on to the Suez Canal. Indeed, on the Golan, as along the canal, the Israeli presence led to something resembling a war of attrition. In terms of deployment and force structure, the Israeli response was basically schematic and predictable. Shelter for the forces holding the lines on the Golan was provided by a system of *ma'ozim* very close to the cease-fire lines (as in the Sinai, the Jordan valley, and the Lebanese border). In addition (emulating the Jordan River and the Suez Canal) the IDF dug a deep artificial tank ditch as an obstacle to armored attacks. If such an attack was planned by the Syrians, it would have required special bridging equipment at a number of points, which would inevitably become vulnerable bottlenecks. To make a Syrian attack even more difficult, the IDF laid a large number of antipersonnel and antivehicle mines and deployed elements of artillery, armor, and some infantry at a number of central points some distance from the cease-fire lines. There was, of course, also a fence system against infiltration for purpose of sabotage and intelligence gathering, as well as some awesome-looking early warning and electronic communications centers.

All in all, the Golan front had one-third the size of the force that the IDF had in the Sinai. One armored brigade (60–80 tanks) plus one infantry battalion (about 350 combatants) and some auxiliaries were supposed to be able to absorb an attack by a formidable force of more than 600 tanks, which Syria had deployed in the immediate vicinity of the cease-fire line. Moreover, a substantial part of the Syrian force was concentrated so close to the crossing line that the small IDF contingent would hardly have any early warning. All the Syrians had to do was to take the camouflage nets off their tanks, start the engines, and move them to the crossing line a few hundred yards away. Under these circumstances, unless the IDF succeeded in obtaining hard intelligence data positively proving an imminent Syrian intention to launch a

massive attack (which not even the best intelligence service in the world could responsibly promise), the minuscule Israeli force on the Golan—the only force standing between the Syrians and the population of the valley ten miles to the west—would have to fight against a force ten times its size, for at least forty-eight hours, without any significant reinforcement.

How could the IDF planners have been tempted to believe that such a force would deter effectively? The answer may lie in two separate but related sets of assumptions. First, having already become overextended because of the requirements of deployment on other fronts, the IDF had no choice but to make the high-risk assumption that more force could be made available only in a supreme emergency. Hypnotized by the advantages of strategic depth, the Achilles' heel of the Israeli deterrent before June 1967, IDF planners were apparently not entirely aware of the trade-off between strategic depth and other components of deterrence.

The pre-1967 boundaries may have been imperfect, but they were commensurate with the order of battle that Israel could afford to maintain. The post-1967 boundaries greatly improved security from the point of view of strategic depth, but they may have also increased Arab motivation to fight and, despite the colossal expansion of the IDF, led to a worse force-to-space ratio than existed before the 1967 war. To put it bluntly, one regular armored brigade (the seventh) near the town of Ashkelon in the center of Israel as a strategic reserve offered a better deterrent within the more compact 1967 lines than did a whole armored division in the Sinai, plus an armored brigade in the Golan, plus numerous other smaller elements of armor spread over a great variety of locations along the new—and far longer—boundaries. What was gained in size was undercut by the combination of far longer internal lines, with a shift to—in essence—forward deployment, a method reducing Israel's early warning and underlining its abject numerical inferiority.

The IDF, then, started its calculus from the assumption that the forces in the Golan could not be substantially augmented unless and until a supreme emergency was positivley identified. Thus it was only natural for the planners to assume that this entailed no unacceptable risk. But how could it be assumed that there was no unreasonable risk when the Syrians were engaged—right in front of Israeli eyes—in the most vigorous arms buildup in their history? The explanation may be traced in standard Israeli assumptions concerning the Syrian calculus. Syria, it may have been assumed, would not go to war without Egypt. Egypt would not go to war unless it could recapture a substantial part of the Sinai. But since—at least in the Israeli perception—the Egyptians would remain unable to do so for a long time to come, a large-scale Syrian attack was highly unlikely.

This reasoning is not the same as saying that the Israelis did not anticipate any kind of threat. Although a full-scale Syrian assault was considered only a remote possibility, contingencies such as a renewed war of attrition or a

Syrian attempt to grab a piece of land on which the Syrian flag could be proudly hoisted were held to be likely, even very likely. Against such limited threats, the forces allocated for the Golan would be quite enough, especially if their backbone, the 188th armored brigade, were deployed somewhere in the rear as a local, concentrated strategic reserve capable of deploying quickly at any point along the cease-fire lines where a Syrian intention to perform a *mechtaff* ("grab" in Hebrew) or any other hostile move was detected.

The Decline of Casi Belli

One of the most paradoxical aspects of the Israeli experience with casi belli as an instrument of deterrence is that most of the changes in the status quo that would have led Israel, before the Six-Day War, to initiate hostilities became obsolete before they were fully spelled out. Allon's comprehensive definition of Arab acts that would be regarded by Israel as a grievous breach of the status quo, and thus as a potential cause for resorting to force, was published in the summer 1967 issue of the hebrew language magazine *Molad*. When the article was published, Israel had already gone to war in order to undo the consequences of Nasser's challenge and thus ipso facto exhibit the credibility of its deterrence. The consequences of the war, however, robbed the concept of deterrent casi belli of much of its policy relevance. If a naval blockade was a casus belli, Israel's conquest of the Sinai peninsula endowed it with effective control over the Straits of Tiran. If the concentration of Egyptian forces in the Sinai in close proximity to the Israeli border was a casus belli, the Israeli control of the peninsula, again, ensured that the Egyptians would not be able to concentrate their forces there except by actually launching a war. If the passage of Israeli ships through the Suez Canal had been a grievous wound since the early 1950s, Israel's control of the Sinai created a situation in which the canal was open either to both countries or to neither. If the stationing of Jordanian troops in great concentrations on the West Bank was a casus belli, the Israeli conquest of this territory removed it from the list as well. Last but not least, if Israel considered Syrian interference with the use of the water of the Jordan River a casus belli, Syria could no longer interfere while the IDF controlled the Hasbani, the Banias, and the Dan, the three main tributaries of the Jordan.

The sudden irrelevance of Israel's casi belli had more profound implications than the Eshkol and Meir governments realized. It boiled down, in fact, to nothing less than a fundamental shift in overall strategic posture from deterrence to defense; from a strategy of war prevention through a threat of punishment to a strategy of war prevention through the declared intention of denying the adversary any military or territorial gains; from, in the final analysis, a strategy that was commensurate with Israel's size and resources to a strategy that was more aligned with Israeli dreams.

The full extent of the shift can best be understood through the perspective of what is known as *strategic depth*. Before the 1967 war, Israel relied on a strategic posture that sought to compensate for the lack of *endogenous* strategic depth by creating through the enunciation or signaling of casi belli an envelope of added, *exogenous*, shock-absorbing capacity. This entailed both spatial and functional dimensions. In spatial terms the added absorptive capacity of enemy attack would be gained through the unilateral definition of security margins outside the sovereign territory of the state. Differently stated, if the boundaries of the state delineated the domain of its intrinsic, vital interests, then declared, semideclared, hinted, signaled, or even only mooted casi belli constituted a desperate and not entirely successful attempt to delineate a wider strategic perimeter. In functional terms, the added increments of security would be gained through the unilateral designation of specific limitations on the adversaries' capabilities.

From a legal point of view, this was an outrageous practice. It entailed an Israeli demand from neighboring states to accept restrictions on their freedom of action in matters that were entirely within their sovereign rights. Thus if Israel declared that it would not tolerate the arming of the Arab world beyond a certain level, or if it threatened that the concentration of Egyptian forces in the Sinai or of Jordanian forces on the West Bank or of Syrian forces in Jordan or in Lebanon would constitute a casus belli, the Jewish state would, strictly speaking, be interfering with the internal affairs of these countries. Such anticipatory deterrent threats constituted, in other words, a *Diktat*, a challenge—an intolerable affront. They were uncivilized, brigand, unlawful, and above all provocative.

Nevertheless, even if the Israelis were fully aware of this—and it is not entirely clear that they were—they could argue two things in defense of this policy. First, they could say, the Arabs had brought such a predicament upon themselves by declaring and maintaining a state of war. Second, the alternative could be worse; namely, if Israel could not protect itself through threats, if its admittedly provocative demands were not heeded, it might have to protect itself through execution. From the Arab point of view, the result would be worse: ever more frequent Israeli preemptions leading to an Israeli occupation of Arab lands. This was what Israel had tried to prevent throughout the nineteen years preceding the Six-Day War. Having failed (by its own perception more than by Arab perceptions), it shifted its strategy from threats to their execution, from deterrence to active defense. This was the story of the reprisals before the 1956 war and of the 1956 campaign itself. The outcome was an Israeli withdrawal in return for a vague U.S. assurance that the Egyptians would tacitly agree to regard any return to the pre-1956 war status quo ante a legitimate casus belli.

Egypt had complied with this voluntary agreement, but it evidently continued to regard this state of affairs as an open wound, a score that a proud and ambitious nation like itself could not afford to forego. In February 1960

Nasser attempted to settle this score for the first time; in May 1967 he tried again. In the first instance Israel's response succeeded in deterring; in the second, however, Israel failed to take full advantage of its very real deterrent power and was consequently impelled to execute its deterrent threats.

Once the threatened punishments had been administered, however, Israel's *projected, potential, and exogenous strategic depth was realized. It became actual, internalized, endogenous. What until June 1967 had been perceived as* secondary *strategic* interests (for which one *may* fight) were inadvertently redefined as primary, *intrinsic* interests (for which one *will* fight). *Although the bulk of the newly acquired territory was seen by Israeli policymakers as a mere bargaining asset, the provisional arrangements made in order to hold on to it, the fortifications, the military air bases and infrastructure, the civilian* and paramilitary settlements—all had the effect of transforming the overall strategy. The previous strategy of deterrence based on the threat of punishment was abandoned. Adopted instead was a strategy of deterrence based on a supposedly impregnable defensive deployment. That this defensive form of deterrence was not impregnable the Israelis discovered with a shock in 1973. Meanwhile, however, the novel and immensely satisfying sense of impregnability affected Israel's official attitude toward other elements in its own formula for general deterrence.

The Illusion of Self-Reliance

The first victim of Israel's newly acquired self-confidence was its long-held policy regarding international patronage. Ben Gurion's maxim that a mighty international patron like the United States would greatly augment Israel's deterrence—that the very existence of a formal, public alliance with such a patron would have an important impact on the Arab strategic calculus and willingness to initiate hostilities—was never explicitly challenged. But the harrowing experience of being abandoned by virtually everyone on the eve of the 1967 war, and the heady sensation of victory and omniscience that engulfed the Israelis after the war, soon led to a new calculus of deterrence in which a formal alliance with a great power was relegated to a tertiary level of importance.

This was not the result of a single decision or of a consistent, orderly process of policy evaluation. Rather, it was the outcome of a drawn-out exchange in which the United States confronted Israel with a clear choice: *either* territories *or* a formal alliance. Coauthored by a multitude of policymaking authorities, the U.S. perspective in this regard (as in most others) was not entirely coherent. Its main elements, however, were not difficult to identify. The United States was not unhappy about the Israeli victory in the war (although it was outraged by the mysterious attack on the USS *Liberty*). After all, Israel had administered a stunning knockout blow to the allies of the Soviet Union and had thereby seemingly changed the strategic realities of the Middle East. The Soviet traffic of supplies to North Vietnam through the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean was blocked. The Soviets were not only humiliated but, indeed, forced to spend huge sums to restore the devastated armed forces of their Arab clients.

At the same time, however, the U.S. government was alarmed by the heightened tensions in the Middle East resulting from the war. There was an urgent need to remove some of the sources of imminent explosion that were virtually built into a situation in which Israel occupied such vast Arab lands. Indeed, the U.S. position in the Arab world had suffered greatly as a result of the Israeli triumph, since officially the United States was held to be in collusion with the Jewish state. Accordingly, if the United States could facilitate a constructive Arab–Israeli dialogue, or at least an interim agreement that would lead to an Israeli withdrawal in exchange for partial Arab recognition, U.S. interests would be greatly benefited.

This in a nutshell was the position of the Near East Bureau of the State Department, the main depository of empathy for the Arabs in official Washington. The National Security Council and the White House did not entirely disagree with the main tenets of this thesis, but they also tended to accept elements of the Israeli thesis. In particular, they conceded the logic of the argument that, had Israel possesseed a security guarantee from the United States and had Israel not been pushed by the United States in 1957 to evacuate the Sinai without any Egyptian willingness to make peace, the war of 1967 might have been avoided. It was urgent, President Johnson and his White House staff believed, to defuse the situation. This could be achieved through an Israeli withdrawal, but Israel should not be pushed into withdrawing again in return for no tangible improvement in its basic security situation.

Seen from Washington, the optimal solution would have been an Israeli withdrawal, Arab recognition of Israel, and a formal U.S. guarantee of Israel's security as insurance against sudden shifts in the Arab position. The second-best solution would be an Israeli withdrawal without a full peace with the Arabs but with a U.S. security guarantee. What the United States could not do, however, was what Israel would have preferred—namely, underwrite Israel's security in a formal treaty while Israel still occupied vast Arab lands. Under such circumstances, the danger of a flare-up leading to a U.S. entanglement in another imbroglio (in addition to Vietnam) would be very great, as would the damage to U.S. relations with the Arab and Moslem worlds.

Such a view of U.S. interests presented Israel with a difficult choice. On the one hand, the United States was offering what Israel had craved ever since its inception—namely, a public, unambiguously defined security guarantee. If the Jewish state were to have such an agreement with the mightiest power in the world, especially if it would be not merely an executive agreement but a treaty ratified in Congress, the strategic calculus of its Arab adversaries was

bound to be altered. The Arabs would have to assume not only that Israel itself was powerful and quite capable of inflicting painful wounds to them, but also that Israel was supported in a binding manner by the United States; that it had no problem of either economic solvency or military supplies; that if it ran out of manpower, the United States would have to dispatch U.S. troops to defend it; that the actual might and credibility of the great American republic were irrevocably committed to the Jewish state's defense; that the impact of the far-flung Soviet commitment on the side of the Arabs was substantially undercut and neutralized by a symmetrical U.S. involvement on the side of Israel; that, ultimately, the undoing of Israel as a political reality in the Middle East had become an utterly unrealistic proposition.

On the other hand, such a security guarantee was bound to carry a significant price tag. In the first place, Israel would have to accept the notion of a withdrawal from virtually all the territories occupied in the Six-Day War in return for less than what the Israelis perceived as full and normal peace with the Arbas. In a sense, if they accepted the U.S. offer, they might have to go back to the pre–June 1967 status quo ante, in which the Sinai would be under Egyptian control, the West Bank under Jordanian control, and the Golan (possibly excluding the DMZs), under Syrian control. This would mean that Israel would be in fact trading territories, physical barriers, and strategic depth for a U.S. declaration (albeit a written one) as the main shield of its security.

The implications would be profound. An utter lack of exchange of either persons or commodities or ideas between the Jewish state and its neighbors would be endorsed as a normal state of affairs. U.S. arms rather than a complex web of human relations and interdependencies would be the main dam against yet another Arab attack. The Jewish state would largely forego its freedom to decide when and how to use force. Henceforth, every time the Arabs either threatened or actually implemented steps Israel deemed detrimental to its security, it would have to prevail on U.S. hesitations and obtain an executive commitment, backed by Congress, to take deterrent or defensive action. The problem would be serious with regard to threats to Israel's basic security—that is, the probability of an all-out war (as in 1948, 1956, or 1967)—because of the dangers that this entailed. But it would be acute with regard to low-level, current-security threats (such as Israel had to deal with all along). From a U.S. perspective such threats might appear inconsequential, whereas from an Israeli perspective they would be as intolerable as a similar situation on the California–Mexico border would be from the U.S. point of view. Since it could be taken for granted that the United States would always advise caution, prudence, and restraint and that it would always drag its feet in response to any Israeli request for backing, a formal U.S.–Israeli alliance could turn into an endless source of friction between the two countries.

Which of these considerations loomed larger in the Israeli mind is impossible to tell. What is clear, however, is that the Eshkol government never really seriously considered the U.S. offer of a treaty of alliance in exchange for an

Israeli endorsement of the principle of more or less complete withdrawal from the occupied territories. Israel's ability to deter the Arabs by holding onto all the newly occupied territories appeared to be beyond challenge. The United States seemed to have been so favorably impressed by Israel's latest demonstration of military prowess that it was moving rapidly toward an acknowledgment of the Jewish state's value as a strategic asset. Meanwhile, it was supplying Israel with most of the arms and political and economic support it needed. In other words, Israel was reaping most of the tangible fruits of an alliance without paying any real price for it. So why even consider a treaty?[24]

David Ben Gurion might have insisted that in the long run Israel was too small and vulnerable to shun a formal alliance with the world's mightiest power, that the moral and strategic-political impact of such an alliance on Israel's posture vis-à-vis the Arabs should not be taken lightly. His successors, however, acted from a position of greatly invigorated self-confidence. This was already discernible in the attitude of the Eshkol government during Lyndon Johnson's last year in the White House. But it became an unchallenged orthodoxy, an article of faith, an assumption that one acts on and never stops to question, during 1969–73, when Nixon, Kissinger, Golda Meir, Israel Galili, Dayan, Allon, and Rabin were the principal actors.

From the Israeli point of view, what seems to explain this breakaway from the age-old maxim that the Jewish state needed a superpower patron is the combination of personal and situational factors. The personal dimension is as simple as it is difficult to substantiate: the leading team in Israel after Eshkol's death in February 1969 added up to a hard, self-confident group. This started from the personality of the prime minister herself—a pugnacious, self-righteous, courageous, but conspicuously unimaginative person. In turn, all her colleagues—including some, like Dayan, who were occasionally given to doubts—came to share her unshakable conviction that Israel was safe because it was right and its adversaries were wrong.

The conviction that the occupied territories were a more reliable foundation for security than a U.S. guarantee was an article of faith both for Moshe Dayan and for the Achdut Haavodah component in the government, whose two leaders, Israel Galili and Yigal Allon, were very close to Prime Minister Meir. Finally, during the years under discussion (1968–73), the United States was in the process of withdrawing from its commitments to South Vietnam and Taiwan. To advocate a U.S. guarantee under these inauspicious circumstances made no sense. Who could trust a U.S. guarantee if the United States could not make good its own words? On the other hand, who wished to confront U.S. public opinon with a demand for a guarantee that might lead to the stationing of U.S. troops in yet another trouble spot thousands of miles away from the shores of the great American republic?

This rationale for abandoning the search for a formally guaranteed U.S. patronage was strongly reinforced by two more considerations. First, the Israeli nuclear program was drawing closer to a point at which a weapon of last

resort could be within reach at short notice. Whether or not this was really the case is still unclear. But there appears to be some credence to the argument that under the impact of the crisis of 1967, in which Israel was—in its own perceptions—abandoned to its fate, a decision was taken to accelerate (along with a conventional-weapons productive capacity) efforts to obtain access to some nuclear device. If this factor was added to the presumably strengthened security owing to the acquisition of defensible borders, small wonder that Golda Meir and her colleagues felt that a formal security guarantee would be a poor substitute.[25]

Second, there was increasing evidence that the Nixon administration, for its own reasons, was heading toward a de facto alliance in any case. Both Nixon and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, saw in the Arab–Israeli confrontation an important arena of the East–West struggle, an area where the United States could either offset the damage that Vietnam had done to its credibility or, if it did not play it right, accelerate its decline as a great power. Such a perspective led them virtually to ignore the advice of the State Department's area specialists (who tended to propose a kind of pro-Arab appeasement) and move instead toward a strongly pro-Israel posture.

Israel appeared to be a model U.S. ally because it was both able and willing to defend itself. It made little sense for the United States to punish such an ally and strive to deliver Israeli concessions to the Arabs (and through them to the Soviets). To be sure, it was a supreme U.S. interest to stabilize the Arab–Israeli conflict and consolidate the U.S. position in the oil states. This, however, could be achieved only if the United States retained the ability to influence Israeli policy.

The Arab-affairs specialists in the Near East Bureau believed that U.S. influence on Israeli policy could—in fact should—be gained through pressure. Nixon and Kissinger, on the other hand, believed that the United States should flex its muscles against its foes, not against its allies. Making Israel stronger through arms supplies, economic assistance, and political patronage, the president and Kissinger argued, would be a far more efficient way to gain influence over the Israelis and would not further harm relations with the Arab world.

The area specialists had an opportunity to test the validity of their thesis in 1969–70. Their initiatives (the four-power and two-power proximity talks, the Rogers initiatives, and the various Jarring missions) led to meager results. In fact, the only success the State Department could claim was the August 1970 Egyptian–Israeli cease-fire, which was violated by the Egyptians within twenty-four hours in a manner that gained U.S. diplomacy no laurels. The president and Kissinger, on the other hand, collected handsome dividends for the United States in their management of the Jordan crisis of September 1970, a dramatic demonstration of the potential of U.S.–Israeli strategic cooperation.[26] Small wonder, then, that the lessons of this last experience continued to inform U.S. policy in the Middle East until the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

In practice this boiled down to unabashed, consistent, and high-handed support for Israel in every possible respect—something the Israelis had always dreamed about but had never before succeeded in obtaining (not even during the peak of the honeymoon with France). It was thus to be expected that the Meir government would be further reinforced in its conviction that a formal U.S. guarantee was no longer necessary. Judging by their statements, the Arab confrontation states (Syria and Egypt, in particular) treated U.S.–Israeli relations as an alliance, as did the Soviets and, increasingly, the Americans themselves. Why, then, should the Israelis question this by insisting pedantically on a contractual agreement?[27]

Israel's relations with non-Arab regional powers during this period mirrored the same attitude. Like the United States, Turkey, Ethiopia, and above all Iran would not enter into an alliance with the Jewish state even after the spectacular victory of 1967. Again like the United States, however, these powers, too, were enormously impressed by the Israelis and exceedingly eager to tap some of the strategic resources that the Jewish state seemed to have in order to strengthen their own positions. The result was a marked rise in the intensity and scope of Israeli relations with all three countries. At the same time, and much to the annoyance of the Israelis, all three countries continued to prefer a low public profile for their Israeli connection. This was particularly noticeable—and annoying from the Israeli point of view—in the case of Iran, the other pillar of Nixon's Middle East policy. The Israelis traded with Iran to the tune of close to U.S. $250 million annually; they trained Iranian armed forces and instructed the all-too-powerful Iranian secret service (SAVAK); they built Iranian military bases; they bought Iranian oil and piped it through a special pipeline from Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba to Ashdod on the Mediterranean that bypassed the Suez Canal (which the Egyptians had blocked); they employed Iranian territory as a forward base for substantial assistance to the Kurdish rebels of Mula Mustapha al Barazani in the northern part of Iraq.

Many of these operations were managed from a burgeoning Israeli mission in Teheran whose head carried ambassadorial rank and had easier access to the shah than did most of the latter's own subjects. Yet Iran persisted in its flat refusal not only to sign a treaty of alliance but even to establish normal and open diplomatic relations—seemingly a mere formality. Its own embassy in Tel Aviv continued to be regarded as a mere section of the Swiss Embassy. Visits to Teheran by Israeli leaders such as Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan, Abba Eban, and Pinchas Sapir (Meir's powerful finance minister) were kept secret. Iranian officials of comparable rank avoided Israel.

More important still was the fact that, while expanding relations with Israel, the shah himself was tirelessly searching for a crack in the wall of Arab hostility toward Iran. Anticipating a dangerous political vacuum in the Gulf area after the British departure from east of Suez, he thawed relations with moderate

Arab regimes like that of Saudi Arabia, invested tremendous efforts in attempts to come to terms with the new Gulf states, and—as soon as Nasser, his foe for two decades, had passed away—hurried to resume relations with Egypt. The political tender with which the shah paid for these major diplomatic strides included signals of a strong willingness to pursue a rapproachement with Arab moderates. In public this posture took the form of an emphasis on positions that would please the Arabs and raise the concern and anguish of the Israelis. Thus he underscored repeatedly Iran's objections to Israel's acquisition of Arab territory by the force of arms, and—though openly hostile toward the PLO (which supported his own Pharsi enemies), he repeatedly upheld the "legitimate rights of the Palestinians."

As a strategic decoy capable of diverting Arab attention and resources away from Israel's own borders, Iran lived up to the Israelis' expectations. Paradoxically, the very fact that so much could be achieved in practice without normal diplomatic relations underlined the inadequacy of these strange relations from the political and strategic viewpoints. The Arabs may have felt that the Iranians were in Israel's strategic pocket, so to speak. Some of them, notably the Iraqis, may have feared that if and when they were to become involved in another war with Israel, Iran might be tempted to take advantage of this in order to encroach on Iraq's own vital interests. From the Israeli point of view, however, such an impact on the Arab strategic calculus could not be too readily assumed. Indeed, the absence of the formal and public dimension in Israel's relations with Iran implied the continued existence in the Israeli mind of an irreducible residue of doubt: if there were another war between Israel and the Arabs, would the Iranians do anything to help? Few Israeli policymakers entertained any illusions about that. In the final analysis, despite the cloak-and-dagger atmosphere in which it was sometimes shrouded, the whole Iranian escapade boiled down, from the Israeli point of view, to little more than a promising commercial opportunity.[28]

Inertia, Brinksmanship, and the Use of Force

Israel's *tactical* employment of force during the 1967–73 period was imaginative, innovative, sometimes almost virtuoso. The IAF, which in the course of the 1967 war had carried out one of the most devastating air strikes in the history of military aviation, continued to startle the world with unexpected coups that set new standards of performance. The Israeli naval commandos, too, began to make an important impression on the emerging picture of warfare. Israeli paratroopers, special reconnaissance units, helicopter pilots, and even a sizable number of less exotic units performed spectacular surgical operations—such as a raid on Beirut's international airport; the killing of prominent PLO leaders in their homes in the heart of Beirut; a raid on a hijacked Sabena aircraft; the

seizure and airlifting of a late-model Soviet radar system; a twenty-four-hour hike of a large armored unit (using Soviet-made vehicles and tanks) on the Egyptian side of the gulf of Suez; and the blowing up of highway bridges, dams, and power stations right in the heart of Egypt.

Exploits like these had an electrifying impact on Israelis back home. They projected an ability to carry out almost any task. They demonstrated the vulnerability of the Arabs. They reinforced the conviction of many Israelis that time was on Israel's side and that, small and exposed as the Jewish state may have been, it was capable of coping with the main challenges facing it. Yet such an atmosphere also reinforced a tendency not to see the strategic wood for the tactical trees. Brilliant as all the Israeli tactical effects may have been, Israeli grand strategy during this period was—or so it seems in retrospect—schematic, predictable, unimaginative, lacking in conceptual clarity, full of fundamental misperceptions—in fact, quite poor. It continued to operate within the confines of assumptions that had seemed suitable during earlier periods. It led to a dangerous escalation that brought Israel to the brink of a military confrontation with the Soviet Union. Above all, not only did it fail to deter Egypt and Syria, not only did it fail to lead to a coherent doctrine, but it even had no success in resolving the most important preliminary question relating to general war: under what circumstances the Jewish state would again initiate an all-out war.

One reason for this poverty of strategic thought was quite human: the Israelis were stunned by the magnitude of their own victory in the 1967 war. Having panicked during the crisis preceding the war, they also lost their cool judgment once the war was over. The long-held assumption of vulnerability and limited control over the flow of events gave way to an unrealistic delirium in which almost everything seemed possible. Since the strategy of the past had been so spectacularly successful, its utility for the future seemed beyond doubt.

This, however, was only one—and not necessarily the most important—cause of the stagnation of Israeli strategic thought. Another factor, far more concrete, was the logical trap into which Israeli strategy fell as a result of Israel's acquisition of seemingly impregnable borders. In Israeli policy concerning the occupied territories, the starting point was a cabinet decision on June 19, 1967—a week after the war—that Israel would agree to return the Sinai and the Golan to Egypt and Syria, respectively, if and when the two agreed to sign a normal peace treaty. The Egyptian and Syrian reply came on August 30, when the Arab summit meeting at Khartoum rejected categorically any negotiations with Israel prior to the return of the occupied territories. Simultaneously Egypt, Syria, and increasingly the PLO (operating from Jordan and Lebanon) engaged Israel in a multidimensional war of attrition. The result was a grim change in the Israeli position. The June 19, 1967, decision was never officially rescinded. But leading members of the cabinet—especially after the death of Eshkol and the appointment of Meir (February–March 1969)—spoke increasingly about the need for defensible borders.

It was not easy to determine what were the most defensible borders that the Jewish state could hope for. For the Israeli left, only peace could provide defensible borders, and peace could not be obtained without an Israeli commitment to return all the territories. To the Israeli right, the most defensible borders were those obtained as a result of the 1967 war—namely, the June 11, 1967, cease-fire lines, which included Arab territories four times the size of Israel proper (within the 1949 "green line") and a population of a million and a half resentful Palestinians. To middle-of-the-road Israelis, the most defensible borders corresponded to an elusive break-even point between the nonstrategic approach of the doves and the narrowly strategic perception of the hawks. For the time being, this mainstream view led to a grim determination to hold on to the cease-fire lines. Thus, in effect, the majority view was identical with the most hawkish view.[29]

The logic that led to this was simple. Since there was nobody to talk to on the Arab side, Israel should hold on to the territories until the Arabs became convinced that the only way to retrieve their territories was through direct negotiations leading to peace agreements. Until then, however, the Arabs would probably continue to harbor warlike intentions. To deal with this military threat, there were no better borders than the cease-fire lines or something approximating them (such as the Mitla-Gidi line in the Sinai). These lines were thus reified. They were seen as the best lines Israel ever had, as the ultimate solution to Israel's daunting problem of strategic depth and early warning, as an asset that would have prevented previous wars and would prevent major wars in the future.

Such a disposition inadvertently ruled out any possibility of yet another Israeli first strike. This was so both for domestic political reasons and from the point of view of foreign policy. Domestically, the future of the territories was the single most divisive issue the Israeli polity had ever faced. With the growing number of casualties in the war of attrition, the controversiality of this issue only increased. To this the Meir government had only one answer: imagine Israel without the cease-fire lines. The Arab threat would still be there, but the Jewish state would not have defensible borders to shield it. The war of attrition, in other words, was an acute version of Israel's chronic current-security problem: a full-scale war waged in a subwar fashion. Israel's basic security, Golda Meir and her colleagues argued—its ability to deter against and defend itself from all-out war—had been immeasurably improved as a result of the acquisition of the cease-fire lines.

Not surprisingly, this argument gained credibility during the 1971–73 period, when the cease-fire along the Suez Canal was maintained by Egypt and the PLO had been driven out of Jordan. The only serious problem facing Israel during this three-year period was the insecurity along the border with Lebanon. But this was a typical problem of current, low-level security. Thus the argument that, strategically, Israel had never had it so good was as plausible

as it was pleasing to the ear of the average Israeli. The trouble, however, was that the same government that maintained that Israel had never had it so good could not uphold a first-strike strategy. If the cease-fire lines provided such absolute security, if they were strategically so superb, they should save Israel the agonizing decision of the past of whether to initiate war. This onus, like that of the decision whether or not to negotiate peace, thus fell conveniently on the Arabs. Israel, in this view, had done enough to show that it wanted peace and was secure enough to absorb a war begun by the Arabs.

If the Meir government had no better argument to defend its policies in the arena of Israeli domestic politics, it also had no better argument to rely on in its efforts to justify the impasse in the arena of international politics. Israel was slow and conspicuously unenthusiastic in its response to U.N. Resolution 242, to the various Jarring missions, and to the various peace initiatives of U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers. The reason was not so much an objection in principle to negotiations or even to the principle that substantial parts of the territories occupied in 1967 should be returned to the Arabs. Rather, it stemmed from a fear—reinforced by the experience of 1956—of being cunningly stripped of bargaining chips and strategic assets without obtaining adequate returns. Whatever the reasons, the most important argument Israeli leaders resorted to during this period was that in the absence of an Arab willingness to make peace, the cease-fire lines at least reduced the likelihood of war.

The Israeli position was predicated on a sequence of assumptions, such as the following. First, exceptionally defensible lines meant a far smaller hope for the Arabs to gain from war. Second, for this reason there was a far smaller likelihood of large-scale Arab attacks. The Arabs might threaten war, but they were incapable of carrying it out. They could resort to small-scale attacks and wars of attrition, but Israel was far better placed to deal with this type of threat as well, within the cease-fire lines. Third, if the Arabs were nevertheless tempted to launch a major military campaign, Israel, again, would be far better placed to meet the challenge. Fourth, the temptation for Israel to initiate wars was greatly reduced. Previously, when it had had to observe Arab threats from the vulnerable position of the armistice demarcation lines, Israel had acted somewhat nervously. Conversely, surrounded by easily defended boundaries, Israel could look forward to the future with greater confidence. Differently stated, the prevailing Israeli view between the war of attrition and the Yom Kippur War was that the defensible cease-fire lines had reduced not only the Arabs' but also Israel's proneness to war.

Against the background of Israel's experience with the Arabs, such arguments were quite persuasive. They were rejected out of hand by the Soviet bloc and challenged by the French. But the rest of western Europe and, in particular, the Nixon administration in the United States could not but concede that the Israelis had a point. Consequently, the Jewish state was permitted to hold on to the occupied territories without any significant international

to give them back for much less than what the Meir government would have accepted anyway. The other side of the same coin, however, was that Israel, in effect, eschewed its right to another preemptive strike. The mitigating circumstances that had endowed the Israeli preemtive/preventive/interceptive disposition of the past with an air of legitimacy were thus undone by the Israelis themselves—all the more so since the success of the 1967 war had made Israel look either hysterical or somewhat dishonest. If the danger to Israel's existence had been so great on June 4, 1967, how was it that the armies of its enemies were turned into a smoldering rubble by June 11? Clearly Israel was stronger than it had admitted before the June 1967 war and—by the same token—at least as strong as it claimed after this war.

Adding a great deal of weight to the arguments against the preservation of Israel's first-strike doctrine was the fact that the IDF found it difficult to designate reasonable war aims. Before the 1967 war there were four principal aims of a military operation: (1) to destroy the enemy's fighting capacity; (2) to capture territory for political bargaining; (3) to capture territory for the purpose of improving the Jewish state's own defensive capacity; and (4) to recharge the failing batteries of the Israeli deterrent through a bold rise to an Arab challenge to one or another casus belli and through a spectacular demonstration of both resolve and skill on the battlefield.

After the 1967 war, however, it became far more difficult to define logical war aims. Destroying the enemy's fighting capacity was still a respectable war aim in principle, but it would entail operations over a perimeter that became too wide for Israel's capacity (at least insofar as armored operations were concerned). Capturing more territories in order to bargain made no sense when even the occupation of the Sinai, the West Bank, and the Golan had failed to induce the Arabs to negotiate. Capturing more Arab territories for the purpose of improving Israel's own defensive capacity made even less sense because, *by Israel's own statements,* the cease-fire lines were the very epitome of defensible boundaries. Finally, as a result of the 1967 war, Israel was left with no casi belli to defend. The IDF was deployed on the very lines whose crossing by Arab armies would have constituted casus belli before the 1967 war. Hence the question of using force for deterrence purposes was confined to demonstrative tours de force. This, however, could surely be achieved through spectacular short-of-war operations such as the IDF was carrying out anyway—and with outstanding success.

Israel, then, had ample reason to assume that the next war would be (from its own point of view) a second-strike one. It would be initiated by the Arabs, and the IDF would not enjoy the advantages of either surprise or momentum, but would have to absorb a shock itself without letting this shatter its morale. Despite such an inauspicious start, it would have to pick up the pieces, regroup, mobilize the reserves, and only then return to the modus operandi that had stood it in such good stead in the past—a dashing, mobile combination of the

That this scenario became highly realistic as soon as the Egyptian and Syrian armies had recuperated from the shock of the 1967 war was widely assumed as a matter of course by Israeli policymakers throughout the 1967–73 period and, increasingly, after the August 1970 standstill/cease-fire agreement with Egypt. It was, indeed, the omnipresence of such a possibility that turned the question of how to deploy along the Suez Canal into a source of a divisive controversy within the IDF General Staff. Nonetheless, to the extent that can be judged, the Meir government did not devote even one orderly session to a discussion of the simple question of how Israel should react if and when there were clear signs of a pending Egyptian and/or Syrian attack. The question was simply left in abeyance, to be discussed if and when circumstances made it urgent. In a word, instead of formulating a policy, a doctrine, at least a contingency plan, the Meir government chose not to decide until a decision would be forced on it by its opponents.

This was, of course, the traditional Israeli approach of muddling through, trial and error, crossing the bridge when we get to it. In this sense the Meir government accurately mirrored a deep-seated principle of government and administration in the Jewish state.[30] But this principle became the origin of a catastrophe because of the prevalence of three critical assumptions in IDF thinking:

1. That intelligence would ensure an adequate advance warning
2. That the government would not desist from a decision to authorize an interceptive strike if and when Arab moves suggested that an attack was imminent
3. That the very least that the government would authorize would be a large-scale mobilizaiton of reserves[31]

What the IDF did not foresee was the possibility that not even one of these conditions would materialize—that is, a scenario in which intelligence estimates were slow and fuzzy; the government did not authorize a disarming first strike, not even a limited one; and the government would authorize only a limited and secret mobilization of reserves. The origins of the Israeli debacle in the first week of the 1973 war, in this sense, should be ascribed not merely to the failure of national-intelligence estimates,[32] but above all to a fundamental incongruity, a truly critical short circuit in the interface between military planning and political purpose. Meir and her colleagues either failed to consider the possibility of an all-out Arab attack or took it for granted that Israel could deal with one effectively even without the benefit of mobilization and a disarming first strike. The IDF, on the other hand, had assumed all along that the government would yield to its demand to initiate hostilities if and when an Arab attack appeared imminent.

Both sides in this tangle discovered the differences between their respec-

attack. The IDF General Staff, in particular the IAF, pressed almost hysterically for permission to preempt. Fearing U.S. criticism and concerned with avoiding a replay of the 1967 crisis—especially the loss of flexibility as a result of the vast scope of reserve mobilization—the Meir cabinet resisted the pressures. It was even reluctant to authorize a limited reserve call-up. Alarmed, the IDF proceeded to alert many more reserve units than the government had authorized, but this was too little and too late; it could not be an adequate substitute either for a preemptive strike or for comprehensive mobilization. It was a last-minute improvization, not a thoroughly considered strategic move such as was expected of a military machine of the size, capability, experience, and technological sophistication of the IDF.[33]

There is no doubt that the IDF General Staff bears much of the responsibility for this debacle because of its smugness, neglect of a variety of logistical aspects, and failure to interpret the intelligence at its disposal. The civilians in the government from whom the IDF received its orders, however, ultimately bear a greater share of the blame. Indeed, whereas the IDF cannot be blamed for being unprofessional, the Meir government can. For all the experience in national security affairs of individuals such as Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan, Yigal Allon, Israel Galili, and Chaim Bar-Lev, their level of strategic consciousness, so to speak, left much to be desired. It was the cabinet's responsibliity, not the IDF's, to attend to questions such as whether or not to act on the assumption of a first strike. The individuals concerned, however, did not seem to have been sufficiently aware of the need to discuss the issue thoroughly in advance; therefore, they placed the IDF in an impossible situation.

A not dissimilar dilletantism, shortsightedness, and muddleheadedness was also reflected in the same cabinet's handling of the problem of retaliation. The war of attrition, especially along the Suez Canal, faced these cabinet members with some very hard choices concerning the fundamental question of whether to follow the path of massive retaliation or the alternative of flexible response. As with the question of initiation discussed earlier, they responded mechanically and showed far more tactical than strategic imagination. The emphasis was on force, but the focus was narrow and amazingly lacking in foresight, and the result was mixed. Israel was successful on the Jordanian and Syrian fronts, utterly unsuccessful on the Lebanese front, and only partly successful on the Egyptian front. The details are worth an examination at some length.

The Jordan Valley

The effective sealing by the IDF of the Jordan cease-fire lines to Palestinian penetration, Israel's success in inducing the West Bank population not to assist the PLO, and the state of interdependence with Jordan on the basis of the open-bridges policy added up to an environment in which escalation could be effectively contained. To be sure, from the Jordanian point of view, the problem

was not simple. At stake was not merely the future of the PLO on Jordanian territory but, indeed, the future of the Hashemite monarchy itself. If King Hussein were to restrain the PLO when the latter was the Arab world's favorite son, Jordan would be ostracized in the all-important arena of inter-Arab politics. If, on the other hand, the Hashemite monarch did not restrain the PLO, then PLO attacks against Israel would be stepped up, the Israelis would escalate their punitive countermeasures, and the PLO would gradually seize control over the Hashemite state from within.

Faced with this choice, King Hussein maneuvered very carefully. At first he allowed the PLO to operate against the IDF from a sanctuary on the Jordanian (eastern) side of the valley. Indeed, the PLO received Jordanian army escorts, artillery cover, and assistance in logistics and intelligence. Israel, however, refused to show any forbearance in the face of these attacks. The IDF resorted to an invigorated form of flexible response in which, as in the standard form of this strategy, the link in time and place between fire from the Jordanian side and the Israeli riposte was maintained. In terms of scale, however, the IDF did not confine itself to a strict tit-for-tat. Rather, it tended to escalate by at least one rung as a means of pointing out to the Jordanian authorities that Israel, though wishing to avoid escalation, would not accept intermittent fire as a normal, routine way of life. Either Jordan took measures to restrain the PLO, or it would be made to pay for it.

During the first year of this encounter, the fighting was concentrated primarily in the immediate vicinity of the Jordan River. As a result of the Israeli response the battlefield was gradually expanded eastward into the Jordanian state. At first this horizontal escalation occurred primarily as a result of artillery fire and air strike by the Israelis against both PLO and Jordanian army positions. The Jordanian response, especially Jordanian gunnery, was accurate and quite costly from the Israeli point of view. Hence the IDF escalated vertically by bringing in the IAF. Consequently, the Jordanian relative advnatage in gunnery was neutralized, and its relative disadvantage as a result of having a substantial—and very vulnerable—population in the area was underlined.

This, however, was not enough to stop the PLO from carrying on its operations against IDF positions on the western bank of the river and against Israeli towns such as Eilat in the south and Beit Shean in the north. Barrred from easy access to the river, the PLO resorted to sudden salvos of *katyusha*—multiple rocket fire—an ineffective and inaccurate instrument of warfare against military units but a devastating means of demoralizing and harming civilians in densely populated areas. Given the considerable range of these weapons, all the PLO needed was a very small number of weapons and operators. Since the launching pad of this Soviet-made weapon is highly mobile, it could be employed at night, when IDF fire and reconnaissance cover of the eastern Jordan valley was minimal.

The effect on the civilian population, especially in Beit Shean, was alarming. There were demonstrations and fits of public hysteria, and the government

came under pressure to do virtually anything to stop the fire. The result was escalation in two forms. The first was an attack by a substantial armored force on the PLO center at Karameh on March 21, 1968. The second was a devastating bombardment of the Jordanian town of Aqaba several miles east of Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba. The former operation was carried out under strict orders not to penetrate deeper into Jordan. Jordanian tanks and guns on the hills overlooking Karameh gave massive support to the PLO, with the result that the IDF suffered heavy casualties. The PLO, which fought poorly, later claimed that the IDF's intention was to conquer Jordanian territory and that this design was thwarted by the Palestinians' heroic resistance. The story gained a momentum of its own and greatly assisted the ascendance of the PLO in the Arab world. From the Israeli point of view, however, it was looked upon then, and ever after, as a limited part of an attempt to force Jordan's hand and bring it to discipline the PLO.

By contrast, the riposte in Aqaba achieved its main purpose—namely, to establish a rule whereby neither Eilat nor Aqaba would be part of the fighting zone. This attack, however, was not sufficient to compel Jordan to clamp down on the PLO. As attacks against Beit Shean and its vicinity continued, Israel escalated its response one notch further. Using artillery and air power, the IDF turned the most fertile and most populated part of the east bank of the Jordan valley into a smoldering desert. The Ghor irrigation project, which Jordan had constructed with U.S. and World Bank support, was demolished. Farmers were prevented from tilling their lands and became refugees in the safer hinterland of the Gilead Heights. Jordan's economy suffered, and the pressure on the king to stop Arafat's guerrillas mounted. It was becoming increasingly clear that the choice, from the Hashemites' point of view, was literally existential.[34]

The Golan Heights

King Hussein yielded to Israel's coercive diplomacy in September 1970, and from then on the Jordanian border was quiet and stable. From the Israeli viewpoint, this was an important achievement, all the more so since a similar situation was obtained on the Syrian front. To be sure, since Syria never allowed the PLO any measure of freedom, it also required a far less problematic policy from the Israeli point of view to stabilize the Golan cease-fire line. Unlike Hussein of Jordan, who to some extent was the PLO's rival, Syria had been the most important champion of the Palestinian cause. Indeed, it was in Syria that Yasser Arafat's Fateh, the mainstay of the PLO, was established, and it was there that it began to train guerrillas and send them into action against Israel.

Yet behind the rhetoric of support for the PLO, Syria was ultimately as much an enemy of the organization as was King Hussein's Jordan. Ideologically, this was manifested by a Syrian tendency to regard what the PLO perceived as Palestine as a mere province of a Greater Syria. Politically, the Syrians allowed

Fateh to come into existence and to begin to operate as part of a complex struggle for mastery in the Arab world. In 1964 President Nasser of Egypt launched an Egyptian-sponsored Palestinian organization under the title PLO. Syria reacted by sponsoring its own Palestinian proxy under the title Fateh (Arabic acronym in reverse for Movement for the Liberation of Palestine). As soon as Fateh showed signs of independence and autonomy, however, the Syrian regime of Salah Jedid—representing as it did the fiercest version of Ba'athist radicalism—arrested the inner circle of the organization's leadership. Recognizing what the Syrians were up to, the Fateh leadership sought to escape the Syrian embrace after the Six-Day War and moved its center of operations to the West Bank and Jordan. When Yasser Arafat succeeded in merging the Fateh into the formerly Egyptian-sponsored PLO, he also had no way of preventing Syria from setting up within the revamped PLO a proxy organization of its own under Zoheir Mohsen, a Syrian army officer.[35]

During the September 1970 encounter between Hussein's troops and Arafat's guerrillas, the Syrian ruler Jedid sent an armored column into Jordan to help the guerrillas. But the Syrian armor was denied air support because Hafez al-Assad, the commander of the Air Force and Jedid's main rival, would not allow the Syrian air force to intervene. Assad's unusual conduct may have been affected by his fierce rivalry with Jedid. Indeed, within several weeks he took advantage of Jedid's humiliation at having to withdraw the force from Jordan and seized ultimate power in the Ba'ath republic.[36]

Assad may also have been influenced by fear of an Israeli and U.S. response. Israel made threatening noises and concentrated some armor close to the Syrian border. This was coordinated quite visibly with the United States, and in this sense Assad may have been deterred.[37] Once in power, furthermore, Assad would not authorize any short-of-war military operations against the Israelis from Syrian territory. This applied not only to the Syrian army but no less so to the Palestinian guerrilla organizations. Thus, unlike the Israeli–Syrian armistice demarcation lines before the 1967 war (which corresponded to the international border), the Israeli–Syrian 1967 cease-fire lines (which ran inside Syria's own sovereign territory) were quite stable from the summer of 1970 until the outbreak of the 1973 war.

Lebanon

In both Jordan and Syria, an escalatory strategy of massive retaliation ultimately led to deescalation, for four principal reasons:

1. The two countries had vigorous governments, which provided Israel with a punishable target.
2. In both cases it was ultimately rational from the point of view of the incumbent regime to play the game by Israeli rules, at least for a while

3. The Jordanian and Syrian ceasefire lines were sparsely populated on both sides.
4. The Jordan valley and the Golan Heights were topographically easy to defend against small-scale guerrilla warfare.

None of these facilitating conditions existed on Israel's Lebanese front. Nonetheless, Israel resorted reflexively to a strategy of massive retaliation. The purpose, as always, was to obtain *deescalation* through *escalation.* To the dismay of Meir and her colleagues, however, those same methods that had worked so well on the eastern cease-fire lines bore meager results on the northern front.

The first PLO attack from Lebanese territory occurred on June 2, 1965, two years before the Six-Day War. From then until the summer of 1968, the PLO launched twenty-nine additional attacks of various kinds. All this, however, was a mere prelude to a major effort to step up the attacks as of May 1968. The opening shots in the new phase were sudden salvos of Katyusha rockets on Kibbutz Manara (on May 8, 1968) and on Moshav Margaliot four days later. The fire was renewed on June 14, 1968, when ten 2-inch mortar shells landed again on Kibbutz Manara. On September, 16, 1968, a civilian vehicle was ambushed near the village of Zar'it. On October 14, 20, 26, and 28 there were attacks on Kefar Yuval, Kibbutz Malkiya, Kibbutz Dan, and again Kibbutz Manara. Four Israelis, two of them civilians, were killed, and an Israeli vehicle was destroyed.

Up to this point the Israeli response had been primarily defensive. The Lebanese government was urged to stop the activities of the PLO, and on the Israeli side of the border the IDF erected fences, dug shelters, and stepped up its patrolling activities. When the PLO escalated its attacks, Israel had no logical alternative to escalatory counteraction. It was impossible to confine the entire population in the area to shelters and trenches. The Lebanese government did not seem to be either able or willing to do anything about it all. The only hope, therefore, lay in exacting a high price from the PLO itself through direct Israeli action inside Lebanon's own territory. This was done for the first time on October 30, 1968, when a small IDF unit penetrated the territory of south Lebanon and destroyed a small PLO encampment there.

The raid bought Israel's northern Jewish population (a substantial segment of the population on the Israeli side is Arab, but they were never subject to PLO assaults) a breathing space of some two months, during which the frequency and scope of PLO operations in the area declined. Meanwhile, however, the Eshkol government faced another related but different challenge—namely, PLO air piracy and spectacular feats of anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish terrorism in foreign lands. On July 22, 1968, an El Al plane was hijacked to Algiers. Israel submitted quietly to the demands of the hijackers but introduced extensive security measures in all El Al stations abroad and on the company's small

fleet of Boeing 707 aircrafts. These measures notwithstanding, on December 26 another Israeli plane was attacked on the tarmac in Athens. The Eshkol government met in special session and concluded that neither purely defensive measures nor even a retaliatory act calibrated to the scope of the attack could solve the problem. What was needed was an act of massive retaliation, a spectacularly disproportionate offensive operation that would act as a deterrent against either launching or assisting in launching such attacks in the future.

Two nights later this retaliation was carried out. A party of paratroopers and special commandos descended on Beirut's international airport and destroyed on the tarmac thirteen Middle East Airlines passenger jets. There were no casualties, but the message was clear. The PLO hijackers and raiding parties had come from Beirut. If the Lebanese government continued to permit the use of their capital as a sanctuary, their business would suffer greatly. The Lebanese authorities—or at least those who were in the control of the Maronites—had no problem understanding the Israeli message. President Charles Helu (a Christian) in fact ordered the Lebanese army (through its Christian chief of staff, General Boustani) to clamp down on the PLO. But this triggered a crisis in the Lebanese government because the Moslem prime minister, Abdulla al-Yafi, opposed this compliance with Israeli demands. The latter was adamant and succeeded in forcing the government to negotiate an understanding with the PLO that purported to lay down clear rules for PLO operations in or from Lebanon.

The Lebanese–PLO understanding of January 19, 1969, survived until August 1 of that year, when the PLO attacked Kiryat Shemonah, the northernmost town in Israel, with multiple rocket launchers. There was some damage and a certain loss of life. This led to a cabinet policy reappraisal and to a decision to escalate the retributions—in particular, to employ air power. The result was a series of both air and large-scale ground attacks by the IAF and IDF during the month of August. The damage was extensive, and the Israeli raids touched off yet another cabinet crisis in the fractured Lebanese republic. Within a few weeks, sporadic fighting had broken out between Lebanese and Palestinians, and some Syrian forces masquerading as units of the PLO entered Lebanon. When matters seemed to be getting entirely out of hand, the parties to the Lebanese conflict were summoned to Cairo by President Nasser, who, acting as an intermediary, brought them to sign an accord on October 25, 1969.

The Cairo accords could not possibly work for longer than a few months. They were based on Lebanese acknowledgment of the right of the PLO to operate against Israel from a small part of south Lebanon. Although this was a concession that no other Arab state had previously made to the PLO, it also contained a devious Lebanese signal to Israel concerning the part of Lebanon in which the IDF could pursue the PLO with tacit Lebanese consent. All this was, of course, too clever by half. The PLO resumed its operations against Israel. The IDF moved a large force into an area that gave it a topographic advantage

over the PLO and proceeded to blast away. The PLO in turn was impelled to seek a sanctuary in an area that extended beyond the limits of the Cairo accords. Before long the PLO and the IDF were engaged in an encounter on a wide front stretching from Naqura on the Mediterranean to Kiryat Shemonah near the Golan Heights.

By May 1970 the intensification of shooting along this line began to cause the departure from the border area of (Jewish) Israeli civilians who could no longer bear the life under constant fire. The Meir government was prompted to carry out another policy reappraisal, which led to a substantial increase in government appropriations for defense measures in the area and for financial and other inducements for people to stay there. It also led, on May 12, 1970, to a large-scale attack by a sizable armored column on the Arqoub, a narrow area north of Kiryat Shemonah that the PLO had used extensively for operations against Israeli villages.

Though involving a significant push up the escalation ladder, the operation failed to achieve its purpose. One immediate result was that the IDF turned such large-scale raids into a daily occurrence. Another result was a spectacular but nevertheless desperate Israeli raid on the PLO center in Beirut, carried out with the speed, precision, and resourcefulness of a thriller. It led to the killing in their beds of three prominent PLO personalities. It demonstrated once again, if any further proof was needed, that the Israelis had a long operational arm that could reach almost anywhere in the Arab world. It showed that Israel's military intelligence was still as good as it could be. For all this, however, the rent-a-car raid (as it was later dubbed) failed to change anything of consequence in the overall situation. Deterrence against small-scale attacks by a sizable army such as the Syrian one was within Israel's reach, but deterrence against a ragtag militia such as the PLO was almost impossible. Without bases, depots, or heavy weaponry—in fact, without anything very substantial to lose from Israeli retaliations, but with a lot to gain from constant visibility through press reports—the PLO in Lebanon succeeded in exposing one of the weakest elements in the Israeli deterrence posture. The full extent of this shortfall at the lower end of the spectrum of violence would be discovered by the Israelis only in subsequent years.[38] Meanwhile, the IDF faced another formidable challenge at the upper end of the same spectrum in the form of a bloody war of attrition along the Suez Canal.

The Suez Canal

One of Israel's greatest failures was to underestimate, almost to ignore, the importance Egypt attached to the Sinai. To Israel, the peninsula was little more than a piece of strategic real estate. Not even the most militant segments of Israeli public opinion considered the Sinai an integral part of the ancestral land; it was either a launching pad for Egyptian hostilities against Israel or the

reverse. The thought that the Egyptians would find the continued occupation of the Sinai by the IDF an intolerable situation, whose termination justified almost any price, seldom occurred to the Israelis.

What Israeli policymakers apparently failed to realize was that Egypt's national pride had been unacceptably compromised by the IDF's presence along the canal; that Nasser's entire career and his place in posterity had become inseparably intertwined with his ability to retrieve the Sinai, or at least put up a good fight for it; that the Soviets' position in the Arab world in particular, and in the Third World more generally, had become critically dependent on their ability to prepare the Egyptians for a heroic attempt to recapture the lost land; that Egypt—with its self-perception as a leading power with a historical legacy of which few nations could boast—was not simply going to resign itself to the loss of these lands.

The result of this failure to develop adequate empathy for their foes' state of mind was a slow, painful process for Israelis in awakening to the facts of Middle Eastern life. The prevailing belief in Israel immediately after the war was predicated on a somewhat too simple set of assumptions. Egypt, in this view, remained hostile because as long as it continued to believe that Israel could be subdued by the force of arms, it was not adequately deterred. Having been so badly beaten, the Israelis imagined, the Egyptians would at least reappraise their strategic calculus. They would realize that vanquishing the Jewish state was a pipe dream, and they would have no alternative but to enter into meaningful negotiations. In the wistful words of Yigal Allon a year after the war, "the results of the Six-Day War led to a 'moment of truth' [in the Arab world] which may bring leaders, circles and governments to the thought or even to the conclusion that Israel is an unalterable fact in the region which cannot be undone, and that any attempt to assault it is bound to fail and to bring further calamities on the heads of the Arab states."[39]

Less than three weeks after the end of the hostilities of the Six-Day War, the Egyptians offered a kind of preview of what was in store for the IDF. On July 1, 1967, an Israeli patrol was ambushed by regular Egyptian forces near Kantara at the northern tip of the Suez Canal. The ambushed unit fought doggedly and managed to deny the Egyptians any significant gains, but its commanding officer was killed and a number of soldiers were wounded. Moreover, for the next ten days fighting in this area continued intermittently, until a precarious cease-fire was established by the UN. Meanwhile, Egypt lost seven jet fighters, and Israel had nine soldiers killed and fifty-five wounded.

For the next six weeks the canal area was quiet. Then, early in September, the Egyptians opened fire on Israeli vessels in the Gulf of Suez. The IDF returned the fire, and the fighting spread to virtually the entire front, causing the flight of thousands of Egyptians from their homes along the canal. If the Israelis thought that by escalating they would bring the Egyptians to stop out of concern for the civilian population along the Suez Canal, they were in for a rude shock. On

October 21, 1967, an Egyptian Styx missile drowned the Israeli Navy flagship *Eilat,* taking the lives of forty-seven Israeli sailors and causing injury to ninety more. Israel's reflexive choice of retaliation was to set fire to Egyptian refineries and petrochemical installations in the city of Suez. If the Israelis had more or less relied up to now on a tit-for-tat (flexible response) strategy, this particular action was already massive retaliation. It occurred four days after the sinking of the *Eilat,* but, aiming at the city of Suez in the southern end of the canal, it did not take place near the site of the Egyptian attack. Above all, although it entailed the loss of a far smaller number of Egyptian lives (eleven Egyptians were killed and ninety-two wounded, as against forty-seven Israeli dead and ninety wounded), it caused incomparably greater material damage: the fire raged for several days and destroyed equipment worth some U.S. $100 million.

The Israeli retaliation for the loss of the *Eilat* apparently convinced the Egyptians of the need to complete the absorption of new Soviet equipment and to dig in along the canal before the next major round of hostilities. Accordingly, until September 1968, the canal front was not the scene of heavy fighting. Then, on September 8, an Israeli patrol exploded an Egyptian mine and thus inadvertently gave a signal to some 1,000 Egyptian cannons across the canal to open a well-planned, expertly concerted fire along a sixty-five-mile-long front. The IDF was caught off guard and lost forty-nine men. Considerably outgunned but still determined not to escalate the fighting to the level of air strikes, the IDF concentrated for the next two months on the construction of its defenses. The purpose was to secure adequate cover for the troops on the front line, but the result was far-reaching: for the first time in its history, the IDF became confined to a system of static defenses—the Bar-Lev line.

As if to convince itself that it had not lost its flexibility and maneuverability, on the night of October 31, 1968, the IDF launched a daring raid by helicopter-borne commandos. It resulted in the destruction deep inside Egypt (300 miles south of Cairo and 150 miles north of the Aswan Dam) of two bridges on the Nile, Kena and Najh Hammadi. The blasts themselves were relatively modest, but the operation nevertheless amounted to a case of massive retaliation because of the significant measure of horizontal escalation it entailed. The message was quite clear: the IDF could reach any point inside Egypt, and would engage in such exploits in the future if Egypt would not maintain a cease-fire along the Suez Canal. The Egyptians must know that Israel would not play by their rules, which maximized their comparative advantage in staying power and minimized Israel's comparative advantage in moving power.

A hidden purpose of the raid may have been to bring the Egyptians to thin out their forces along the canal and spread them as guards of potential strategic targets throughout the country. If that was the Israeli intention, it failed to make any significant difference in the Egyptian calculus. The soldiers that the Egyptian high command sent to guard such objects were second- and third-rate; 150,000 of Egypt's best soldiers (at least ten times the size of the Israeli force

across the canal) remained in the canal area. The Egyptian army was not at all deflected from its ultimate purpose—namely, to bleed Israel, weaken its resolve to stay in the Sinai, keep the Israeli occupation of the canal on the top of the international (especially superpower) agenda, and bring about the rolling back of the IDF from Egyptian territory and the recovery of Egypt's status, self-esteem, and clout in the international arena. That this was the Egyptian state of mind was evident when, on March 31, 1969, Nasser denounced the U.N.-sponsored cease-fire agreement. It was reiterated and officially declared a war of attrition for the first time in Nasser's speech of June 23. Israeli strategy, which had grown accustomed to decisive battles and clear-cut results, was in a quandary: it faced a challenge that it had utterly failed to anticipate and for which it had no simple answer.[40]

The initial response was relatively restrained. Ezer Weizman, as head of the General Staff (G3) Division of the IDF, pressed for an immediate resort to air power, but the majority of his colleagues in the IDF and the majority in the recently formed Meir cabinet demurred. The IDF's stocks of front-line planes were small and should be preserved for general war, they argued. Maximal vertical escalation at the very beginning of the confrontation, moreover, would leave Israel with no answers for a possible scenario in which Egypt would not be adequately deterred. In a word, massive, disproportionate retaliation, Israel's typical response so far, was rejected. Gradual, flexible response was (atypically) preferred.

This policy was upheld for four months, until it collapsed in the face of relentless Egyptian pressure. Israeli casualties soared, and the mood of the country was somber. The IDF had neither artillery nor manpower with which to counter the Egyptian fire. The Egyptian population, which had previously been seen as a kind of hostage against Egyptian military pressure, had fled the area. It was now a confrontation between two armies, in which Egypt had the advantage precisely because it did not attempt to recapture the Sinai in one massive strike. Egypt's comparative advantage in staying power—in its ability to absorb damages and casualties in great numbers over a long period of time—was maximized. Israel's comparative advantage in moving power—its ability to concentrate force, perform quick and imaginative maneuvers, stun its adversaries, and bring them to their knees within a matter of days—was minimized.

As this was dawning on the Meir cabinet, it began to fear a scenario in which, emboldened by their relative success, the Egyptians might attempt to conquer parts of the Sinai. The momentum that the Egyptian campaign of attrition was gaining, then, had to be checked somehow. This could be done through a mobilization and a large-scale attack on the west bank of the canal. Since such an all-out attack could be complicated from both the political and military viewpoints, without promising any major improvement, the idea was rejected out of hand.

The only other alternative was to escalate the Israeli use of force vertically. Ezer Weizman, the former commander of the IAF, advocated a coordinated operation in which pressure on the Egyptians would be increased simultaneously by both ground and air forces. The IDF may have concurred, but the cabinet was not enthusiastic. Assuming that wholesale escalation would increase the cost to Israel itself, the cabinet's instinct was to keep Israeli retaliation within bounds and to rely primarily on actions that would obtain the most powerful psychological impact for the fewest IDF casualties. Hence the IDF was instructed to intensify spectacular ground operations in the Egyptian rear and flanks (rather than in the fortified Canal Zone), whereas the IAF was ordered to provide, *in the canal area only,* a flying artillery, an airborne substitute for the IDF's inadequate firepower on the ground. This new phase began with a massive attack on July 20, 1969, on Egyptian positions and installations. It was carried on relentlessly for the next five months, and it seemed to have achieved its main purpose: Egypt suffered enormous damages, whereas IDF casualties on the Sinai front were substantially reduced.

Egypt was clearly in trouble. Having visibly lost not only the 1967 war but even the war of attrition, in which it seemingly had a fundamental advantage, the only step (other than submission) that it could still take to cut its losses was to turn to the Soviet Union for help. To the proud and sensitive Nasser, this must have been a singularly humiliating situation. Nasser, a founding father of the nonaligned bloc, the first Arab leader to have succeeded in delivering his people from foreign subjugation, was increasingly becoming the president of a virtual Soviet protectorate. Since yielding to the Israelis was even worse, Nasser apparently had no rational alternative.

The Egyptian request for assistance presented the Soviets, too, with a critical choice: Should they defend the credibility of their commitment to Egypt and thus jeopardize détente and risk a head-on confrontation with the United States? Their decision was to assist Egypt to the best of their ability in terms of hardware, training, and passive defensive measures, but to try to avoid direct involvement in actual hostilities. They would instruct the Egyptians in the use of latest-model weapons systems; they would man SAM missile sites and communication centers; they would offer advice on a routine basis to every Egyptian front-line unit down to the battalion level; they would even provide Egypt with pilots as an emergency measure designed to protect Egypt's sovereign airspace. But the Soviet pilots' presence and, more generally, the direct involvement of Soviet personnel in actual hostilities would not be officially acknowledged.

The Israelis of course, were anxious witnesses to the process whereby Soviet involvement was gaining momentum. Thus when they decided to keep up the pressure on Egypt even when Egyptian defenses seemed on the verge of collapse, the Israelis were fully aware of the possibility that escalation could lead to a head-on confrontation with the Soviets. The minister of defense, Moshe Dayan,

was in fact the leading advocate of caution, precisely because of the danger of a collision with the Soviets.[41]

Yet, as on previous occasions of crucial importance (the decision to take the Golan, the decision to stay on the Suez Canal), Dayan would not fight for his views. Confronted by Yitzhak Rabin (the former chief of staff and now ambassador to the United States), Yigal Allon (as deputy premier) and Ezer Weizman (who had retired from the IDF and joined Golda Meir's National Unity government), Dayan's opposition to further escalation gradually withered away.[42] Then, on January 7, 1970, he joined the throng and embraced the idea of deep-penetration bombing—namely, of escalation from a counterforce to a countercity strategy. Tacitly, the minimum objective of the new strategy was perceived as nothing less than *decision in the war of attrition.* In other words, the Meir cabinet hoped, through a combination of massive retaliation and countercity strategy, to compel Nasser to stop shooting and start talking.

The main assumptions leading to this critical decision were as simple as their validity was difficult either to prove or to disprove. Egypt in general and Nasser in particular seemed on the verge of collapse. Hence it seemed logical that a little extra pressure would help exploit the success of previous months. Success would foster Israel's deterrence not only against Egypt but also against all other major Arab states. Indeed, a decision in the canal war would greatly augment Israel's ability to dissuade the Arabs from ever again resorting to the practice of attrition.

The Soviet Union, ever a cautious international actor, would not dare to intervene directly on the side of the Egyptians, so many thousands of miles away from home. Engaged in its own deep-penetration bombings in Vietnam, the United States would not object to Israel's doing the same thing. Indeed, Washington seemed supportive because it was glad to see a radical Soviet client restrained by the United States' own client; because it expected to benefit in southeast Asia from an Israeli policy that pinned down Soviet attention to the Middle East; and because liberal Jewish critics of the administration's Vietnam policy would be at a loss if their own most favored nation, Israel, were to indulge in deep-penetration bombings, too. Finally, having just received the first batch of twenty-five F-4 Phantom fighter-bombers from the United States, Israel at last had the means with which to perform such an operation successfully.[43]

The deep-penetration bombings continued almost without interruption until late March 1970, and in a more restrained manner until the cease-fire standstill agreement of August 7, 1970. They wreaked havoc in Egypt, not just in the canal area but virtually everywhere between the canal and the Egyptian capital. Also—contrary to one of the most important ground rules of Israeli national security, and for the first time since the encounter with the British pilots flying Egyptian piston-engine Spitfire fighters in the fall of 1948—they brought Israeli aviators to a dogfight with the pilots of a global power.[44] The mos

startling aspect of this story is that the encounter was no accident: the Soviet pilots were there in order to deter Israeli pilots. The Israeli government knew this and took a deliberate decision at the highest level to approach the very edge of the brink. In a word, this was a classical case—in a nonnuclear setting—of the rationality of the irrational, of a uniquely experienced group of decision makers thinking about the unthinkable and actually proceeding to act accordingly.

Broadly speaking, the Israeli calculus comprised the following ingredients. As long as Soviet pilots confined themselves to the defense of the Egyptian rear, Israel was quite prepared to avoid any clash with them. This implied that Israel had lost the ability to carry on the deep-penetration bombings of the previous months. But considering the dangers inherent in a fight between Israel and the Soviet Union over the freedom to fly above Cairo and the rest of the Egyptian rear, it would be utterly reckless, the Meir cabinet thought, to take on the Soviets.

Realizing that the IAF was not prepared to engage them in the skies of the Egyptian rear, the Soviets began to expand their protective umbrella over Egyptian airspace. By June 1970 Egyptian planes flown by Soviet pilots were already roaming above the canal—from which they had been barred for more than a year as a result of Israel's complete mastery of the air—and on several occasions had even fired missiles at Israeli planes. If such incidents became a daily occurrence, the Israelis calculated, the Soviets might be tempted to think that they could push the IAF farther east without as much as a dogfight. In this manner Israeli forces along the canal could easily be deprived of the air cover without which they could not possibly hold their own. It was, therefore, essential to signal to the Soviets that when it came to the canal area, not to mention the Sinai, the IAF would be both willing and able to take them on. If a Soviet pilot was shot down unannounced (because he was flying Egyptian colors), the Soviet Union would not be directly challenged. If it came to the worst and the Soviets felt that they were challenged, they would have to make a move that was almost bound to be seen as a challenge to the United States. In the event, Israel would not be facing the Soviets alone.

Such a calculus led on July 30, 1970, to the most escalatory move in the canal war—a premeditated Israeli aerial ambush of eight Egyptian MIGs flown by soviet aviators. Four of the Egyptian planes were shot down, and one barely made it to its base. Israel had a moment of satisfaction. In the final analysis, however, the incident underlined the pervasively incremental, tactical, indeed shortsighted nature of Israeli decision making. Almost every phase of the war of attrition began with a surprise to the Israelis. They managed to retain the initiative in the tactical sense, but the strategic initiative remained for most of this thousand-day period in the hands of the Egyptians.[45]

While Egypt retained the strategic initiative, Israel was constantly forced to escalate until matters reached a point at which the Israelis had more or less exhausted all their options. This was reflected by the fact that, with the Soviet

deployment of SAM systems close to the canal area, Israel began to lose planes at the prohibitive rate (given the relatively small size of the IAF) of one aircraft a day. The Egyptian-operated Soviet SAMs, in Ezer Weizman's frank words, succeeded in "bending the wing" of the U.S.-made and Israeli-flown planes.[46]

At this point Egypt discovered the weapon with which to faciliate a massive crossing of the canal: Soviet SAMs could provide Egypt with a protective canopy above the canal and its vicinity on the east (Sinai) bank. All that was necessary was the deployment of these missiles close to the canal in such a form that the Israelis would not be able to knock them out. A cease-fire with Israel would thus form the first step in a larger game of deception. If diplomacy obtained a reasonable settlement from the Egyptian point of view, force would not have to be used. If, however, as seemed likely, diplomacy failed again, then the cease-fire would give Egypt an opportunity to prepare for war.

A handful of Israeli policymakers may have been vaguely aware of this as soon as Egypt deceitfully redeployed the SAMs close to the Suez Canal in violation of the standstill agreement of August 7, 1970.[47] The rest, however, were unshaken in their conviction that the massive-retaliation/countercity deep-penetration air raids during January–August 1970 had broken the resistance of the Egyptians. Seen from such a perspective, the Egyptian deceit of August 7–8, 1970, seemed more annoying than serious. It depreciated—Israeli policymakers argued—some of Israel's hard-won strategic advantages, but it did not shake a widely shared conviction that the Jewish state had won the canal war. Or had it won?

The Domestic Politics of Self-Delusion

The sequence of decisions that led Israel to the brink of a confrontation with the Soviet Union cannot be accounted for by any political struggle inside the Jewish state. The problem was approached in a purely strategic manner, from a perspective seeking to minimize the cost to Israel and to maximize the cost to Egypt. It was insulated from any party political, bureaucratic, or personal rivalry; and the commitment of the individuals who were involved in these decisions to the national interest cannot be doubted. They acted in good faith and did their utmost to obtain the best possible result for the national interest. Strictly speaking, then, this was the epitome of rational decision making.

Observed from a broader perspective, however, the process reveals many symptoms of what is sometimes referred to as *bounded rationality,* a protracted, multidimensional process of collective decision making in which every individual participant is as logical as possible but the ultimate outcome is less than optimal from the point of view of the entity on whose behalf the decision is taken.[48] What this meant in the case of Israeli strategy during the 1967–73 period was that in the background there were societal, ideological orientational

and even naked power struggles among individuals, anomic groups, institutionalized interest groups, political parties, and government bureaucracies; all these had a significant but indirect impact on the decision process.

Starting at the societal level, it is clear that during 1967–73 Israeli society was beginning to show the consequences of a long-dormant change. The European-born establishment (mainly eastern Europeans) who had built the country and were in control of all its political institutions during the first generation after independence were rapidly passing away. A new social mix, consisting of non-European Sephardic communities and of sabras (native-born Israeli Jews, primarily of European origin), was rapidly emerging.[49] The change, to be sure, was not without turbulence. Social statistics and even intuitive observation indicated a marked degree of inequality that rougly corresponded to the ethnic divisions between Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews. Political and economic power, as well as higher education and a more elevated social status, tended to concentrate in the Ashkenazis, (less than 50 percent of the population), not in the increasingly self-aware Sephardic communities. Most government ministers, officials, bank managers, professors, senior civil servants, and army officers were of European Ashkenazi origin. Most of the population at the lowest income levels, most of the drug addicts, most of the convicted criminals, and most of the manual laborers were of Sephardic (mainly Moroccan) origin.

This had been the case ever since the mass immigrations from the Middle East and North Africa in the immediate aftermath of independence. Now, however, expectations and attitudes were changing. The official, and in many respects actual, policy since independence put nation building at the top of the national agenda. The Sephard's were seen through a melting-pot prism that tacitly assumed the complete submerging of Sephardic Jews into the ethos and cultural world of the Ashkenazis. To achieve this, the state employed a huge educational machinery, an extensive network of social welfare institutions, and even to a marked degree the IDF. In turn, the results in terms of literacy, health, employment, and housing were exceedingly impressive. The other side of the coin, however, was a revolution of rising expectations, a deepening sense of deprivation by and alienation from the Ashkenazi-controlled "system."

The intensity of such feelings could already be gauged in 1958, when riots broke out for the first time in the poor Sephardic neighborhoods of Haifa. For the next decade and a half, however, all was quiet on the Israeli ethnic front, or so it seemed. Then, in March 1971, barely six months after the conclusion of the canal war, Israel was shaken by a wave of riots in Jerusalem. These were organized by young residents of Moroccan origin from the Jerusalem slum area called Morasha (formerly Mousrara). They claimed that they were being discriminated against; they demanded better jobs, new housing, and equality of opportunity in an affirmative-action mold. Somewhat misleadingly, they called themselves Black Panthers. Prime Minister Golda Meir, who asked to meet with their leaders, proved too old, impatient, and self-righteous to deal

with them. Indeed, she seems to have aggravated matters unnecessarily by telling a journalist after the meeting that Charlie Bitton and Sa'adia Marciano, the Black Panther leaders whom she met, were not "nice guys." Her colleagues and subordinates proved more adept in dealing with the issue, and the storm was weathered. The whole affair, however, alerted the Israeli political system as a whole to the existence of a grave domestic problem and generated pressures for cutbacks in the soaring defense budget. If the country was as secure as the government claimed, argued the critics, if a large-scale war in the foreseeable future had become so much less likely, then it was imperative to change the national priorities. The banner of social welfare and equality, in the language of one slogan, should be raised above the banner of national security.[50]

The trouble was that the government was not at all convinced that security against external attack had been obtained. In an attempt to keep up with the growing strength of the Arabs, Israel increased the defense budget during the 1967–73 period by 40 percent from an annual average of 12 percent of GNP to an average of close to 20 percent of GNP. According to IDF projections immediately after the Six-Day War (the so-called Goshen Plan), the available force should have been expanded in tandem with the GNP. Yet by 1972 it was clear that the GNP had not grown and was not going to grow nearly as fast as was predicted. Consequently, the chief of staff, Lieutenant-General David Elazar, ordered a thorough revision in planning. The new five-year framework (the Ofek Plan) called for a 15 percent cutback in planned growth at a time when rising oil prices and Soviet support had enabled the Arabs to step up considerably their force expansion.

Last but not least, as of April 1973 the IDF was put on alert for a general war, which was considered highly likely to break out some time in the course of the coming summer. The emergency necessitated a change in emphasis from *hitkonenut* ("preparation") to *konenut* ("alert")—that is, from investments in long-term increases in the order of battle to short-term preparation for actual fighting. One specific form that this assumed was maintaining larger quantities of reserve personnel in uniform instead of purchasing more arms and setting up new units. As a result of these anxious endeavors during the summer of 1973, the total force available to the IDF when the October war began was substantially larger than would have been the case without Elazar's revisions. But this was all achieved at a great actual cost and, according to available accounts, exerted constant pressure on the planners. The latter were thus in an unenviable situation. The press clamored daily for cutbacks and ran stories of IDF corruption, inefficiency, and wastefulness. The planners, however, were concerned that what was actually being spent fell dangerously below requirements.[51]

The rise in social discontent also had indirect influences on the social bases of the party political system. Initially, most of the new Sephardic immigrants were drafted into existing political parties in return for promises of patronage. Concretely, what most parties could offer was help in finding jobs and housing

and in obtaining a number of other benefits. Opposition parties—the Communists on the left and Menachem Begin's Herut on the right—had very little to offer in this respect and therefore were quite unsuccessful in increasing their constituency as a result of the influx of hundreds of thousands of new immigrants. The main electoral benefits accrued to the center, religious, and moderate leftist parties.

This, however, was a kind of electoral taxation without political representation. Voters gave their support to a party that allowed them very little involvement in its routine business. Consequently, the bulk of the Sephardic community became increasingly aware of its status as a political periphery. This was also the prevailing feeling in Begin's Herut party. Israel thus had two discontented political peripheries, and with the rise in the Sephardis' self-awareness came the realization of a potential partnership between them and Herut.

In April 1965 the Herut party formed a parliamentary bloc with the bourgeois Liberal party under the name GAHAL (Herut–Liberal bloc). In the November 1966 elections to the Sixth Knesset, the new bloc gained twenty-six seats. In the crisis preceding the 1967 war, GAHAL was invited for the first time to join the cabinet. Menachem Begin and several of his colleagues were thus given, for the first time since independence, an opportunity to share in governing the country. They became, as a result, a legitimate political body worthy and potentially capable of running for office, even for forming a government one day. Hence if many Sephardic voters had a natural inclination to voice their protest against the left-center Ashkenazi establishment, they at last also had a major political vehicle through which to do so.[52]

All this coincided with another factor facilitating the rise and expansion of the Israeli right—namely, the reawakening of long-dormant territorial dreams. Begin's Herut had initially been insistent on Israel's right (as they saw it) to claim sovereignty, not only over every part of Palestine west of the Jordan River, but also over the territory of the Jordanian state on the east bank of the river. Between 1949 and 1967 they gradually dropped their slogan "two banks to the river." Although the West Bank remained part of their concept of the homeland, they would not go so far as to advocate a war for the purpose of obtaining it. Once the Six-Day War was over, however, and the IDF was in control of every bit of historic Palestine west of the Jordan, Herut at once revived the old territorial dream of a Greater Israel.

In advocating the annexation of the so-called liberated territories, Menachem Begin was not alone. In the hitherto moderate National Religious party (NRP) the topic became the axis of a struggle for power between a moderate pragmatic old guard and the party's younger leadership, in particular Zevulun Hammer and Yehuda Ben Meir. The latter had behind them an ever-growing camp of supporters from the party's own youth movement, Bnei Akiva. The more successful they were in recruiting support for their views, the greater the influence they exerted over the party's stance at cabinet level

concerning the divisive issue of the future of the occupied territories, especially the West Bank.

A similar nationalist reawakening occurred also in the ranks of the mainly MAPAI and RAFI *moshav* movement, incorporating relatively well established owners of small private farms. These tended to lend their support mainly to Moshe Dayan, himself a well-known product of Nahalal, the first moshav in Palestine. To make the picture even more complicated, a similar and perhaps even fiercer nationalist awakening took place in Achdut Haavodah, the left-wing party of Yigal Allon and Israel Galili.

All these disparate strands of integral, territorial nationalism—a familiar phenomenon in itself but a novel experience for Jews—ultimately tended to amplify and further legitimize the role of the Israeli right while posing a real threat to the moderate Israeli left. During the Ben Gurion era, Begin and his party were virtual political outcasts; but during the tenures of Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir, Herut and its world view became acceptable, respectable, even attractive to many young Israelis, especially if they were Sephardic and/or religious. The Labor party, formed in 1969, in which the old MAPAI, Achdut Haavodah, and RAFI were integrated, thus faced a formidable domestic threat with which it could cope only by adopting an increasingly nationalist posture, too.[53]

Reinforcing this tendency was the fact that within the Labor party itself, MAPAI, Golda Meir's party and the mainstay of power in the Jewish state for decades, was faced with the powerful hawkish influence of Allon's Achdut Haavodah on the one hand, and of Dayan's RAFI on the other. Officially, all three parties had ceased to exist as of 1969, when they were united within the Labor party. In practice, however, they continued to act as intraparty factions. Meir could, of course, play Allon and Achdut Haavodah off against Dayan and RAFI, but she seldom did so. In fact, her inclination was to achieve as quickly as possible the complete integration of the party. She also had no difficulty in sharing the pragmatic-hawkish views of both Allon and Dayan. Consequently, although the prime minister herself came from the traditionally dovish-pragmatic MAPAI, she was actually instrumental in endowing the Labor party with an increasingly hawkish image.[54]

The increasingly hawkish complexion of the Labor party, however, concealed a number of internal differences of great significance from the point of view of the present discussion. Allon and Dayan, respectively, stood for two very different hawkish philosophies. Allon was a scion of an intensely ideological tradition that, though fiercely socialist in its views on socioeconomic issues, was not very different from the right-wing Herut party of Menachem Begin in its views concerning the Land of Israel—Palestine, in Jewish-Zionist lore. Dayan, by contrast, was pervasively pragmatic and worked out his opinions in the light of a semiarticulated, strategic-political world view.

In practice, the differences between them—which became the axis of a wider political division—could be discerned on one issue of great relevance to the

present discussion: the question of force deployment. Allon was a territorialist and, as such, started from an irresistible fascination with the geography of politics. Consistent with this fascination, he advocated forward deployment in the Sinai and a similar posture in the Jordan valley, where, he maintained, the IDF could be greatly assisted by a north–south belt of Jewish settlements.[55] Dayan, by contrast, was exceedingly conscious of Israel's shortage of manpower. Settlements, he thought, could not solve the problem of security, but could only provide a friendly hinterland for IDF units. For that reason it was important to have them established; the question, however, was where.

Dayan's view was that the small size of the IDF's regular nucleus and its dependence on reserves made it impossible to deploy it effectively in a forward-deployment manner a short distance from the numerically far superior adversaries. A small IDF force in the Mitla and Gidi Passes in the Sinai or in three or four critical bottlenecks on the mountains of Judea and Samaria could provide an adequate instrument with which to deal with the initial wave of an Arab surprise attack until the reserves were mobilized and the war could be transferred to the adversary's territory. The same force right on the long cease-fire line, whether along the Suez Canal or along the Jordan River, would be pitifully outnumbered and outgunned.

In retrospect it appears that Dayan's views were more compatible with Israel's needs and capabilities than were Allon's. After all, if the armored division of the Sinai were deployed in the Mitla and Gidi Passes and the bulk of the Egyptian army were west of the canal, the latter would face enormous difficulty in launching a full-scale war. It would have to cross the canal and approach the Israeli positions some fifteen miles to the east. That would give the IDF both advance warning—time in which to call up reserves—and an advantageous topographic position from which effective fire would be directed against any Egyptian force moving eastward from the canal. In addition, the Egyptians would have to do battle with the Israelis while pushing their way eastward, a style of battle in which the IDF excelled but which the Egyptian army found exceedingly difficult. The October 14, 1973, attack in this style of the fourth and twenty-first armored divisions of the Egyptian army, in which they lost two hundred tanks while the IDF barely suffered a loss, provides an excellent illustration of this point. When Dayan tried in March 1971 to argue for such a strategy within the framework of his proposal for an interim agreement with Egypt, he was defeated by his colleagues. It appears that indirectly the winner in this conceptual and political contest was the territorialist/forward-deployment school, of which Allon was the chief spokesman.

Nor was Dayan successful in persuading his colleagues to apply a similar concept to the West Bank. Formally speaking, a vote was never taken. Informally, however, Dayan's views were turned into an appendage of Allon's plan. Without making a formal decision on this divisive issue, the Meir government proceeded to implement the Allon plan through settlements in the Jordan valley and the Etzion bloc south of Jerusalem. In addition, where there was no contradiction between the Allon and Dayan concepts, both would be implemented.[56]

The result was an incoherent pattern of settlement on the West Bank that suggested a barely hidden intention to annex all of this area. In this confused manner, the Meir cabinet surely projected an annexationist posture that could not but affect the Arabs' motivation.[57] The Israelis repeatedly argued throughout the 1967–73 period that "everything" (that is, all territories occupied in the Six-Day War) was negotiable and that, specifically, if only the Arabs would enter into direct negotiations, they would find Israel surprisingly pragmatic and open-minded. Yet while arguing in this vein, the Israelis were establishing settlements in northern Sinai, in the Golan, and in every plot of uninhabited land on the West Bank. Was this pattern not projecting a determined attempt to devour all the Arab territories?

The facts from the Israeli political scene do not entirely support such a suspicion. In fact, before the 1973 war, there was an abundance of evidence suggesting that in return for a peace agreement and normalization of relations, Israel would be willing to give back most of the occupied territory. But watching the Israelis from across the cease-fire lines, the Arabs could not know what exactly Israel was up to. Under these circumstances they were prone to assume, like the Israelis themselves and, in fact, like all people in a state of conflict, the very worst. The Arab motivation to challenge Israel on the battlefield was thus invigorated not only by the injury inflicted on them in 1967, or by the clear signs that Israel found the casualties of the war of attrition hard to stomach, or by the evidence of growing friction in Israeli society, or by Israel's patently slow and ambiguous response to a variety of plans for a settlement—but by the specter of the creeping annexation of Arab lands by a seemingly insatiable Israeli appetite for territories. In the language of strategy, what this may have boiled down to was an imperceptible but nevertheless real depreciation of Israeli deterrence.

The Third Strategic Package

The 1967 war and its outcome put to the test two principal Israeli theses: first, that if only Israel had a chance to deliver a decisive defeat to the Arabs, the latter would come round to the idea that peace was in their interest; and second, that Israel's main source of weakness (in addition to its small demographic size) was the lack of strategic depth. If only Israel had natural—that is, tactically defensible—boundaries, and if only it had enough strategic depth to ensure that no Arab surprise attack could ever deal it an irremediable defeat, the Arabs' incentive for starting wars would be so greatly diminished that peace would again become a realistic proposition.

The Six-Day War was by all accounts a decisive Israeli victory and an ignominious Arab defeat. It also gave Israel its "natural" boundaries and, with them, more strategic depth than it could swallow. Yet ultimately this did not increase the efficacy of the Israeli deterrent but, if anything, made it even more precarious than it had been during the previous decade. For one thing, the vast new expanses that the IDF had to defend, along with the gigantic boost the 1967 war had given to the regional arms race, presented the IDF with the need for an order of battle that was beyond its capacity. Instead of the small, compact, but easily mobilized and deployed army of the previous decade, the post-1967 IDF became big, cumbersome, prohibitively expensive, but far less capable of performing its single most important task. There were two primary reasons for this.

First, the distance of the front from the rear meant that mobilization and deployment of reserves would take far longer, especially in the Sinai, the principal front. The implication was that the regular force on duty on the cease-fire lines would have to sustain a surprise attack longer than would have been the case under the armistice regime. Second, the small distance between the IDF and its adversaries across the cease-fire lines—sometimes no more than a few hundred yards—gave the IDF totally inadequate advance warning. The bulk of the Egyptian and Syrian armies were regular soldiers. When these were permanently deployed right on the cease-fire lines, all they had to do in order to move into battle was to cross a few hundred yards. The Suez Canal and the Jordan River obviously added important obstacles. But because of the Israelis' fixation on strategic depth and their assumption that the intelligence community would be able to provide adequate early warning, many Israelis (Dayan was a notable exception) failed to realize that the advantage of formidable physical barriers could not offset the disadvantages of having to mobilize reserves in the rear and deploy them at the front, which was about a hundred miles away.

The problems of deployment resulting from this situation were never quite resolved. The IDF General Staff remained divided on this issue, not only because some of its members did not get along with one another, but also, and perhaps primarily, because it attempted to solve a problem that basically defied a satisfactory solution given Israel's limited resources. Under these circumstances the strategy that was officially adopted (under two code names—*Shovach Yonim* for alert and *Sela* for full-scale war), was sufficiently vague to accommodate all views. Thereafter, every OC Southern Command interpreted the spirit of the official strategy in his own way. Under Major-General Yesha'ayahou ("Shaike") Gavish, forward deployment was fully observed. Under his successor, Arik Sharon, the IDF forces on the waterfront were progressively thinned out. Then, under Sharon's successor, Gonen ("Gorodish"), the pendulum began to shift back to more substantial forward deployment.

The challenge facing the IDF was compounded by the fact that in forward deployment on boundaries publicly hailed as optimal, the IDF lost the benefit

of red lines and casi belli. Instead of an exogenous strategic depth whose traversing by enemy forces would constitute an early warning, the IDF was now deployed on the outer rim of what it had previously considered to be security margins. With a few limited exceptions, it was beyond its capacity to project new red lines deeper into the adversaries' territory. There was, therefore, virtually nothing it could do to stop the Arabs from concentrating forces, entering into alliances, deploying forces within their neighbors' territories, or—for that matter—engaging Israel in costly, protracted, and demoralizing wars of attrition. An Egyptian bombardment of Israel inside the 1967 lines amounting to one-tenth of what the Egyptians turned into a daily routine in the Sinai during the 1969–70 attrition period would have prompted Israel to launch a massive war effort. Similarly, attacks such as those launched by the PLO from Jordan (until 1970) and from Lebanon in the course of most of the 1967–73 period would have prompted pre-1967 Israel to carry out massive punitive strikes. Yet in the so-called defensible boundaries of the post-1967 period, Israel responded gingerly. As a result, it was dragged into drawn-out attritions that maximized its adversaries' comparative advantages and minimized its own.

A third strategic cost incurred as a result of the territorial gains of the 1967 war was the foregoing of a formal defense treaty with the United States. Having sought such an alliance ever since its inception as a state, Israel was at last presented with a clear offer. Infatuated, however, with the lure of defensible borders, pervasively cynical about the reliability of other powers, and more self-confident than ever, Israel turned down the U.S. offer without really giving it serious consideration.

Subsequent events seemingly proved this decision to have been right. After all, the United States stepped up its support for the Jewish state even without a formal alliance. Yet the manner in which the Yom Kippur War broke out raises some questions. If Israel had had a formal treaty of alliance with the United States, Egypt might have been more reluctant to initiate this war for fear that a full-scale assault against an ally of the United States might be regarded as a war against the United States. Of course, given the size of its support for Israel during the 1967–73 period, the United States had become too heavily committed to the defense and well-being of the Jewish state to be able to abandon it without a damage to its credibility among other allies, especially after the departure from Vietnam. The vagueness of this form of commitment, the fact that it was neither clearly spelled out nor ever ratified in public by a legislative decision, implied that neither Egypt nor Syria—nor, above all, Israel itself—could tell in advance how far the United States would go in defense of Israel. The absence of a formal alliance, then, constituted an important window of added Israeli vulnerability.

Perhaps the heaviest price Israel paid (in terms of its ability to deter) for its newly acquired strategic depth related to the topic of force employment. The IDF continued to operate on the (correct) assumption that, in the prevailing

conditions of the Arab–Israeli battlefield, Israel could not afford the political luxury of a second-strike strategy. The IDF, however, was inadvertently wronged by its political chiefs, who either had not really given thought to this crucial question until the last forty-eight hours before the beginning of the October war or had changed their minds at the last minute. Consequently, the IDF had to adapt to a fundamentally different strategy within a few hours—an exercise it could not possibly have performed successfully. The adaptation to the requirements of a second-strike strategy was, in effect, carried out in the course of the actual fighting. Given this constraint, it seems that the IDF did exceptionally well. The price, however, was prohibitive in terms of human life, economic resources, morale, international status, and—as a result—deterrence.

A similar conclusion seems to be begged by the Israeli experience during this period with other dimensions of force employment—namely, retaliation and escalation. Flexible response when the opponent sought to build up pressure through attrition was a poor strategy. Under such circumstances, escalation was an inescapable imperative (that is, if a disengagement of forces was ruled out). Whereas escalation did solve the problem on the eastern border (vis-à-vis Syria and Jordan), it led to an abyss on the Egyptian front and to an inconclusive result on the northern border. But did Israel have an alternative? The answer, again, is negative. Under conditions of forward deployment along boundaries that were time and again celebrated as ideal, an escalation to general war was out of the question. The alternatives were either withdrawal or brinksmanship. The former was rejected because it would have greatly weakened the Israeli deterrent. The latter, which took the form of massive retaliation and a countercity strategy, entailed, however, the risk of a confrontation with a superpower.

Some of the sources of this problematic strategy were psychological; some were no doubt logical. But the domestic political situation also had significant impact. With the Six-Day War, the genie of irredentism and integral nationalism was released from its nineteen years' captivity. The Meir government was incapable of stemming the tide. In fact, the government served as a mirror, if not an amplifier, of broader societal and political trends. Some members of the cabinet actually intensified the rise of nationalist aspirations, whereas others merely rode the crest, but ultimately these differences did not really matter. The territorial hawks won the day. The state's external posture became more intransigent. Internally, Israeli society became divided on foreign policy issues as deeply as it had been in the long-forgotten prestatehood days. Finally, all this took place in a situation in which Arab motivation for yet another war had been dramatically aroused by the loss of honor, the loss of territory, and the gain of an unprecedented international status. In a word, precisely when many Israelis were convinced that their nation's deterrence was at its peak, it was in fact in decline. This was demonstrated with vengeance by the thousand-day canal war and by the frequency and relative success of Palestinian terrorism. Above all, it was demonstrated by the joint Egyptian–Syrian surprise attack of October 6, 1973.

5

In Search of a New Formula: 1974–1984

In its broad outlines the Yom Kippur War very closely resembled a wa scenario with which Israeli planning had been thoroughly familiar eve since 1948: an Arab attack, a quick mobilization of reserves, and an Israe counterattack carrying the fighting to the adversary's territory and culminatin in decisive major battles. Moreover, according to Major-General Benjamin Peled OC of the IAF during this war, the IDF's planning had anticipated intensiv battles in the Golan, in the Jordan valley, and in the Sinai for about thirty day and as many as ten thousand Israeli casualties.[1] Terrible as the Yom Kippu war may have been, then, it was not nearly as bad as the IDF had anticipate and had even accepted as reasonable.

The war began with a coordinated surprise attack by the two leading Arab armies. The rest of the Arab world offered their support vicariously, in the form of military contingents in the vicinity of the main battlefields (Iraq, Jordan, and Morocco); or economic and political pressures on Israel's European and African hinterland of international support (the oil countries); or military supplies (Libya). Although the Syrians and Egyptians were successful in making significant territorial gains in the early phases of the war, the IDF regulars, whose task was to contain them, did succeed in halting their advance toward the so-called green line, Israel's border. Meanwhile, the reserves were mobilized and hurriedly dispatched to the fronts. Once the reserves arrived at the two main fronts, the IDF prepared for a counterattack. Containing the Egyptian army in the Sinai, on the one hand, and turning its main attention to the Syrians on the Golan, on the other hand, the IDF succeeded in recovering all the territory captured by the Syrians during the previous week, in reviving its own morale, in gaining bargaining chips for the postwar negotiations, in deterring other Arab armies (notably those of Jordan and Iraq) from opening a third front, and finally in generating serious strains in the Syrian–Egyptian war coalition.

Having achieved all that within less than ten days of fighting, the IDF could concentrate its attention on the Egyptian sector of the war. A decisive tank battle left in ruins the prime of Egyptian armor, the fourth and the twenty-first

divisions. This was followed by a daring and imaginative crossing of the Suez Canal, which in a matter of less than a week led to the complete encirclement of the Egyptian Third Army and which would, within another day or two, have led to the encirclement of the Egyptian Second Army as well. In that event Egypt was left with only one army corps to defend its capital, Cairo.

The reason this did not happen was not the ineffectiveness of the IDF but, rather, the intervention of the United States. With the Syrians beaten and the Egyptians on the verge of a spectacular defeat, the Soviet alliance with both those countries faced its ultimate test. Eager to avoid a collision with the United States, the Soviets made threatening noises without actually involving themselves in the fighting. In turn, the United States was prompted to stand up to the Soviets, yet at the same time to press Israel to accept a cease-fire in place. Israel was thus denied a decisive victory not so much by Arab valor (although this time the Arabs fought well) or by the Arabs' strategic acumen (although they exhibited much of this as well) as by U.S. pressure.[2]

Nevertheless, the fact that the IDF was denied a decisive victory could not alter the overall military outcome of the war: a campaign begun by the Arabs in the most auspicious circumstances from their point of view had ended with the near collapse of the two largest Arab armies. The Egyptian army may have made some territorial gains on the east bank of the canal. Technically, however, the IDF, after twenty-one days of fighting, was in a position to starve two-thirds of the armed forces of the largest Arab state. Likewise, the Syrian army nearly reached the Sea of Galilee in the first forty-eight hours of the war, but by the end of the war the IDF had taken a substantial amount of additional Syrian territory and was in a position to bombard the Syrian capital with medium-range field guns.

Yet for all these remarkable achievements, and despite the fact that the October war resembled an anticipated scenario, it went down in the annals of Israeli strategy as a disastrous turning point, a near calamity, a pyrrhic victory—an "earthquake," as one widely read book described it.[3] The reasons for Israeli despondence are not difficult to guess. The war came as a rude awakening from a sweet but unreal dream. It took the lives of close to three thousand Israelis. It cost almost as much as the entire 1973 annual budget. It increased Israel's dependence on the United States. It underscored Israel's isolation in the world. Finally, accompanied by a successful Arab oil embargo and by the fourfold rise in oil prices, it illustrated the potential power of the Arabs.

All this was so depressing that it blinded many Israelis to the fact that the war had also accrued some tangible benefits. It underlined the fact that the United States had come to accept the defense of Israel as an integral part of defending the national interest of the United States. It showed that although the Israeli ability to deter the Arabs from war was not as absolute as many Israelis had led themselves to believe, Israel could still deal the Arabs devastating military blows. It confirmed Jordan in its conviction that it could not risk a war

with the Jewish state. More important still, it brought Sadat's Egypt to a similar state of mind. In other words, while exposing the limits of Israeli deterrence, the 1973 war also underlined its strengths.

From this viewpoint, the sequence of Israeli–Egyptian and Israeli–Syrian disengagement and interim agreements that followed the 1973 war constituted a natural and logical offshoot of this war. President Sadat repeatedly argued that since Arab honor had been restored on the battlefields of the 1973 war, the Arabs could at last afford to embark in earnest on a search for peace. Although this must have reflected a genuine Arab feeling, it was also a more pleasing way (from the Arab point of view) of conceding that the Arab, or at least the Egyptian, strategic calculus had been altered by the war: if after the defeat of 1967 Egypt could not afford peace, then following the relative victory of 1973 it could no longer afford another war.

Shaken to the depths of their psyche by the 1973 "earthquake," most Israelis were slow to become aware of this change on the Arab side. Small wonder, then, that they were as surprised by Sadat's peace initiative of November 1977 as they had been caught unawares by his war initiative four years earlier.[4] Sadat was later called to task by his own enemies for his evident penchant for dramatic coups.[5] But the Israelis' surprise was apparently invoked by something deeper than a mere response to the Egyptian president's masterful diplomatic antics.

Sadat caught Israel in the throes of a crisis of reckoning, manifested by a collective manic-depressive state of mind. The whole nation was on edge. In October 1973 everything seemed to be on the verge of total collapse—"the pending destruction of the Third Temple." Then, in June 1976, the Jewish state experienced a rush of ecstatic pride and ebullient self-confidence when the IDF rescued the hostages from their Palestinian captors at Entebbe. The fall from this high point to the sordid resignation of Prime Minister Rabin in March 1977, when it transpired that he had kept a small but illegal bank account in the United States, was therefore particularly tormenting.

The next psychological shake-up came with the May 1977 *mahapach* (Hebrew for "abrupt turnover"), which brought to power Menachem Begin, the all-time pariah of Israeli politics. Most Israelis, including Begin's own supporters, would never have expected this development to lead to an Israeli–Arab rapprochement. At best the expectation was that, led by a defiant Begin, Israel would miraculously regain some of the self-confidence it had lost on the battlefields of October 1973. Consequently, the fact that Sadat chose to make a bid for peace so shortly after the advent of Begin only served to magnify the psychological jolt that his initative gave to the Israelis.[6]

Under Begin's government, this seesaw movement of Israeli morale and self-perception between peaks of ecstasy and depths of agony was, if anything, accelerated. Sadat's visit created unrealistic hopes for a quick peace, which were shattered prematurely at the Ismailyia summit meeting of the Israeli prime minister and the Egyptian president three months

Israelis begun to resign themselves again to an Israeli–Egyptian stalemate, when they were shocked by the PLO hijacking of a bus on the Tel Aviv–Haifa highway and by the Israeli invasion of south Lebanon (Operation Litani).

The hopes for peace with Egypt were aroused again when President Carter invited Begin and Sadat to Camp David for a marathon peace conference. Israel held its breath for two weeks and then had its spirits raised again by the signing of the Camp David peace accords. This was followed by the traumatic, acrimonious experience of withdrawing from the Sinai and, once this was over, by a new rush of national exhilaration when the IDF, in a spectacular operation, destroyed the Iraqi nuclear reactor Osiraq, near Baghdad. Yet even before the excitement about this strategic spectacle had subsided, Israeli morale had once again sunk to a new low as a result of the July 1981 mini–war of attrition with the PLO along the border with Lebanon and the resulting flight (for the first time in Israel's history) of much of the Jewish population from the area.

Shaken, perplexed, and humiliated, the Israelis watched Menachem Begin, the most pugnacious opponent of any accommodation with the Palestinians, accept a cease-fire with the PLO. This was followed by a year of virtual countdown, of which many Israelis were fully aware, toward another war, this time in Lebanon. When this war came, it began almost as a replay of the Six-Day War. The IDF made a quick advance, the PLO and the Syrians were beaten, and the IAF carried out yet another breathtaking spectacle—namely, the destruction of the Syrian missiles in the Beka'a Valley and a kill ratio of 86:1 in dogfights between IAF and Syrian pilots.

This raised Israeli morale to peaks that had not been experienced for years.[7] By the second week of the war, however, it began to dawn on the Israelis that this was not another brilliant blitzkrieg. The IDF became bogged down around Beirut; casualty figures soared; and the world press increasingly depicted Israel as an ugly Goliath out to smash the PLO, which in this script was cast in Israel's own traditional role of a gutsy little David. All this culminated in the assassination of Bashir Gemayel, the Sabra and Shatila massacre, an unprecedented domestic division in Israel, and a prolonged process of withdrawal from Lebanon during which Israel suffered casualties with seemingly nothing to show for them.

The development of a strategic concept against the unsettling and disconcerting background of such convulsive changes was predictably difficult. Indeed, in many ways this fourth phase in the evolution of the Israeli strategy deserves the title "The Era of Complexity." The weight of the decisions that had to be taken, the scope of the domestic and international political canvas that had to be surveyed when critical decisions were made, the frequency with which irreversible decisions were called for, the esoteric complexity of the technology of weapons systems, the tense and fractured domestic political background against which policy had to be promulgated—all these together rendered the making of Israeli strategy during the 1974–84 period a truly gigantic

task. In a way, the agenda was almost extensive enough for a world power. The resources, however, were those of a small, psychologically exhausted country. Yet despite this overload, the strategic package that ultimately emerged, though far from perfect, was a sensible one.

The Quest for Combined Arms

After the 1973 war, as after all previous wars, the IDF embarked on a massive effort to refurbish its stocks and rethink its doctrine. The difference this time, however, was that the Israeli security establishment started off with the assumption that the 1973 war had not been as much of a success as it could have been and that Israel should never allow either political or economic constraints to influence its choices again. In terms of the strategic concept, this state of mind boiled down to an effort to find answers to all worst-case contingencies, regardless of cost.

Manpower

Such intentions notwithstanding, to find short-term—in fact, almost immediate—answers to all worst-case challenges was easier said than done. Given its size and sociopolitical structure, Israel's freedom of choice was severely restricted by major constraints. These prevented or at least limited Israel's ability to adopt a force-structure concept that would alter the basic formula on which the IDF had based itself all along. To begin with, the basic demographic constraint could not be overcome after the 1973 war any more than it could have been before. The Jewish population of the country had, of course, grown substantially since the days when the reserve system had been devised. But so had the population of the main confrontation states. Accordingly, Israel in the 1970s still had no viable alternative to the conscription/reserve formula of the 1950s.

In many ways the problem had become, if anything, more acute. For one thing, the degree of mobilization in the Arab confrontation states had been stepped up, and other Arab states such as Iraq, Libya, and even Saudi Arabia were increasingly featured as potential sources of significant expeditionary forces for the next Arab–Israeli war. Consequently, Israeli estimates of the total balance of manpower showed a decline from a 2:3 ratio in 1974 (400,000 Israeli soldiers in full mobilization versus 650,000 Arab regulars) to a 1:2 ratio in 1977 (400,000 for the IDF as against 844,000 for the Arabs) to a 1:3.5 ratio (580,000 versus 1,850,000) in 1984.[8] Second, there had been breathtaking changes in military technology. The latest vintages of planes, helicopters, tanks artillery, missiles, and engineering and communication devices required a longer period of training. Consequently, a growing family of military professionals—especially in the IAF, in the IN, and in most ground forces—called for a period of service

far exceeding the long-standing three years of compulsory conscription. Of course, the problem could be solved by signing up conscripts for longer periods of service as regulars. This, however, implied a growth of the regular nucleus of the IDF beyond the prescription of the basic 1950 model. Moreover, moving to a larger regular base meant competing in a buoyant open market (whose buoyancy was, paradoxically, maintained by a huge defense budget), where manpower of the same quality could find more lucrative career opportunities.

Up to a point these new problems could be solved by an appeal to the patriotic instincts of the main reservoir of manpower from which the IDF drew service personnel. Although the shock of the Yom Kippur War had caused a certain decline in the status of the armed forces, during the first three or four years after the war there was a strong popular feeling that the country was in real danger. The decline in the status of the IDF was thus somewhat offset for a while by a rise in the prevailing perception of danger. Indeed, responding to the IDF's appeal for patriotism, successful young professions—doctors, lawyers, engineers, economists—who held positions of consequence as reserve officers and NCOs, signed up for one to five years.

Another step the IDF took in a desperate attempt to augment its inadequate manpower resources was to review the conscription registry in an attempt to identify able-bodied men who had dodged service or had simply not been called up by the IDF. This scraping of the bottom of the country's manpower reservoir took a great deal of effort and did enrich the IDF with a few thousand men who had previously not been included. The effect, however, was more psychological than real. In a society in which draft dodgers were held in contempt and in which the best and the brightest tended to volunteer for the toughest combat units, those who stayed on the sidelines and would not come forward were hardly the stuff of which good soldiers are made. The publicity attending the search for them was necessary in order to prop up demoralized reserve personnel who had to serve longer while others presumably stayed at home and attended to their careers and businesses. But the net contribution of those who were brought back into service in this way was probably negligible.[9]

Yet another method that the IDF adopted in the 1970s in order to augment its ranks, especially in combat units, was to modify the pattern of service for women. Contrary to the popular image in the world press, Israeli female conscripts had hardly ever seen real battle. For the most part they had been confined to office, paramedical, paramilitary, educational, welfare, and electronic-intelligence assignments in the rear. In the aftermath of the 1973 war, however, the IDF began to rely on women in relatively large numbers for instruction and operative positions in the army's various schools. This included instruction in combat drills involving an extensive degree of technological know-how—artillery; missile boat assignments; armor; intelligence; and of course electronic surveillance and command, control, and communication jobs.

Unlike the practice in the United States since the introduction of the all-volunteer army the IDF would not assign women to mixed units or to high-risk jobs, but female soldiers were encouraged to serve as instructors of combat units consisting exclusively of males. This began on a limited, experimental basis, but when it proved effective, the visibility of women in rear bases of combat units was substantially increased.[10]

Last but not least, the IDF simply had no alternative but to reduce numerical standards within units, on the one hand, and increase substantially the mobilization of reserves for routine, current-security assignments, on the other hand. This began in 1973, when a protracted war of attrition on both the Golan and the Sinai fronts lingered on while the parties to the conflict were engaged in negotiations. The Israelis feared that the negotiations might fail. In any event, there was a near certainty that the hostilities would be resumed. Meanwhile, both Egypt and Syria resorted to force in order to increase the pressure on Israel to make concessions at the negotiating table. Thus although a large number of Israeli reservists were sent home, several reserve divisions remained on active duty until as late as April 1974, six months after the end of the war.

This cost a lot of money, but the financial burden paled in comparison to the psychological burden. Those who were kept in uniform were mainly in combat units, which had paid a heavy toll in the course of the war—a fact that created a problematic starting point for prolonged service. In addition, many of them had businesses or farms that simply could not be run without them. The IDF devised a method whereby reasonable salaries were paid to reservists through the National Insurance Institute. This system, however, could not save the owners of small farms or legal firms, or of shops that were neglected because of the prolonged service, from virtually going into liquidation.

The lessons of this period were not forgotten, but the IDF had no alternatives. Having paid a heavy toll as a result of the decision in October 1973 not to call up the reserves until the very last minute, the IDF was determined in the course of the 1970s and early 1980s not to take any chances again. It would not allow its political superiors to restrict the growth of the order of battle for either economic or political reasons. Whenever there was even a faint sign of tension or suspicion of another Arab deception, the IDF would instantly call up some reserves. And since the choice (in terms of strategic adequacy) was between calling up many second-rate units and calling up a few first-rate ones, it was always cheaper to summon the latter. Consequently, a relatively small segment of the population found itself called to the flag with inordinate frequency.

The problem, to be sure, became far less acute after the signing of the Egyptian–Israeli interim agreements in September 1975. It became even less burdensome after the beginning of the Egyptian–Israeli peace process in the winter of 1977–78. By the spring of 1978, however, it had once again become an irritating source of domestic debate. This began with Operation Litani in

March 1978. Then, because of the escalation of the conflict with the Palestinians on the West Bank and along the border with Lebanaon, there was an ever-increasing need for larger quantities of trained military manpower than the regular kernel of the IDF and the routine volume of reserve call-up facilitated.

In the last months of 1981 the pressure to maintain growing quantities of reserve manpower in uniform reached a new peak. The passage of the Golan annexation law in December caused tensions with Syria to reach a peak as well. The IDF was ordered by Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon to mobilize substantial contingents of high-quality manpower as a means of dissuading the Syrians from making any military move. When the tensions with Syria subsided, however, most of the reserve units were not discharged. The reason, according to one well-informed source, was the decision in principle to invade Lebanon within a matter of a few months. Having resolved to carry out such a military operation, the government, or the minister of defense acting on its behalf, wished to maintain a force large enough to launch an invasion even prior to a general call-up. Whatever the reason, however, the policy of keeping a relatively large reserve force on active service generated a great deal of pent-up resentment among those civilians who were called up and kept in arms for long months.[11]

With the beginning of the war in Lebanon in June 1982, this became an important factor. Advocates of the war argued that the IDF would not have to stay in Lebanon for more than three months. Instead, the IDF became bogged down in Lebanon for two years. Initially exciting, the service there soon turned into a nightmare. As a result, the fact that there was no domestic consensus concerning the objectives and scope of the war, and the fact that there was so much resentment regarding the large number of reserve personnel who were kept there as an occupation garrison, became principal reasons for the decision to withdraw from that country without any assurance that the peace of the Galilee would be safeguarded. The limits of Israel's system of manpower allocation were thus demonstrated during the 1974–84 period in two important ways. First, it was an effective method of augmenting the size of the IDF *only* if and when reserves were called up for short periods. Second, drawing on the civilian population as it did, it could not work without a solid domestic consensus.[12]

Weapons

Difficulties of an even greater magnitude were encountered during the same period in the effort to keep abreast of the arms race. As a result of the colossal transfer of Western resources into Arab hands as a direct consequence of the quadrupling of oil prices, the Arab world enjoyed during most of the 1974–84 period a financial boom of unprecedented scale. Unable to work together as a cartel of buyers, the Western countries and Japan could only hope to offset the effects of this shift of resources through a massive export drive, in which

a major item was arms for the Arab countries, some of which (such as Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, and Algeria) were also receiving weapons from the Soviets.[13]

Confronted by this race to provide arms for oil, the dormant division in the upper echelon of the Israeli military-political elite between supporters and opponents of a more explicit nuclear program resurfaced. Moshe Dayan, for one, became skeptical about Israel's demographic and economic ability to maintain a sufficiently dissuasive correlation of forces on the basis of conventional weapons alone. As he put it on one occasion:

> Israel should invest in security within the bounds of its [economic] capacity. It is not our purpose [to maintain] a conventional balance of forces with all the Arab states over whose motives and armament programs we have no control. We therefore have to put the emphasis on the IDF's quality, and not [allow ourselves] to be led into an arms race which will destroy our economy without necessarily ensuring our security. Quality and imaginative IDF solutions can preserve our edge over Arab quantity and not the current [under the Rabin–Allon–Peres team during 1974–77] attempt to compete with our adversaries quantitatively.[14]

What exactly Dayan was suggesting as an alternative to uncontrolled growth of conventional capabilities was never made entirely clear. But his cryptic comments seemed to suggest that he was advocating a return to what might be called a neo–Ben Gurionist concept. It consisted of three parts:

1. The growth of conventional capabilities should be disconnected from the growth of Arab conventional capabilities and fixed within a rigid framework determined by the growth of Israel's GNP.
2. The balance in terms of Israel's ability to deal with the threat of a combined Arab assault should be covered by a last-resort nuclear capability.
3. It was not essential that Israel should literally "go public" with the bomb, but the Jewish state should somehow bring this new national security formula to the attention of its adversaries.

Though he was speaking as a Knesset back-bencher and not as a member of the cabinet, Dayan's authority on this issue could not be questioned. Judging from a variety of unconfirmed reports, what he said was based on the knowledge that Israel had already, during the Yom Kippur War, had the capacity for the posture that he proposed in 1976, and that, at the darkest hour of the war (after the failure of the counter attack of October 8), Golda Meir had ordered a bomb to be assembled at once.[15] That such an evaluation of Israel's capacity was taken for granted by its chief adversaries cannot be doubted. In fact, leading Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian, and Iraqi politicians and commentators had spoken and written freely since the immediate aftermath of

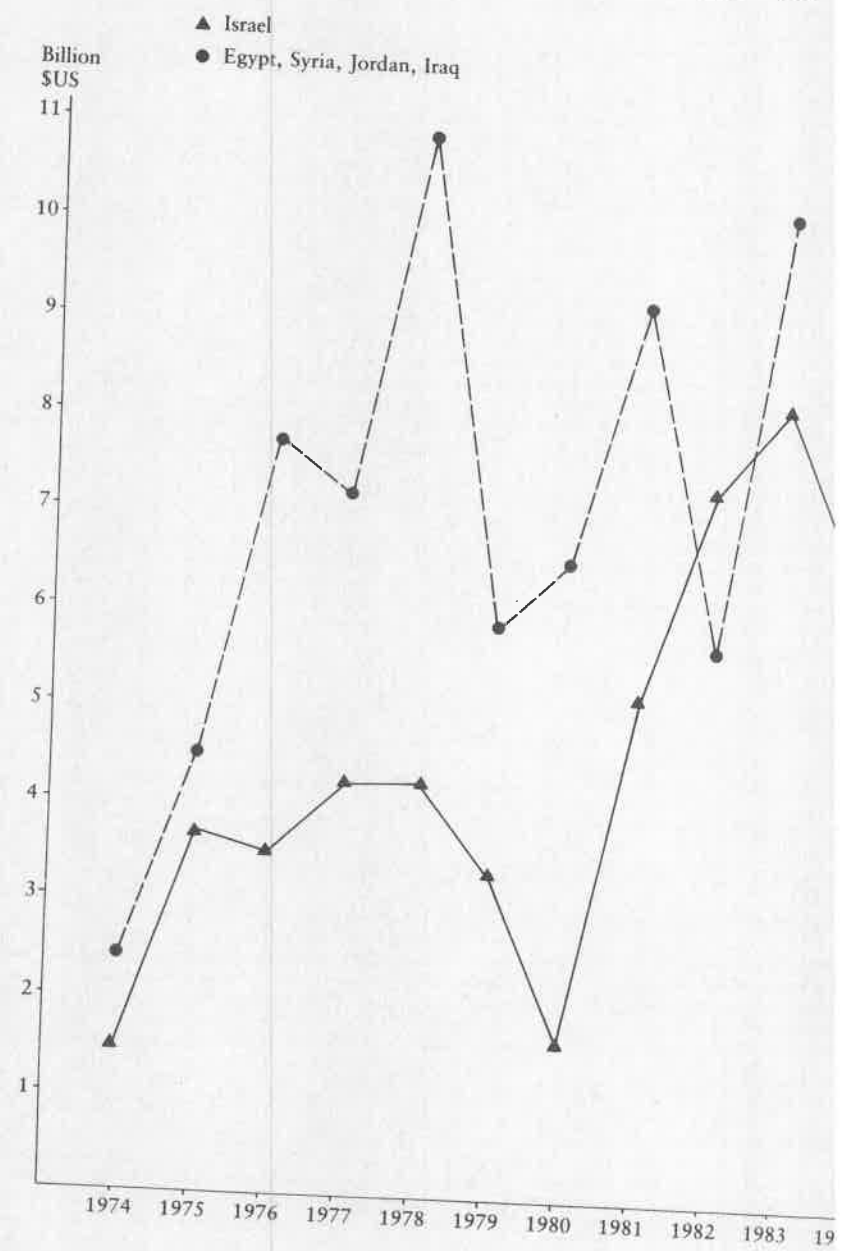
Yom Kippur War about the possibility that Israel would resort to the use of nuclear weapons in the event of an Arab conventional victory.[16]

If Israel's Arab adversaries became alarmed, so did the United States, Israel's most important friend in the world arena. This cannot be gauged by the few official U.S. statements on the topic, which mostly reject the notion that Israel has gone nuclear. Rather, *the real measure of U.S. anxieties in this regard appears to be the scope, pattern, and nature of U.S. assistance to Israel.* Since 1973 the United States has markedly stepped up its economic and military assistance to the Jewish state. The turning point was the U.S. airlift of military aid in the course of the 1973 war. Previously, the Nixon administration had often attempted to barter U.S. commitments to supply arms for Israeli counter-commitments regarding the terms of an Arab–Israeli settlement. But when the possibility of an Israeli defeat began to loom large, Washington may have become sufficiently alarmed at the possibility of a desperate Israeli move that it decided to act as swiftly and as generously as it did.

The total sum of assistance for the first year after the 1973 war, $2.2 billion, ultimately became a permanent annual allocation. Israeli analysts point out that this assistance has roughly covered the added burden resulting from the growth in Israel's conventional capabilities since 1973.[17] Therefore, it does not seem implausible to argue that the main purpose of the United States in giving this military aid has been to contain Israel's slide toward a nuclear strategy. If this has been the most important wellspring of U.S. generosity toward the Jewish state since 1973, it seems to have worked. Although Dayan's views were apparently fully shared by Shimon Peres, the minister of defense in Rabin's government, Dayan's advocacy was rejected by the Rabin–Allon–Bar-Lev team that headed the government in the mid-1970s. The thesis that appears to have won the day was that with U.S. financial backing, Israel would be able to keep abreast of the conventional arms race without introducing nuclear weapons. This view did not call for abandoning efforts to advance the nuclear program to a point at which Israel would need only several days, or even hours, to put together a bomb. It did, however, indicate a conscious wish to avoid even an implicit inclusion of nuclear weapons in the routine national security posture.[18]

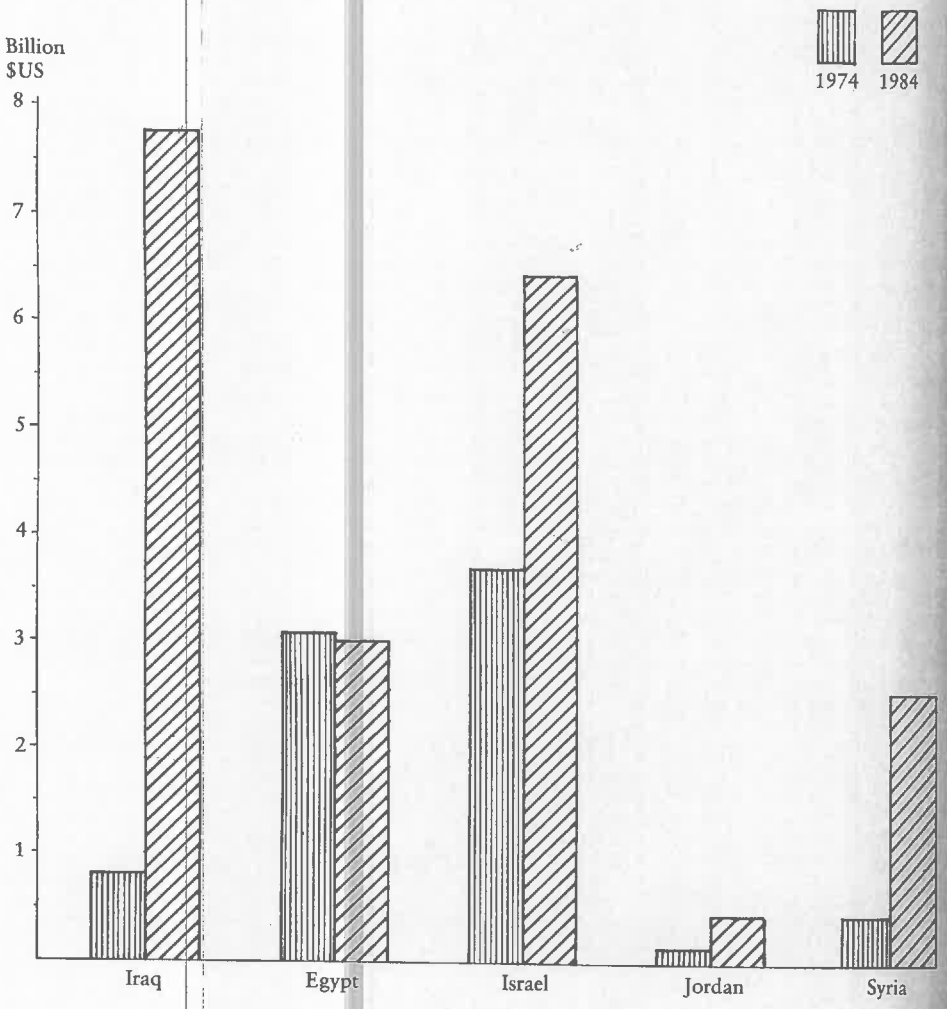
The logical corollary to this view was a conventional buildup of gigantic proportions (see figures 5–1 and 5–2). Drawing on the composite experience of the Six-Day War, the canal war, the Yom Kippur War, and (since 1982) the invasion of Lebanon, the IDF General Staff started from a maximalist definition of requirements. To fulfill its chief duties, the IDF, according to Lieutenant-General Mordechai ("Mota") Gur, the chief of staff from the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War until the aftermath of Operation Litani, should be able to:

1. Ensure the widest possible latitude for political bargaining.
2. Have the ability to defend the state in both a first- and a second-strike war.



Source: Based on data in *The Military Balance* (London: International Institute for Strate 1974–1984).

Figure 5–1. The Arab–Israeli



Source: Based on data in *The Military Balance* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1974–75 and 1984–85).

Note: The vast growth of Iraqi military outlays was mainly due to the Iran–Iraq war.

Figure 5–2. Selected Comparisons of Arab and Israeli Military Outlays, 1974 and 1984

3. Have sufficient power to deter any combination of adversaries from beginning a war.
4. Be capable of finishing any war with a decisive victory so that the adversary would have neither the ability to turn an unfinished encounter into a war

To achieve these ambitious goals, the General Staff determined that the IDF should grow to a size—in both manpower and equipment—that would ensure sufficient defensive power on all fronts simultaneously. In addition, it was decided to develop a central strategic reserve for ground, air, and sea operations that would be capable of critically affecting the battle on any front at any given time. A third type of force to be set up as part of this policy was a long-reach arm, based on airborne infantry, air power, and medium-range missiles, and capable of destroying any adversary expeditionary force long before the latter had the opportunity to reach the battlefield on the Israeli border. In addition, the IDF decided to develop an arm (mainly naval) capable of preventing a naval stranglehold in the Red Sea.[19]

The impact of this post-1973 program on the IDF's inventory of hardware was dramatic. In 1974 The IDF had, according to Israeli sources, 466 combat jets (mainly Mirage, Skyhawk A-4, Kfir C-2, and Phantom F-4E); by 1984 the total had grown to 580 (19 squadrons at 10 bases, consisting of 40 4-15 Eagle, 72 F-16 A/B, 140 Skyhawk A-4, 163 Kfir C-2, 132 Phantom F-4, and 40 Mirage III). In 1974 the IAF had 54 transport planes; a decade later it had 96 (C-130 Hercules, KC-130 refueling, Boeing 707, DC Dakota [C-47], Norman-Brittan Islander, Beechcraft Queen Air, Westwind 1124, and Dornier DO 1128). In 1974 the IAF had 78 helicopters (mainly French-built SA-321 Super Frelon and U.S.-built Ch-53, AB 212, and AB 206); in 1984 it had a fleet of 175 helicopters, including more than 40 AH-1G/S Cobra and MD-500 defender attack helicopters.

Nor were the changes in ground forces any less dramatic. In terms of armored divisions, the IDF grew from fewer than seven to more than twelve within less than a decade. This entailed the doubling of the number of tanks from 1,900 in 1974 (mainly M-48-A5, M-60/M-60 A1, Centurion, and remodeled, captured Soviet-built, T-55 Tiran) to 3,600 in 1984 (consisting of all these types plus a growing number of Israeli-designed Merkava). It also led to a near trebling of the number of APCs from 2,500 (mainly U.S.-built M and M-3 half track, and Soviet-built BTR-50, OT-62, and BRDM-2) to 8,000 (mainly high-quality U.S.-built M-113).

In addition, there were immense changes in personal weapons (from Israeli manufactured Uzi submachine guns and Belgian Fabrique Nationale (FN) rifles and light machine guns to U.S.-made M-16 and Israeli-designed Galil; in the numbers and quality of mortars (all Israeli-made Soltam); in the variety and quality of specialized aircraft, such as the E-2C Hawkeye AEW, OV-1E Mohawk AEW, MQM-74C Chukar IIRPV, Teledyne Ryan Model 1241 RPV, Scout (IAI) Mini-RPV; in the variety and quantity of missiles (Israeli-designed and -manufactured Shafrir and Gabriel, and U.S.-made MR-530, AIM-9 Sidewinder, AIM-7 Sparrow air-to-air missiles; AGM-65 Maverick and Walleye air-to-ground missiles; Hawk and MIM-23B improved Hawk ground-to-air missiles, and Jericho medium-range

48 other types in 1974 to 23 missile boats, 3 submarines, and 65 other types in 1984).[20]

The conceptual framework within which this huge order of battle was to be encapsulated was known as HaKrav HaMeshulav (the combined arms operation). In the 1973 war, the IAF, the armor, and the infantry—not to mention a variety of auxiliaries—suffered from conspicuously poor coordination. Separately, they functioned more or less coherently. But whenever the armor needed air support and whenever infantry and armor were called on to operate together, coordination was barely feasible at the macro staff level, whereas at the micro operational/tactical level, it was almost not put into practice (except through ingenious ad hoc improvisations). This was evidently the result of the incremental response in previous years to the lessons of the Six-Day War and the canal war. Having been alerted to this lack of coordination in the course of the 1973 war and, to some extent, influenced by similar notions in the U.S. armed forces, IDF planners moved in the 1970s toward an integrated concept of the combat team almost regardless of its size.

As had been the case ever since Operation Kadesh in 1956, the cornerstone of the entire edifice was a definition of the role of the IAF. The air force, it was decided, would train and equip itself for surprise attacks against enemy airfields; for overpowering enemy surface-to-air missiles; for intensive support of operations on the ground; for actual participation—based on helicopter gunships—in armored battles; for massive shuttles of troops (in both helicopters and planes); and for surveillance and long-reach operations in a huge perimeter covering the bulk of the Middle east and half the Mediterranean littoral. Such a post–Yom Kippur IAF should have been able to guarantee clear skies for every territory held by Israel. Moreover, it was perceived as a deterrent against any attempt by any force in the Arab world to launch a surprise air strike (of the kind Israel itself had carried out in June 1967) or to facilitate surprise ground attacks by disrupting the mobilization of the IDF's civilian reserves through air bombardments or deadly salvos of intermediate-range surface-to-surface missiles with conventional warheads.

But the real novelty in both the concept and its implementation was in the extensive interface that the quest for a combined arms operation decreed between the IAF and the IDF's ground capabilities. Before the 1967 war, the IAF was mainly geared for surveillance; for limited transport activities; and, of course, for a preemptive, preventive, or interceptive air strike focusing on the total disarming of enemy air forces. Before the 1973 war it added to these capabilities an extensive bombing capacity. Now, in addition to all this, it was increasingly trained and equipped for extensive tactical participation in major ground battles.

The other side of the coin was that the mainstay of the ground forces was also trained and equipped to work with the IAF. This entailed a virtual revolution in the electronics and communication systems of the armored

corps and of all the various auxiliaries at its disposal. It meant that not onl divisional commanders but also brigade, battalion, and even company com manders were equipped with implements that made it possible for them t call in the IAF for help; indeed, they were taught a variety of procedures fo doing so. It meant an unprecedented degree of standardization in thinkin in equipment, and in training among all the field corps of the IDF. The ar mored corps—which before the 1973 war had dismissed the infantry as a outdated relic of a bygone style of warfare—was now called on not to devou infantry but to be integrated with it. For its part, infantry had to digest th notion of operating extensively from APCs, which in turn became part an parcel of armored fists. Both arms, moreover, had to devise together a con cept of battle that would delineate optimal roles for the artillery, for th engineers, for the signals, for the medical corps, and of course for ordnanc

As a result of this simultaneous revolution in size and in operational doc trine, it did not take long for the more imaginative and more intellectuall alert members of the General Staff to reach the obvious conclusion: the struc ture of the IDF since 1949—whereby the armored corps, the artillery corps the engineering corps, the medical corps, the signals corps, and the ordnanc corps each had its own separate staff, concept, and training structure—ha become obsolete; the time had come to turn the IDF from a loose confedera tion of semiautonomous corps into an integrated, highly centralized com mand structure, a Central Field Forces Command (the Hebrew acronym i MAFCHASH, for *Mifkedet Kochot Hasadel*) that would fulfill the same com prehensive, exclusive role vis-à-vis the ground forces that the IAF and IN command structures fulfill in connection with the air and sea forces respectively.

The organizational reshuffle that this reform entailed has lasted nearly decade now. It called for a review of the entire command structure of the IDF Since it could create tremendous havoc—indeed, could almost put the IDF ou of commission while it was being carried out—it was implemented piecemea over a long period of time. Meanwhile, however, the training and fighting con cept that the reform proposed was gradually inculcated in the training doc trine and in operational planning for war.

Thus at the time of Operation Pinetrees (alias Peace for the Galilee, alia the 1982 invasion of Lebanon), the IDF employed an operational concept tha was ahead of the organizational structure implementing it. Although the fightin in Lebanon was one of the first combined arms operations, the command struc ture that carried it out was in fact dual. It still retained the separate functiona corps commands alongside the new integrated system. In practice, this dua structure added impetus to an already strong tendency to move with a top heavy machinery. It led to a cumbersome General Staff operation—to the presence, to put it bluntly, of too many top brass in too many command posi tions, all the way from the imposing minister of defense (retired Major-General

Ariel Sharon) and his own private staff (YALAL, a Hebrew acronym for *Yechide Le-bitachon Leumi*, or National Security Unit); through the IDF General Staff under Lieutenant-General Rafael Eitan through the theater command under OC Northern Command Major-General Amir Drori; through corps commands (such as that under Major-General Avigdor Ben-Gal in the campaign against the Syrian forces in the Beka'a Valley); through no less than nine divisional commands; through numerous brigades, battalions, and other structures down the line.

More serious, perhaps, was the effect of the spectacular growth of the IDF during the 1974–84 period on the primary attributes of its modus oeprandi. The easy access to air and artillery power that the combined-arms concept gave to relatively junior ranks created an unhealthy shift of emphasis from imagination, boldness, and the indirect approach—that is, from the typical traits of a small, poor army—to a slow, and cumbersome "steamroller" style of fighting typical of large, well-endowed armies. Instead of assuming their own relative weakness and looking for ingenious and daring ways of circumventing obstacles and breaking the resistance of a sluggish but far better endowed enemy, the IDF in the Lebanon war revealed a tendency to assume that time, munitions, and weapons were not the object, and that therefore the sheer weight of superior force could achieve all its objectives.

To be sure, at the micro level many units still performed entirely up to the IDF's past (very high) standards. As a whole, however, it seems that in Lebanon the IDF acted like a rich, cautious, and relatively poorly motivated army. It seldom fought at night when night-fighting had been its forte in the past. It relied on armor, air support, and artillery where infantry in dashing and clever maneuvers could have worked wonders. In many cases it not only moved slowly but also failed to exploit its own success by keeping up the pressure on a retreating enemy force. This may, of course, be attributed to the concern with avoiding casualties and to the fact that the Begin government went to war without domestic consensus as to its objectives and scope. Nevertheless, a close look at the IDF's performance in the 1978 Operation Litani and at the credible evidence provided by a number of recently retired senior officers seems to suggest a deeper malaise that may well be, at least in part, the result of the overgrowth of the 1970s.[21]

Deployment

If the growth of the IDF in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War entailed certain costs, it also had its very obvious benefits. In particular, what turned it into an important ingredient of deterrence was the fact that it took place against the background of a rapprochement with Egypt. Whether or not the Israeli–Egyptian peace process obtained for the Israelis the kind of "real" peace (as between Holland and Belgium or between the United States and Canada)

they had dreamed of, one thing seems clear: by forcing Israel to depart from the Sinai under conditions that ensured the peninsula's continued demilitarization, the peace with Egypt made an immeasurable contribution to the efficacy of the Israeli deterrent. Indeed, the fact that this development and the greatest ever growth of the IDF occurred simultaneously endowed Israel with the most favorable force/space ratio (from the point of view of strengthening its deterrence) in its four decades of independent statehood.

The foregoing should not lead to a confusion between foresight and afterthought. When Israel embarked on the immense expansion of the IDF's capabilities after the Yom Kippur War, it did so because of a fear that another war shortly was a foregone conclusion. The Arabs had done well in the 1973 war (compared to previous wars); they had the wherewithal, the personnel, and the international support to permit themselves yet another war; they were driven by a ceaseless rivalry among themselves over who was more militant vis-à-vis the common enemy; they tended, in this Israeli perception, to be fanatical anyway; they were supported by the Soviets, who feared that Kissinger and Nixon would really succeed in carrying out their threats to expel the Soviet Union from the region; and finally, they, the Arabs, were impressed by Israel's evident fatigue after the three-week-long, high-attrition war of October 1973. They might be tempted to act as the Israelis themselves would have preferred—namely, to exploit their success and build up further pressure on the Jewish state.

If this grim perception was on the minds of Israeli policymakers during the first two years of the Rabin cabinet, the implication was obvious: Israel faced a critical test. It could succeed in standing up to the challenge only if it quickly brought the IDF back into shape, first and foremost in terms of filling up its depleted stocks of weapons and munitions. Although the main intention of this policy was defensive—namely, to prepare for war on the assumption that the Israeli deterrent had suffered a critical eclipse—it paradoxically made war less likely. In fact, it strengthened Israel's deterence as well as its standing in the protracted negotiations following the war. Not having lost the war in military terms, and having refurbished its depots and in fact grown even stronger in terms of hardware, Israel could resist with relative equanimity Arab threats of fresh wars in the event of a failure of the negotiations. Thus Israel's added military strength offset to an extent its exhaustion in the aftermath of the war and paved the way for the disengagement agreements with Egypt and Syria and, subsequently, for the interim agreements with these countries. In both cases the Jewish state ostensibly paid a heavy price: large chunks of territory, for which many Israeli lives had been lost a year or two earlier, were ceded to Arab governments which—in the eyes of many Israelis—had failed to capture them by force and had therefore resorted to other means.

Neither Henry Kissinger, who acted as the main intermediary between Israel, Syria and Egypt, nor Golda Meir, Israeli prime minister during the first round of agreements ending in mid-April 1974, nor Yitzhak Rabin, who was Israeli

prime minister during the second round of agreements, really shared this pessimistic view. They were only too aware of the possibility that the Arabs would attempt to exploit the good offices of the U.S.A., Kissinger's desire to deliver an agreement and Israel's fatigue in order to obtain more territory for fewer counter-concessions. At least Egypt seemed basically disposed to accept, for the first time in the history of Israel, an agreement that would lay the foundations for a more extensive understanding in the future.

Specifically, the Sinai II agreements with Egypt led to the creation in the Sinai of an ever-expanding no-man's land between Israel and Egypt in which U.S. rather than U.N. observers were stationed. In turn, the danger of another surprise attack declined, as did the danger of a war of attrition while the presence of an approximately eleven-hundred-strong multinational (mainly U.S.) force created a kind of U.S. tripwire. If Egypt ever attempted to force its way through the lines of the GIs in the Sinai, thin as these lines might be, Egypt would be confronting not just Israel but very likely the United States as well.

Other advantages of the interim agreements were that they placed on Egypt the onus of pressing for further talks leading ultimately to a peace agreement; they greatly improved Israel's bargaining position, and ultimately they almost removed Egypt from the Arab war coalition. Evidently aware of this, Sadat took the historic step of performing a dramatic pilgrimage to Jerusalem and thus paved the way to the Camp David accords and to the Israeli–Egyptian peace of 1979. Israel had to swallow the bitter pills of removing two major military airfields and a prosperous civilian population from the Sinai. Compared to the strategic gain, however, this was arguably a small price to pay.

Broadly speaking, two main strategic advantages accrued to Israel from the demilitarization of the Sinai. First, the Israeli evacuation of the Sinai facilitated an enormously advantageous Israeli reversion from the strategy of protracted defensive warfare on interior lines of the 1967–73 period (in which Egypt had clear advantages) to the strategy of quick-decision offensive warfare on exterior lines of the 1957–67 period (in which Israel had built-in advantages).[22] Second, the evacuation converted Egyptian space into a quality that Israel's small size renders vital—namely, extended early warning time. What this amounted to was a great decline in the Egyptian motivation to fight wars against the Jewish state; at the same time, it created something approximating an exogenous strategic depth. From the legal, ceremonial, and economic points of view, the Sinai had returned to Egypt; from the strategic point of view, however, it has remained to a certain extent under Israeli suzerainty.[23]

The combined impact of these two advantages can be portrayed through an imagined, but probably realistic, scenario. If Egypt ever wished to start another war, it would have to move its forces into the Sinai. To facilitate this, it dug tunnels under the Suez Canal. Although this has made an abrupt change in the Egyptian order of battle in the Sinai more feasible than ever before, it also introduced a crucial element of early warning from the Israeli viewpoint.

If the Egyptians were to attack, Israel could respond by calling up reserves and by rolling the IDF back into the Sinai. The result would be a race of the two armies toward a meeting point somewhere in the middle of the peninsula and, most probably, a clash between the Egyptians and the multinational force. If the Egyptian army managed that clash, it would still have to face the IDF in a head-on collision into which the parties would enter from frantic movement (a form of war in which Israel has always had a clear advantage). In short, if Egypt decides to challenge the military terms of the peace agreement, it would also have to assume the inescapability of a full-scale war with Israel in the depth of Egypt's own territory and in a method of warfare that maximizes Israel's comparative advantages. If this hypothesis is correct, it follows that whoever rules Egypt and whatever the circumstances, the likelihood of a successful Egyptian surprise attack has become very limited. The peace treaty not only reflected an Egyptian acknowledgment of Israel's ability to defend itself, but it was also in itself designed to strengthen the stability of mutual deterrence between the two countries.

As a result, by April 26, 1982, when Israel completed the withdrawal from the Sinai, it could afford to downgrade the Egyptian front, hitherto the single most dangerous front, to the lowest priority. Only under one set of circumstances would this be changed—namely, if and when Israel was bogged down in a protracted, patently unsuccessful war with, say, Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. Then, the pressure on Egypt in the Arab world and the temptation for the Egyptians themselves to reenter the war coalition would be maximized. Otherwise Israel has been virtually freed of the need to allocate any significant forces for the maintenance of the Egyptian line.

The corollary has been a dramatic change in Israel's ability to concentrate forces on other fronts. With an order of battle of unprecedented size, but without an active Egyptian front to attend to, the size of the IDF contingent that can be permanently stationed in the Golan Heights has been more than trebled. In 1973 the IDF could barely afford to deploy in the Golan one armored brigade, one battalion of infantry, and some elements of artillery. Ten years later, the size of the peacetime, regular contingent on the Golan had become more than one armored division. To be sure, the Syrian forces facing this contingent have been increased, too, to more than one army group (three to four divisions in front-line deployment). This surely has been a source of grave concern to the Israelis. Against such a background, the reduction of tensions on the Egyptian front—in fact, the elimination of Egypt as an active participant in a near-term war—saved Israel from an impossible situation in which it would have to face, in addition to the Syrians, half a million Egyptian soldiers in forward deployment.

Another critical improvement in the position of the IDF vis-à-vis its main adversaries in terms of deployment has been the shortening of the internal lines along which it would have to move in the event of war. Israeli control of

the Sinai meant not only a dangerous proximity to a much larger Egyptian force but also a long distance from rear to front—in other words, long internal lines on which reserves and supplies had to move. Conversely, now that the Sinai has been returned to Egypt, the curse of long (and vulnerable) internal lines has reverted to the Egyptians again. The IDF can much more easily shift forces from front to front according to need. Thus one of the IDF's most serious concerns, the long time it takes to call up the reserves and transport them to the battlefield, has found a satisfactory solution.

During 1974–84 under Chiefs of Staff Gur, Eitan, and Levi, the IDF introduced three additional factors in an effort to improve its deployment. The first was the establishment of theater headquarters under the aegis of the three traditional main commands: the north (with responsibility for the Lebanon and Syria borders), the center (with responsibility for the West Bank and the Jordanian border), and the south (with responsibility for the Egyptian and parts of the Jordanian borders). The main function of these new command structures was operational. With the stupendous growth in the order of battle, it has become feasible, perhaps even desirable, to attach in advance specific units of division size, as well as the depots supplying them, to the theater in which they are likely to operate in the event of war. Overall coordination for battles in the area remains in the hands of the regional command. But intermediate lower echelons in charge of roughly a corps have been consolidated into permanent operational staffs as well.

A second, far more problematic novelty in the 1974–84 period has been the return to Spatial Defense. In the 1950s this was a means of creating an artificial strategic depth. Between the 1956 and 1973 wars, it had been frozen to such an extent in terms of the allocation of resources that the concept became almost totally obsolete. In the Yom Kippur War all the Golan settlements were in fact evacuated, since they had no means of defending themselves against Syrian armor. Consequently, under the hard psychological impression of this experience, the IDF—and the public—engaged in a debate over the strategic utility of these settlements.

The results of this debate were mixed. Under Chief of Staff Eitan, a vociferous proponent of Greater Israel, the IDF invested significant resources in an attempt to train and equip all border settlements for paramilitary duties in the event of another invasion of the 1973 type. This created an anomaly whereby civilians in the occupied territories, especially in the West Bank, became authorized vigilantes, capable of actually using force if and when the IDF in the area did not seem to be quick enough. Yet for all their visibility in the West Bank, these vigilantes, by almost all accounts, are not quite capable of becoming a significant obstacle to an armored thrust by the Syrians in the Golan. Their contribution to Israeli deterrence against a civilian uprising in the populated parts of the occupied territories in the course of a major war with one or another of the neighboring Arab countries is probably considerable.

Armed to the teeth as they may be, however, and in stark contrast to the settlements in the 1948 war or even to the settlements in the framework of Spatial Defense during the 1950s, the rural citadels of farmers on the Golan or in the Jordan valley cannot—in the conditions of the contemporary battlefield—be seriously regarded as an important component of general deterrence against a major war.[24]

The third and last innovation of importance in terms of Israel's deployment strategy relates to the festering wound of Lebanon. The problem from the late 1960s on was how to stem the tide of PLO attacks against the Israeli population of the Galilee in a situation in which there was no accountable Lebanese government to punish. Over the years a variety of Israeli solutions evolved, for the most part in typical trial-and-error fashion. Until the 1975–76 civil war in Lebanon, the dominant pattern of Israeli involvement was through occasional punitive strikes, followed by the immediate withdrawal of IDF forces. With the civil war, Israel adopted a new approach, which in effect incorporated small elements of Christian and Shiite forces within the territory of Lebanon into the Israeli system of defense against the PLO. Until March 1978 this remained confined to a limited framework of three noncontiguous enclaves on the Lebanese side of the border. Then, with Operation Litani, this method was expanded. The enclaves were integrated, and a narrow belt controlled by pro-Israeli forces under Major Sa'ad Haddad was established astride the entire border from Naqura on the Mediterranean to Mount Hermon on the Syrian border.

Beyond this "Haddadland" lay a parallel strip of Lebanese territory controlled by a special U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). This force, however, was not very effective in blocking the PLO, and the ensuing escalation ultimately led to an Israeli decision to invade Lebanon and eject the PLO altogether. The invasion in June 1982 backfired and led, after the death of Bashir Gemayel and the Sabra and Shatila massacres, to an Israeli reappraisal and ultimately an Israeli withdrawal in stages.

From the moment the Israelis decided to withdraw from Lebanon, the most troublesome question was whether to withdraw entirely and simply return to the status quo ante bellum or to devise a new method that would safeguard the peace of the Galilee. The argument here was, as previously on all other fronts, between two schools. One school advocated the forward deployment of the IDF within Lebanese territory until a Lebanese authority capable of policing the area had developed. The other school advocated a complete withdrawal but also some combination of mobile, active IDF presence in a security belt under the control of an Israeli-backed Lebanese force along the Israeli border.

Following a long, painful debate, the latter school won the upper hand. The IDF set up the South Lebanese Army (SLA), a regular force consisting mainly of Christian officers and a mixture of Shiite and Christian soldiers. The SLA was put under the command of General Antoine Lahad, a professional Lebanese

Chamoun. This army, equipped and trained by the IDF, continued to operate in close cooperation with IDF units. Small contingents of IDF forces—elements of artillery, intelligence, and some armor—tend to spend long tours of duty inside the "Lahadland." Their policy, however, is to be as invisible as possible. As this book goes to press, this method of dealing with south Lebanon appears to have succeeded from the Israeli point of view inasmuch as there have been hardly any successful attacks against the Galilee. Israelis remain skeptical, however. Sooner or later the troubles in south Lebanon are expected to be resumed, and another method of deployment may have to be found.

What could that method be? Having attempted unsuccessfully to solve the problem through a comprehensive reshuffle (the 1982 invasion), and having tried a method of vicarious control through Haddad's militias and Lahad's SLA, Israel may have no alternative to forward deployment in south Lebanon. This step will not lead to a reoccupation of the area, since that would mean renewed conflict with the Shi'ites. But it could well mean the reintroduction of more force into Lahad's territory than during the first year after the withdrawal from Lebanon.[25]

The Margins of Insecurity Redefined

If the territorial acquisitions of the 1967 war rendered the casi belli of the previous decade obsolete, the post–Yom Kippur War period brought with it the revival of a vigorous reliance on casi belli for deterrence. This took two main forms. The first was the delineation and codification of what would constitute a threat, from the Israeli point of view, in the agreements between the Jewish state, Egypt, and Syria. The second was the unilateral delineation by Israeli spokespersons, with various degrees of explicitness, of casi belli and security margins.

The first instance in which a treaty contained the minimally acceptable conditions from the Israeli point of view, and thus indirectly codified and formalized a casus belli, was the disengagement agreement between Israel and Egypt. Signed on January 19, 1974, the agreement, especially its section B, dealt with the mutual thinning out of forces in the Sinai. Broadly speaking, it divided the area between the Suez Canal and the Mitla and Gidi Passes into three zones: one under Israeli control, one under Egyptian control, and one—in between—under the control of a U.N. Emergency Force (UNEF). Both Egypt and Israel accepted very strict limitations on the amount and strength of military forces in their areas of direct control. The details were spelled out in a letter from President Nixon to President Sadat and Prime Minister Meir. They set a limit of 7,000 men, 30 tanks, and 36 artillery pieces on the forces that the two belligerents could deploy in their respective zones. In addition, Egypt also agreed not to deploy surface-to-air missiles in an area encompassing its zone of control on the east bank of the canal up to 20 kilometers west of the canal.

By signing such an agreement, Israel not only undertook to refrain from certain actions itself, but also obtained, implicitly, a legitimate justification for resorting to force if and when Egypt were to fail to observe any of the specific stipulations of the agreement. In other words, the disengagement agreement was, in effect, an act of codification: it put in writing what each side would be entitled to consider sufficient cause for resorting to force.

Five months later, on May 29, 1974, Israel obtained a similar agreement with Syria. Again, the document did not speak explicitly of casi belli. Nevertheless, as in the agreement with Egypt and for similar reasons, the heart of the Syrian–Israeli disengagement agreement was a tacit recognition that certain specified changes by either side in the military status quo would constitute sufficient cause for the other side to resort to force. At Israel's insistence, both the Syrian and the Egyptian agreements included an explicit commitment to carry on the negotiations toward a full-fledged peace. In the final analysis, however, both agreements were first and foremost instances of codified, explicated casi belli.[26]

In a broad sense the same can be said of the interim (Sinai II) Israeli–Egyptian agreement of September 1, 1975, and of the Israeli–Egyptian peace agreement of March 26, 1979. In both cases the understanding went far beyond technical military arrangements. In fact, there was a coherent, logical progression from the disengagement agreements of Janaury 1974 to the peace agreements of March 1979 in terms of the scope of nonmilitary provisions. Whereas the former was almost entirely military in character, the latter was partly military and partly political. Nevertheless, the concept of casi belli remains as relevant to the limited military agreement as to the all-embracing peace agreement.

The reasons are almost self-evident. First, all three agreements included very specific military clauses that basically extended the principle of limitation of forces to larger parts of the Sinai. The first or disengagement agreement, as pointed out earlier, focuses on the thinning out of any military presence within small areas along the Suez Canal on the Egyptian side and on the rise of the Sinai massif on the Israeli side. The second or interim agreement stretched the same concept to an area that also embraced the Mitla and Gidi Passes. The IDF withdrew to the eastern approaches of the passes, whereas Egypt received back a larger part of the Sinai under the strict condition that its forces would not follow the footsteps of the retreating IDF. Finally, the Camp David accords and the peace agreement that followed led to the complete withdrawl from the Sinai of all remaining IDF forces without a corresponding redeployment of the Egyptians. The latter received sovereignty over the Sinai, but only a limited type of sovereignty, since Egypt "voluntarily" agreed not to introduce into the areas evacuated by the IDF more than a token number of civil administrators and policemen.

Each of these stipulations constituted in itself a casus belli whose transgression by one of the signatory parties could easily lead to retaliation by