



JHUMUNC

THE JOHNS HOPKINS MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

STATE OF ISRAEL
Quadrumvirate: Yom Kippur War (1973)
Chaired by Jacob Lefkovitz

Session XXIII

State of Israel

Quadrumvirate: Yom Kippur War, 1973

Topic A: Campaign Platform for the October 30, 1973 Elections

Topic B: Defending Israel's Place in the Middle East

Committee Overview

In this committee, Topic A is seeking peace with Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. These countries, Israel's most significant neighbors, hold in their power the ability to make life very easy or very difficult for Israel.

In the north, the Syrian Arab Republic is still smarting from the loss of the Golan Heights in the 1967 Six-Day War. Tensions along the Purple Line, the de facto border since 1967, are extremely high. Still, the potential gains from peace are large. Syria has long been the most implacable of Israel's aggressors, and to cool its enthusiasm for war would do much to enhance Israel's overall security.

In the center, just over the eponymous river, sits The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Although the relations—covert, of course—between the two countries are functional, there is much that could still be done to strengthen them.

Finally, in the south, there is the Arab Republic of Egypt. Egypt is the most populous Arab state, so if a breakthrough can be achieved with Egypt, it may prove to be the key to unlocking the rest of the Middle East to of Israeli diplomacy. The only stumbling block is Sinai.

While it is important to attempt diplomacy to its neighbors, Israel simultaneously cannot show weakness to hostile powers. Israel must defend its place

in the Middle East. As the leaders of the State of Israel, you must navigate the ship of state through some of the most turbulent waters seen since the 1948 Independence War, when the very survival of a Jewish community between the Jordan and the Mediterranean imperiled.

At both the tactical and the strategic level, there is little to no room for error. The fate of 3.3 million Israeli men, women, and children will hang in your hands.

Parliamentary Procedure

This committee will follow the JHUMUNC rules of parliamentary procedures as set forth in the Conference Preparation Guide available on the website.

Motions and points. Fundamental to MUN parliamentary procedure are motions, which include motions to open debate, to enter moderated and unmoderated caucuses, to enter voting procedure and to suspend (end session) and adjourn (end conference). Delegates can also make points, including point of inquiry (for questions within the scope of a committee), point of information (for questions outside of committee) and point of personal privilege. Points are always entertained before motions, and motions are voted from most to least disruptive.

Moderated and unmoderated caucuses. As with general committees, debate flow will be organized along the lines of caucuses, with

unmoderated caucuses considered more disruptive than moderated ones. In addition, in place of a moderated caucus, a delegate may motion to open a speakers list, which is organized like a traditional speakers' list in a standing committee, or a round-robin, a debate format in which every delegate speaks exactly once.

Directives. In place of UN resolutions, specialized committees focus on passing directives. There are two main types: committee directives, which are like resolutions in that they are passed by the committee as a whole; and individual directives, which are carried out by individual delegates via crisis notes. Committee directives must obtain a certain threshold of sponsors and signatories before being introduced to the committee; they are

then voted on in voting procedure. Delegates may also introduce amendments to committee directives; they are divided into friendly amendments, which are agreed to by the sponsors, and unfriendly amendments, which must be voted on by the committee.

As a final note, all parliamentary procedure rules may change at the discretion of the chair, and any motion a delegate may bring up can be ruled dilatory or be tabled.



Delegate Biographies:

Golda Meir

Prime Minister

Born as Golda Mabovtich in Kiev in 1898, Golda Meir grew up in Milwaukee until she immigrated to Israel at the age of 23. Once in Israel, she entered politics through her membership in the powerful Histadrut Trade Union. One of the signers of Israel's Declaration of Independence, she was also Israel's first ambassador to the Soviet Union. When she became prime minister in 1969, she became Israel's first and only the world's third female prime minister.¹

Yigal Allon

Deputy Prime Minister

Born as Yigal Peikowitz in Kfar Tavon, Mandatory Palestine in 1918, Allon was first a field commander for the Haganah and later a founder of the Palmach. In the 1948 Independence War, Allon served as a general in all three of the war's major theaters—the Galilee, the coastal strip, and the Negev. Allon entered the Knesset in 1955 and held various ministerial portfolios all through the 1960s.²

Yisrael Galili

Minister without Portfolio

Born as Yisrael Berchenko in Brailov, Russian Empire in 1911, Galili made aliyah with his family when he was 3 years old. Galili served honorably in the Haganah and was its chief of staff from 1946 until 1948 when he was purged by David Ben-Gurion. Galili has long been rumored to have conducted a prolonged affair with Meir.³

Moshe Dayan

Minister of Defense

Born on Degania Alef, the first kibbutz in Mandatory Palestine in 1915, Dayan joined the Haganah at 14. While serving with the British army in Lebanon, Dayan lost his left eye, leading to him adopting his signature black eyepatch. A general in the Independence War, Dayan eventually became IDF Chief of Staff, a position from which he oversaw the 1956 Suez Campaign. Dayan additionally served as Prime Minister Levi Eshkol's defense minister during the 1967 Six-Day War.⁴

Abba Eban

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Born as Aubrey Eban in Cape Town in 1915, Eban served as a British intelligence officer in Jerusalem during World War II. After helping guide the passage of UN General Assembly Resolution 181, Eban was appointed Israel's permanent representative to the UN and ambassador to the United States. A fluent speaker of 10 languages, Eban became the foreign affairs minister in 1966.⁵

Aharon Yariv

Minister of Transportation

Born as Aharon Rabinovich in Moscow in 1920, Yariv made aliyah at the age of 15 and served both in the Haganah and the British army. A former Golani commander, Yariv was also one time the military attaché to Washington. From 1964 to 1972, Yariv was the chief of military intelligence.⁶

¹ Francine Klagsbrun, *Lioness: Golda Meir and the Nation of Israel*.

² Anita Shapira, *Yigal Allon, Native Son: A Biography*.

³ Meron Medzini, "Israel's Eminence Grise: Yisrael Galili and the Evolution of Israeli Foreign Policy, 1967-77."

⁴ Bar-On, *Moshe Dayan: Israel's Controversial Hero*.

⁵ Siviner, *Abba Eban: A Biography*.

⁶ Joseph Finklestone, "Obituary: Maj-Gen Aharon Yariv."

Chaim “Kidoni” Bar-Lev

Minister of Trade and Industry

Born as Chaim Brotzlewsky in Vienna in 1924, Bar-Lev made aliyah at the age of 15. Bar-Lev saw service in the Independence War as part of the Palmach and in the Suez Campaign as an IDF brigadier. From 1967 to 1968 he served as deputy chief of staff, during which time he approved what would become the Bar-Lev fortifications, before serving as chief of staff from 1968 to 1971.⁷

Victor Shem-Tov

Minister of Health

Born in Samokov, Bulgaria in 1915, Shem-Tov made aliyah at the age of 24. A member of the Jerusalem Workers’ Council, he also was active in supporting the Bulgarian immigrant community. Like Meir, Shem-Tov also came up through the Histadrut and eventually made it into the Knesset in 1961.⁸

Ze’ev Sherf

Minister of Finance

Born in Czernowitz, Austria-Hungary in 1904, Sherf made aliyah at the age of 21 and joined the Haganah. During World War II and after, he served on the Haganah high command and with the Jewish Agency. During the founding of the state, Sherf was instrumental in creating the administrative apparatus of the new country.⁹

Yaakov Shimshon Shapira

Minister of Justice

Born in Yelisavetgrad, Russian Empire, in 1902, Shapira made aliyah at the age of 22 after serving a year in a Soviet jail for illegal Zionist organizing. After training as a lawyer at the Hebrew University, Shapira was engaged as the Haganah’s legal representative to the British. After the creation of the state, Shapira was the first Attorney General. He began serving as Minister of Justice in 1966.¹⁰

⁷ Finklestone, “Obituary: Lt-Gen Haim Barlev,” *The Independent*.

⁸ *Knesset.gov.il*, “Victor Shem-Tov.”

⁹ *Knesset.gov.il*, “Ze’ev Sherf.”

¹⁰ *Knesset.gov.il*, “Yaakov Shimshon-Shapira.”

Shlomo Hillel

Minister of Police

Born in Baghdad in 1923, Hillel made aliyah with his family at the age of 11. In 1946, Hillel returned to Iraq to become a member of the Zionist underground movement there. Through his efforts over the next decade, he helped facilitate the emigration of nearly 120,000 Iraqi Jews to Israel. After returning to Israel, Hillel went into the Knesset, left it for the diplomatic service, and then returned to the Knesset finally in 1969.¹¹

Zerach Warhaftig

Minister of Religions

Born in Volkovysk, Russian Empire in 1906, Warhaftig saved the lives of thousands of Lithuanian Jews during World War II by successfully interceding on their behalf with the Japanese vice-consul for his protection. He made aliyah at the age of 41. Warhaftig quickly became involved in politics and was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Warhaftig became minister of religions in 1961.¹²

David “Dado” Elazar

Chief of Staff of the IDF

Born in Sarajevo in 1925, Elazar made aliyah at the age of 15 and joined the Palmach. In the Independence War, he participated in the famed battle for the San Simon monastery in Jerusalem. A tank commander in the Suez campaign, Elazar was a commander of the armored corps from 1961 to 1964. During the Six-Day War, it was Elazar who captured the Syrian Golan as the Northern Commander. He became the chief of staff in 1972.¹³

¹¹ Daphne Tsimhoni, “Hillel, Shlomo.”

¹² Lawrence Joffe, “Obituary: Zerach.”

¹³ Bartov, *Dado: 48 Years and 20 Days*.

Yisrael Tal

Deputy Chief of Staff of the IDF

Born in Mahanayim, Mandatory Palestine in 1924, Tal was only five years old when the 1929 Tzfat riots broke out nearby. A volunteer with the British army's Jewish Brigade, Tal saw service in Italy before returning home and serving as a junior infantry officer in the Independence War. In the Six-Day War, Tal commanded an armored division in Sinai. He was considered Israel's foremost authority on armored strategy and tactics, and an early opponent of the Bar-Lev Line.¹⁴

Yitzhak Hofi

Commanding Officer of Northern Command

Born in Tel-Aviv in 1927, Hofi joined up with the Palmach at the age of 17. As first a paratrooper himself and then eventually commander of the Paratroopers Brigade, Hofi carried out several of the reprisal operations just after the Independence War and saw combat in the Suez campaign.¹⁵

Shmuel "Gorodish" Gonen

Commanding Officer of Southern Command

Born in Vilna in 1930, Gonen made aliyah with his family at the age of 3. A Palmachnik at the age of 14, Gonen participated in the battle for Jerusalem. Gonen was a key player in the establishment of the IDF tank corps, serving as an armored company commander in the Suez campaign and an armored division commander in the Six-Day War. Despite being prized for his battlefield talents, Gonen was never a very popular figure, especially among those who served under him. They considered much of his behavior unjust and glory-seeking and often requested transfers.¹⁶

Zvi Zamir

Director of the Mossad

Born Zvicka Zarzevsky in Lodz, Poland in 1925, Zamir made aliyah with his family as a 7-month-old child. Another Palmachnik, Zamir served in the Independence War as a battalion commander. By the time of the Suez campaign, he had risen to become a brigade commander. Shortly after, he served a stint as the commanding officer of Southern Command before rotating out. Zamir became the Mossad director in 1968. Operation Wrath of God, the reprisal operation against members of the Palestinian terrorist outfit that committed the 1972 Munich massacre of Israeli athletes, was one of the Mossad's major operations under Zamir.¹⁷

Eli Zeira

Chief of Military Intelligence

Born in 1928, Zeira became the director of military intelligence after serving a stint in Washington as the military attaché. Earlier in his service, Zeira had served under Dayan and was considered to have impressed the old soldier. However, others remarked that they found Zeira's self-confidence greater than was perhaps appropriate. These fears intensified after his appointment as a military intelligence director. Nevertheless, Dayan's tacit sponsorship took Zeira far.¹⁸

¹⁴ "Major-General Yisrael Tal.", *The Telegraph*. September 9, 2010.

¹⁵ Yaron Druckman, "Former Mossad chief Yitzhak Hofi dies at 87."

¹⁶ Mitch Ginsburg, "The general killed slowly by the Yom Kippur War."

¹⁷ "Zvi Zamir.", *Directors, Mossad*.

¹⁸ Steven, Stewart, *The Spymasters of Israel* (Macmillan, 1980).

Yossef Harmelin

Director of the General Security Service

Born in Vienna in 1922, Harmelin made aliyah at the age of 16. He joined the Security Service after fighting in the Independence War and became its deputy director in 1960. He was appointed the director in 1964.¹⁹

Simcha Dinitz

Israeli Ambassador to the United States

Born in Tel-Aviv in 1929, Dinitz completed his army service in the Haganah and later IDF before leaving Israel to study political science in the United States. A consummate diplomat, Dinitz was the ambassador to Italy and ambassador to the United States before returning to domestic work and becoming director of the prime minister's office for Meir. Early in 1973, Dinitz was reassigned back to his ambassadorship to the United States but was still closely aligned with Meir.²⁰

Yitzhak Rabin

Cabinet Advisor

Born in Jerusalem in 1922, Rabin was pushed to join the Palmach by Allon. Although not capable of much yet, Dayan accepted the

fresh volunteer. Rabin was fighting alongside Dayan in the battle in which Dayan lost his eye. Rabin eventually became the Palmach's chief operations officer. Despite immense pressure from David Ben-Gurion to resign in the early 1950s, Rabin – along with Bar-Lev and Elazar – held on and became the commanding officer of Northern Command. Rabin was the chief of staff throughout the Six-Day War.²¹

Ariel "Arik" Sharon

Commander (res.) of the 143rd Armored Division

Born in Kfar Malal, Mandatory Palestine in 1928, Sharon joined the Haganah at the age of 14 and became an infantry commander in the Independence War, where he led his company in the battle for Jerusalem. An acknowledged expert in commando tactics, Sharon was tasked with enhancing the special operations capabilities of the paratroop corps. Sharon served as commanding officer of Northern and led an armored division in Sinai during the Six-Day War before becoming the commanding officer of Southern Command. He stood down and took reserve status in mid-1973, launching the Likud opposition party shortly after his retirement.²²

¹⁹ "Yosef Harmelin.", Heads, *Shabak*.

²⁰ "Simcha Dinitz.", *Jewish Virtual Library*

²¹ Rabinovich, *Yitzhak Rabin: Soldier, Leader, Statesman*.

²² Landau, *Arik: The Life of Ariel Sharon*.



Topic A:

Campaign Platform for the October 30, 1973 Elections

Introduction

Very shortly, on October 30, 1973, the Israeli public will go to the polls to choose their next government. As always, voter turnout is expected to be very high²³. The question facing this government is what platform will present the Israeli voting public to try and attract their votes.

The by-now traditional security questions are sure to be important to voters, as they have been since the 1967 Six-Day War. These questions are, in their most basic forms, should Israel try and barter for peace using the territories in the north and the south that it conquered in the war?

Just as the public is divided on these issues, so too is the cabinet. Some argue that it would be foolish to relinquish the very concrete strategic advantages that the territories provide for only some words written on a piece of paper that the Arab leaders have no intention of abiding by.

Others maintain that even if the Arab public will never be fully appeased, their leaders are rational people who simply want to maintain their power. Israel can use that desire to present them with offers that they cannot refuse.

Then there is the very pressing question of what is to be done about the rising threat from international Palestinian terror groups. Since the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes before the eyes of the world at the Munich Olympics in 1972, public opinion has grown increasingly fearful.

A government is supposed to protect its citizens from harm. Israel can win all the wars it wants, but if it cannot stop its citizens from being slaughtered abroad, then what good has it done? How will the government convince the public that it, and not the opposition, will best protect the Israeli public, both at home and abroad?

Finally, tensions between Israeli Jews of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds are running high as the Mizrachim, or Jews from Arab countries, confront the Ashkenazim, or Jews from European countries, and the Haredi, or ultra-Orthodox, Jews confront the secular Jews.

What will the government do to heal these social divisions? Is it simply a matter of reaffirming the old social hierarchies, or must new models of society be elaborated? What will most appeal to voters in a country where the voter base is rapidly changing from what it once was?

The Future of the Sinai

What is the Sinai Peninsula?

The Sinai Peninsula, often known simply as Sinai, is a large desert region in the Eastern Mediterranean bounded by the Gulf of Suez in the west, the Gulf of Aqaba in the east, the Mediterranean Sea to the north, and the Red Sea to the south.²⁴ In the early 1900s, large oil reserves were discovered in Sinai, which would eventually become one of the peninsula's most prized resources. Beyond oil, Sinai contains some mineral ores, such as

²³ Arian, Alan. "Were the 1973 Elections in Israel Critical?" *Comparative Politics* 8, no. 1 (1975): 152-65.

²⁴ "Sinai Peninsula." *The Encyclopedia Britannica*.

manganese and uranium, that could also be utilized²⁵.

The Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran are key commercial waterways for both regional as well as global maritime trade.²⁶ The Suez Canal is crucial for the passage of merchant ships from the Mediterranean into the Arabian Sea and onto the Indian Ocean, as well as vice versa. Because of this huge volume of international shipping traffic through the canal, the holder of the canal possesses enormous leverage over the major consumer economies of the West.

Why Does Israel Have Sinai?

At the end of the 1946-1949 Independence War, the terms of the Egyptian-Israeli armistice agreement stipulated that the border would be drawn from the town of Rafah in the north to the town of Taba in the south. This left Sinai under the exclusive control of the Egyptians.²⁷

Although Israel had accepted the terms of the armistice in 1949, the fact that Sinai was under Egyptian control became increasingly problematic for the Israelis. Shipping through the Straits of Tiran, which controls traffic through the Gulf of Aqaba, for Israeli merchants became more and more fraught as the Egyptians brought greater pressure to bear. With the Egyptians perched on the western shore, maritime traffic simply was not safe.²⁸

Finally, in late fall 1956, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion launched Operation Kadesh, a complicated international plot including both the British and the French, the aims of the Israelis was

simple: capture Sharm el-Sheikh on Sinai's southern tip and gain control of the Straits of Tiran.²⁹ Everything else was simply done to ensure the cooperation of the British and French.

The Israeli operation was by and large successful. Most of the strategically important points in Sinai were captured by Israeli paratroopers or armored units. However, the British and French blundered badly, and everything unraveled from there.³⁰

With both the United States and the USSR uniting to oppose the Sinai Campaign, Israel was forced to give back control of the peninsula to Egypt and return to the 1949 armistice borders. However, in return, Israel was given a promise that the Straits of Tiran would remain open for commerce. Additionally, the UN agreed to dispatch a peacekeeping force to Sinai, the UN Emergency Force (UNEF)³¹.

This combative encounter reassured Israelis that the victory in 1949 had not been a fluke and that they had the military capabilities to confront Egypt. The Sinai Campaign also, paradoxically, demonstrated to the Arab world that Gamal Abdel Nasser, the then president of Egypt, was the great Arab hope for defeating Israel and the imperialists. On both sides, then, despite the Sinai Campaign ending in a more stable peace than, military adventurists came out of the expedition considerably emboldened and surer of their eventual victory.

Leading up to the 1967 Six-Day War, tensions began to rise again in the region. Israel repeatedly proclaimed its belief that any obstruction of Israeli commercial traffic

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Arab-Israeli General Armistice Agreement." Encyclopedia.com.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Operation Kadesh - the Suez Crisis 1956.", IDF & Defense Establishment Archives.

³⁰ Reynolds, Paul. "Suez: End of Empire." BBC.

³¹ "FIRST UNITED NATIONS EMERGENCY FORCE (UNEF I) - Background (Summary)." Middle East-UNEF I. United Nations.

through the Straits of Tiran would be a just cause for war.

Then, in May 1967, Nasser began to remilitarize large portions of Sinai and also, provocatively, requested the removal of the UNEF, which was stationed at the Israeli-Egyptian border. Simultaneously, he announced that commercial traffic through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran bound for Israel would no longer be allowed passage rights, essentially blockading the Israeli city of Eilat and severely affecting Israel's overseas commercial trade. Additionally, Gamal Abdel Nasser invited King Hussein of Jordan to sign a mutual defense pact, and Iraq followed suit soon after.³²

Then, on June 5, 1967, Israel launched a preemptive attack on Egypt. The Israeli Air Force (IAF) caught their Egyptian counterparts off-guard and in a couple of sorties destroyed over 90 percent of the Egyptian air units in the region before they could even take off.³³

At the same time, Israel reinvaded Sinai. Unable to have his troops operate in Sinai without any kind of air support, Nasser was forced to reluctantly withdraw his troops from the peninsula, which now was once again back in Israeli hands. The fighting continued until the UN Security Council requested a ceasefire on June 7, which was accepted on the same day by Israel and then by Egypt on the next day.³⁴

The Six-Day War, although relatively short, once again devastated the Arab countries just as the Sinai Campaign had, while Israel came out that much more

confident in the military edge it believed it held over its neighbors.

Egyptian casualties amounted to more than 11,000 soldiers while Israel lost approximately 700 of their own.³⁵ Furthermore, Egypt had taken severe losses in terms of military materiel, with many of its airbases and equipment stores wrecked by that initial IAF attack.

Regionally, Israel once again maintained control of the Sinai peninsula and rose up as the predominant military power in the region.

The Situation in Sinai Today

Following the Six-Day War, Israel began to develop areas within Sinai, setting up a few air and naval bases in the region of its own.³⁶ Egypt, meanwhile, found itself with a new president, Anwar el-Sadat, after Nasser died of a heart attack in 1970.³⁷

Sadat recognized that Egyptian morale was low both among the public and in the army. To improve the nation's spirit, Sadat knew that Sinai had to be returned to Egyptian ownership.³⁸ However, given the lack of military resources, he also knew that Egypt would not be able to take back the entire peninsula at this point in time.³⁹

Sadat opened new diplomatic relations with the United States and, at the same time, turned to Syria's newly-installed Hafez Al-Assad and his sponsor, the Soviet Union, for support.⁴⁰ Together, the Egyptians the Syrians began to form an alliance for stronger military cooperation, and Egypt hoped that when their own forces in the south were reckoned together with the

³² "The October Arab-Israeli War of 1973: What happened?" Al-Jazeera.

³³ Ibid.

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³⁵ "Six Day War." Encyclopedia Britannica.

³⁶ "Israel, Palestine and the Occupied Territories." Global Policy Forum.

³⁷ "From the archive, 29 September 1970: President Nasser dies of heart attack." The Guardian.

³⁸ "Sadat turns to war" The Guardian.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Meron Medzini, "Israel's Eminence Grise: Yisrael Galili and the Evolution of Israeli Foreign Policy, 1967-77."

Syrian forces in the north, to regain at least some control of Sinai.

The Argument for Keeping Sinai

The calculus that is important to keep in mind is the potential value of a hypothetical peace versus those benefits which Israel is currently enjoying because of its position in Sinai.

Since 1967 and the recapture of Sinai, Israel has established several military bases in the peninsula in order to serve as tripwires and first lines of defense should another attempt to conquer the coastal strip be launched.⁴¹ The Israeli military planners like to refer to this as Israeli's strategic depth and argue that to surrender it would be irresponsible, especially given that there is a new and as-yet untested Egyptian regime in Cairo.

In addition to the military development, various Israeli civilian settlements are dotted throughout Sinai.⁴² In order to return Sinai to Egypt, the settlers would have to be relocated and their homes destroyed. This would likely cause an enormous domestic outcry that would be a thorn in the side of any government which proposed it.

Sinai also, as mentioned before, is home to abundant oil and other natural resource deposits which mainland Israel is quite lacking in.⁴³ Especially after the numerous conflicts within the last three decades, the need to hold onto these resources and prevent them from being developed militarily by the Egyptians is particularly pertinent.

Returning Sinai would also not only result in a net gain to the stock of Egyptian war materiel, but also a hit to Israel's trading

accounts. In a country such as Israel, which is still struggling to develop economically and integrate the hundreds of thousands of refugees it received in the 1940s and 1950s, those funds are critical.

Finally, it is important to hold onto Sinai simply because holding on Sinai means holding onto the Suez Canal, which is important for trade. Issues over access to this canal have been one of the primary factors in prior military confrontations with Egypt.⁴⁴ Keeping Sinai would ensure Israeli ability to engage in economic activity with its business partners.

The Argument for Returning Sinai

In the nearly three decades that Israel and Egypt have both been independent countries, military confrontation and conflict have plagued their relationship. Egypt has made it very clear that it regards the return of Sinai as vital to its national interests and to any chances of peace.

Without peace, Israel will need to be constantly on guard for an attack that inevitably will come from Egypt whenever it feels it is capable in order to regain its lost land.

In early-stage negotiations with Israeli representatives, Sadat had indicated that were Sinai to be returned, he could contemplate a real peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. With Egypt weaker now more than ever before, perhaps now is the time to take him up on this potential offer.

Sadat has also opened channels of negotiation with the United States, so it would seem that he is taking the prospect of peace quite seriously.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the international community seems to be favoring a peace

⁴¹ Koven, Ronald, "To Israeli Military, Air Bases in Sinai are Key Issue." Washington Post, Jan 31, 1978.

⁴² Sheldon Kirshner, "Israel's Peace Treaty with Egypt 40 Years On," The Blogs, *Times of Israel*, March 26, 2019

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/israels-peace-treaty-with-egypt-40-years-on/>.

⁴³ See footnote 1.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ See footnote 3.

deal, one that Egypt would accept. Tired of skyrocketing oil prices and the general incredible costs of war in the region surrounding Israel, the United States seems to be pushing Israel to take the offer of a peace treaty. With the United States being one of Israel's major backers, Israel cannot afford to lose its U.S. support and aid.

Coming to terms with Egypt would furthermore be a major step in Israel's diplomatic quest to gain formal recognition of statehood from its Arab neighbors.

And lastly, even though Israel has been triumphant in every war it has so far fought, each war further exhausts its resources and results in far too many dead Israeli soldiers being returned to their families in pinewood boxes. Returning the Sinai peninsula would hopefully end the cycle of bloodshed in the region, increase Israel's standing among the international community, and form a peaceful alliance with the strongest Arab nation in the region.

The Future of the Golan

What is the Golan?

The Golan Heights is a rocky plateau that overlooks both Syria and Israel. It borders Syria to the northeast and Israel to the southwest. The region is sparsely populated with a mixture of Israelis and formerly-Syrian Arabs. The position of the area relative to the two nations—nearly within artillery range of the Syrian capital of Damascus and immediately towering over major Israeli population centers in the Galilee—means that it is one of the areas that are most critical to the conflicts between Israel and the Arab states. It has been an area of contention between the two nations for many years, is a central focus of the conflict

between the nations throughout the history of the State of Israel.⁴⁶

During the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel captured the Golan from Syria. This victory for Israel only increased the pressure from the Arab states, as they still maintained an interest in regaining control over the Golan and the other territories Israel conquered in the war. In the weeks after gaining control, the cabinet in Israel held secret deliberations over whether or not the Golan should be returned in exchange for a peace treaty. The government of Israel decided that it was in their best interest to cede control of the Golan Heights in order to protect Israel from yet another war being fought over the territory.⁴⁷ The basic premise of this idea was the land-for-peace formula: Israel would give up land in exchange for peace with its Arab neighbors.

However, the Arab state's response that was issued as a result of the 1967 Arab Summit in Khartoum was not at all promising. Their response was the famous "three no's"—"no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiation with Israel."⁴⁸ This refusal by the Arab states to engage on Israel reflects the major source of conflict since the creation of the State of Israel. This negative response further complicated the situation, making it necessary to reopen the discussion of controlling the Golan.

It is now important to explore how successful it would be to offer the return of the territory to Syria. The current goal is to decide whether returning the Golan has the ability to appease Syria's Hafez al-Assad enough to prevent a possible war between Syria, and, by extension, Egypt, and Israel.

⁴⁶ Lubell, Maayan. "Explainer: What Is the Significance of the Golan Heights."

⁴⁷ Center for Israel Education, "The Israeli Government Designed Peace Plan Devised After the June 1967 War."

⁴⁸ Meital, Yoram, "The Khartoum Conference and Egyptian Policy After the 1967 War: A Reexamination."

Returning the Golan

One major issue with controlling the Golan is that it is the home of many former Syrian nationals, particularly a major Druze population. Despite historically good relations between the State of Israel and the Druze community, which is one of the few Arab communities to send significant numbers of their young men off for service in the IDF, the Druze in the Golan are exceptional. They are resistant to Israeli administration, with large numbers of them refusing to take Israeli citizenship despite offers from the government.⁴⁹ It has been argued that it is not practical to exert control over the ex-Syrian Druze population on the Golan without even more tensions arising between the nations.

On the other hand, there is a large number of Israelis who have moved into the Golan since the Six-Day War.⁵⁰ This mixture of people within the region complicates the politics of the issue. Because of this, it is necessary to make a decision on how to deal with the newly gained territory in a timely fashion, so as to not escalate unease between Syria and Israel.

Returning the Golan Heights would surely be a gesture of peace towards Syria. However, would it be enough to prevent a possible war over the region? And if it is not enough to completely prevent war, is it enough to at least postpone a war in order to be able to more comprehensively prepare? As delegates, it must be decided whether the mere possibility of peace, at least temporarily, is worth the loss of territory that would accompany returning the region to Syria. With the Khartoum Summit's determination that there would be no peace, recognition, and negotiation with Israel, it

may still be in Israel's favor to return the Golan Heights.

Even if it is not possible to achieve complete peace between Syria and Israel, it may be possible to make strides in that direction, with agreements about the sources of water and natural resources within the region, as well as the possibility of complete demilitarization of the region by both nations.

Multiple stipulations may be necessary to move towards peace when returning the region to protect the interests of Israel. These should be focused on the security for Israeli citizens, military strategy, and the access to the resources of the area.

Keeping the Golan

The Golan gives Israel a strategic military advantage over Syria, in that southern Syria, including the capital city, Damascus, is visible from the top of the heights.⁵¹ This allows Israel to monitor the movement of Syrian troops, which would be essential in the case of a war against Syria. Israel's ability to gain intelligence is absolutely crucial to plan military attacks or defensive strategies. In the same vein, Syria regaining the Golan would allow them to gain more information about the movements and strategies of Israeli troops, allowing them to have a major advantage in the case of a war. Considering the histories of the nations, it may be detrimental to allow such a large advantage to be given to Syria, especially because peace can never be guaranteed. Military advantages are an important topic to consider when deciding whether to return the territory due to the constant threat of war and tensions between Syria and Israel.

⁴⁹ Oster, Marcy, et al. "The Golan Heights, Explained."

⁵⁰ Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Golan Heights." Encyclopedia Britannica.

⁵¹ "Golan Heights profile" BBC, March 25, 2019.

Given the sparse population of the region, it also provides a security buffer between Israel and Syria, which is necessary to protect Israeli citizens from the effects of the strained relations between the two neighboring countries. Prior to 1967, when Syria occupied the region, they routinely subjected adjacent Israeli communities to rocket bombardment and *fedayeen*, or self-sacrificer, attacks from across the border.⁵²

This aggression is surely not permissible and must be combatted. If Syria is able to populate the region, it may become much easier for an invasion of Israel. Assad, along with leaders of the other Arab states, has made it clear that he does not recognize Israel, leaving the constant threat of war between the two nations. In the case that Israel decides to return the Golan, how will it be ensured that citizens remain safe from military attacks by Syria, both within the Golan Heights and in the Upper Galilee?

The area lies in an area of naturally fertile soil, with the Yarmouk River, a major tributary of the Jordan River.⁵³ For this reason, access to the natural resources of the region is of critical importance to both Syria and Israel. Maintaining control of this area would help Israel overall, allowing for increased irrigation. It is also true that giving control of the Golan back to Syria has the potential to be detrimental to Israel's agricultural development strategies.

This has been the case in the past when, in 1964, Syria—in conjunction with other Arab states—began the Headwater Diversion Plan which would block the waters from the Jordan River from reaching the Sea of Galilee, effectively slowing Israel's attempts to build a national water carrier which would help irrigate the northern Negev area.⁵⁴ This irrigation was necessary

to help feed the hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees Israel was absorbing from the European concentration camps and the collapse of Jewish communities throughout the Arab world. This act of aggression against the State of Israel does not augur a positive future in regard to the resources and fertile nature of the Golan. One issue that needs to be considered is the potential for Syria to dam the headwaters of the Jordan River again. If Israel has control of the land, then the Arab states will not have this option. There may also be ways to create a conditional agreement with Syria, where in return for the Golan, there is some partial control retained of the natural resources of the region.

The Response to Terror

The General Atmosphere

On September 6, 1972, 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team were murdered by Palestinian terrorists at the Munich Olympics in Germany. This attack was carried out by the Black September Organization, a Palestinian terrorist group tied to Yasser Arafat.⁵⁵ At the same time, a large number of Palestinians had emigrated to Lebanon and the PLO had become more organized.

⁵²Bloomberg, Ivan Levingston. "Analysis Why the Golan Heights Matter to Israel, Syria and Trump."

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ "1964-1982: 'Water Wars' and Territorial Adjustments." United Nations University

⁵⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica, "Munich Massacre."

The Munich Massacre

The Munich Olympics were the first Olympics to be held in Germany since the 1936 games in Berlin. Hitler infamously used the Berlin games to prop up Nazi ideology. 1936 included blatantly anti-Semitic and racist elements. The return to Germany was supposed to be symbolic of the change the country had undergone.⁵⁶

The first week of the games continued without incident. However, on September 5, 1972, eight Palestinian militants scaled a fence surrounding the Olympic village.⁵⁷ They disguised themselves as athletes and used forged keys in order to infiltrate the residences of Israeli athletes and take them hostage. While all of this unfolded, the International Olympic Committee insisted that the games continue.⁵⁸

The terrorists demanded the release of over 200 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons, two prisoners from German prisons, and a plane to fly them to a safe destination in the Middle East.⁵⁹ German police attempted to rescue the hostages but this rescue attempt resulted in a shootout that left all the Israeli hostages dead. 11 Israeli citizens were murdered in Munich, as well as a West German policeman.⁶⁰

The massacre of the Israeli Olympic athletes had a particularly devastating on Israeli morale. Less than 30 years ago, Jews were the victims of a massive, industrialized genocide in Germany, and this particular terrorist attack brought up bitter memories. Additionally, many felt that the fact that the massacre happened on such a public stage was humiliating. As a result, many Israelis now feel that is important to project an

international image of strength during this time.

The government is currently considering taking up covert revenge operations against the Black September Organization with the goal of assassinating its members.⁶¹ The hope is that by bringing these people to justice, the Israeli government can give peace and comfort to the victims' families and boost the country's morale, as well as send a strong message of deterrence.

However, reprisal operations of this sort are not without their attendant problems. The main target of the Mossad right now is Ali Hassan Salameh, who is believed to have orchestrated the Munich Massacre.⁶² The government currently believes that Salameh is located somewhere in Norway, but there is a chance its intelligence is faulty. If the Mossad chooses to go through with the assassination, one must assume there is a chance that they will assassinate the wrong person.⁶³

Changes in Palestinian Resistance

In 1970, long-running low-intensity battles between the Palestinian refugees living in Jordan and the Jordanian government over the legitimacy of the Hashemite monarchy erupted into a ten-day civil war known as Black September.⁶⁴ The aforementioned terrorist organization was named after this event.

In the aftermath, many Palestinian leaders fled to Lebanon, including Yassar Arafat, who was head of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).⁶⁵ The PLO is an umbrella Palestinian political organization that has since its inception in

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, "Operation Wrath of God."

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ The New York Times, "Life and Death of a Terrorist."

⁶⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica, "Jordan - From 1967 to Civil War."

⁶⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica, "Yasser Arafat."

1964 waged a guerilla war against Israel.⁶⁶ In recent years, more militant factions within the PLO have gained increasing influence.⁶⁷ Members of the PLO, namely the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) have conducted several terrorist attacks in the past.⁶⁸

Israel has limited options in the way it can deal with the threat posed by the PLO, the Black September Organization, and other international Palestinian terror groups. One potential line of action is to invade Lebanon. However, to invade another country's borders is a serious decision not to be taken lightly. Many Israeli soldiers would die in such an operation. Currently, while terrorism has remained ever-present in the lives of Israeli citizens, the numbers are still relatively small.

In the past five years, 226 Israeli citizens have been killed in terror attacks.⁶⁹ While each death is painful, a potential war would likely result in even more casualties.

However, with an election pending, it may make sense for the current government to take a harder stance on terror. One way is by launching more reprisal operations and appearing to take every possible measure to secure the safety of Israeli civilians.

Another way to deal with the threat is to try to negotiate with Lebanon politically. Lebanon is currently fragmented and dealing with sectarian violence between Christians, Shi'as, and Sunnis. The influx of Palestinian refugees has exacerbated tensions further.⁷⁰

Israel currently has cold but stable relations with the Lebanese government.

However, the Lebanese government is as unstable as it comes. Rumors have it that a civil war is brewing in Lebanon.⁷¹ Is it worth trying to negotiate with a government that seems to be so fragile?

Domestic Issues

Immigration and Social tensions

Since the establishment of the state, Israel's population has more than doubled.⁷² Israel has one of the highest ratios of foreign-born-to-native-born populations.⁷³ The two largest sources of immigration are Holocaust survivors and Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Most arrived in the country in the 1940s and 1950s.

Since then, the economy has been growing rapidly. Additionally, the economies of the West Bank and Gaza have become more integrated into the Israeli economy as many Palestinians have participated in the Israeli labor force.⁷⁴ Overall, non-Jewish citizens make up approximately 15 percent of the country.⁷⁵ Israel also faces many internal divisions due to its already large and rapidly growing Haredi Jewish population.

Jews from Arab Countries

After the 1948 war, anti-Semitism increased dramatically all over the Arab world. Jews were persecuted across North Africa and the Middle East, with Zionism even becoming a crime in Iraq.⁷⁶ As a result, many Mizhrai Jews chose to flee to the newly-established State of Israel.

⁶⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica, "Palestinian Liberation Organization."

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "1967-1993: Major Terror Attacks."

⁶⁹ Jewish Virtual Library, "Number of Terrorism Fatalities in Israel (1920 - Present)."

⁷⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica, "Lebanon after independence."

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Jewish Virtual Library, "Jewish & Non-Jewish Population of Israel/Palestine (1517 - Present)."

⁷³ OECD, "Israel."

⁷⁴ Farsakh, "Palestinian Labor Flows to the Israeli Economy: A Finished Story?"

⁷⁵ Jewish Virtual Library, "Jewish & Non-Jewish Population of Israel/Palestine (1517 - Present)."

⁷⁶ Jewish Virtual Library, "Fact Sheet: Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries."

However, this mass influx of immigrants would lead to many social issues and tensions. These refugees came to Israel without any property or money. Many of them lived in refugee camps called *ma'abarot* for nearly a decade.⁷⁷

Additionally, because many of these Jews shared both their culture and language with the Arab enemy, they faced a tremendous stigma in Israeli society.⁷⁸ Even worse, Jews from Arab countries are vastly underrepresented in the government and other important sectors.⁷⁹

Jews from the Middle East are more likely to experience poverty and consequently become enmeshed in crime to make a living than Ashkenazi Jews who came from Europe.⁸⁰ In 1959, a race riot broke out between Ashkenazi and Middle Eastern Jews over the shooting of Moroccan Jewish immigrants by police.⁸¹ Ever since, tensions have been on the rise.

A new fringe ultra-leftist political organization called the Israeli Black Panthers (inspired by the American Black Panthers) has begun staging tense demonstrations in Jerusalem against what it believes to be the racist policies from the government.⁸²

They accused Prime Minister Golda Meir of not considering the Middle Eastern Jews who came from Arabic-speaking communities and had been Israeli citizens since the founding of the State to be as deserving of public support as new Yiddish- and Russian-speaking immigrants from the Soviet Union.⁸³

In response, Prime Minister Golda Meir met with the leaders of the Panthers to talk about their social and economic struggles. Afterward, she stated that the leaders of the Panthers were “not nice people.”⁸⁴ Many took this to mean that Meir continues to harbor prejudices against Middle Eastern Jews.

While the Black Panthers may not represent the entire Middle Eastern Jewish community, their protests make a lot of noise and make the Israeli public deeply uncomfortable. In an election year, this is not something the government wants.

At the same time, Jews from the Middle East are socially conservative in comparison to their European counterparts.⁸⁵ Polls show that they are more hawkish in terms of Israeli foreign policy and that they support further integration of religion and state. These new immigrants could prove a serious threat to the ruling left-wing Labor party in the upcoming election.⁸⁶

⁷⁷ Jewish Virtual Library, “Ma’abarot”

⁷⁸ My Jewish Learning, “Mizrahim.”

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Colin Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel*.

⁸¹ Schechter, “July 9, 1959: Wadi Salib Riots.”

⁸² Haaretz, “A U.S. Guerrilla Filmmaker Caught Israel’s Black Panthers on Tape. Fifty Years On, the Footage Can Finally Be Seen.”

⁸³ Francine Klagsbrun, *Lioness: Golda Meir and the Nation of Israel*, 554.

⁸⁴ Haaretz, “A U.S. Guerrilla Filmmaker Caught Israel’s Black Panthers on Tape. Fifty Years On, the Footage Can Finally Be Seen.”

⁸⁵ My Jewish Learning, “Mizrahim in Israel.”

⁸⁶ Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History*, 362.

Arab Citizens of Israel

Now that the Arab population living in Israel has finally been granted equal citizenship rights, its political participation has been increasing. In particular, many Arab leaders are rising to oppose Absentees' Property Law, which allows the Israeli government to seize the land of those who fled the country during the Independence War and turn it into state land.⁸⁷

Additionally, many Israeli Jews see Arab citizens of Israel as a potential fifth column and are worried that they will never truly be loyal to the state of Israel.⁸⁸ However, the aforementioned (Arab) Druze population has a special important status in Israeli society.⁸⁹ Prior to their mandatory conscription in 1956, Druze volunteered for the IDF. Since the draft was extended to them, the belief that military service was a positive privilege that was bestowed only on those in whom the government trusted.⁹⁰

Personal Status, Issues

Upon the founding of the State of Israel, the government crafted a "status quo" with the Haredi community promising that they would be allowed to exercise religious authority over a small number of matters so long as they agreed to subordinate themselves to secular authority in all other matters.⁹¹

Because of this deal, currently, public transportation is shut down on Shabbat and the Jewish holidays. It is also forbidden to farm pigs in the country. However, this has created tensions between the Haredi and secular population as many secular people feel that religiously-inspired laws are imposing on their freedoms.⁹²

⁸⁷ Adalah, "Absentees' Property Law."

⁸⁸ Krauss, "Israel's Arabs Poised to Gain New Voice after Tight Election."

⁸⁹ Atashi, "The Druze in Israel: The Question of Compulsory Military Service."

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Eglash, "Israel's Battle between Religious and Secular Jews Escalates with Ban on Saturday Shopping."

⁹² Sales, "Majority of Israelis Unhappy with Ultra-Orthodox Influence on Society."

Questions to Consider

1. *Should the Mossad assassinate Hassan Salameh?*

To reiterate, Hassan Salameh orchestrated the Munich Olympics attacks. Currently, the Israeli intelligence organization, the Mossad, is fairly sure that it has located Salameh in Norway. If it turns out the Mossad kills the wrong person, the Israeli government will have taken an innocent life and embarrassed the country on a public stage.

2. *Should Israel invade Lebanon, negotiate with Lebanon, or do nothing?*

With the PLO leadership recently decamping from Lebanon after the Black September and taking up residence in Lebanon, what should Israel do to prevent the security situation along the Lebanese border from deteriorating any further?

3. *How much should Israel worry about its international image in its attempt to combat terrorism?*

When conducting international operations, the number of variables is so high that the chances of pure success are rather low. Just how much international pressure is the government willing to have brought to bear against Israel if it embarks on an international program of hunting down Palestinian terrorists? How will the government decide who is worth going after and who is better off left alone?

4. *What can the government do to alleviate discrimination against Jews from Arab countries?*

Although most of the large-scale Jewish communities that originally lived in North Africa and across the Middle East have collapsed, significant communities remain behind, subject to the whims of their home governments. This is most especially true in North Africa. What is the government willing to do to help protect these Jewish communities? Will the government policy be to help them hold on as long in these countries as they wish to? Or should the government encourage immediate immigration to Israel or another safe third country?

5. *Should the government allow the Black Panther protests to continue given the history of violence and delinquency?*

With an election just over the horizon, what is the most prudent government policy? Do the Israeli Black Panthers represent a real segment of the population that must be accommodated into the Israeli political system? More significantly, perhaps, will this be how they are allowed to do that, on these terms? Or are they just bomb-throwing radicals who can safely enough be marginalized?

Conclusion

So with elections rapidly approaching, the cabinet is faced with many difficult questions. Will being more dovish in terms of the territories possibly mean the chance of a breakthrough in relations that could lead to a clampdown in the facilitation of international terror?

Or, conversely, could become more hawkish in terms of the territories and embarking on an ambitious program of overseas reprisal operations actually bring about a stable sense of deterrence? All of these questions are interlinked.

So too are the social questions. If Israeli society is so deeply divided, will it be able to stand up to the pressures of mounting terror attacks, or will it splinter? How can the government best promote the flourishing of the Israeli economy and Israeli society even as Israel itself seems increasingly besieged from all sides?

This is the charge that the government must answer, and it must answer soon. The opposition, led by the firebrand politician Menachem Begin, is already positioning itself to assume be able to assume the reins of power.

Ariel Sharon, the popular general recently retired from his IDF service in the country's south, has recently joined with Begin to form the Likud, or consolidation, party.

The Likud boasts strong support among working-class Mizrachim, who view the current government with disdain because of the long history of discrimination and prejudice they accuse it of.

The threat is that with the rise of politics like those espoused by the Israeli Black Panthers, Mizrahi voters will

increasingly swing as a bloc against the ruling government. For the moment, many Mizrahi voters identify with the government as an ideal to aspire to. If circumstances change and they begin to instead create their own institutions, the government would be deeply imperiled.

The question then is how to stop this from happening. A breakthrough on the security front? Maybe that will activate traditional behaviors of voting that will remind voters of how the government has always, so far, been able to keep the country safe.

Or perhaps the announcement of a successful overseas reprisal? Instead of highlighting the admittedly checkered past, that would foreground the competence of the government today and force home to the public the idea that this government is the only reliable option on the ballot.

All these choices are open before the members of this cabinet.



Topic B:

Defending Israel's Place in the Middle East

Introduction

What follows is a report by the Planning Directorate of the IDF General Staff detailing a likely worst-case scenario should the government be caught off guard and a two-front, coordinated war be launched against Israel by both the Egyptians and the Syrians. While the General Staff does not consider the below scenario likely, it has thought it prudent to present it to the government nonetheless for its inspection and deliberation.

The General Staff continues to believe that the general risk of the outbreak of war remains low. This is because, despite tensions, the strategic picture at the moment very much favors Israel. Sadat has not yet received his bombers, nor his Scuds, from the Soviets and so he would be extremely vulnerable in a war with Israel. This pushes him out of forming an alliance with Syria, and it is only with an Egyptian alliance that Syria would conceivably enter into outright hostilities with Israel.

The likelier scenarios contemplated by the General Staff include a confrontation with PLO forces in southern Lebanon and a situation in which the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan collapses and is replaced by a more radical regime, such as was threatened during the Black September.

Still, in the spirit of its mission of keeping the government fully apprised, the General Staff humbly submits the following report to the government.

The Beginning

In the early hours of Friday, October 5, 1973, Lieutenant General David Elazar, the IDF chief of staff, issued an order taking the IDF onto C alert. This canceled all weekend leave passes granted to active-duty servicemen and, crucially, readied Israel's emergency mobilization network. Just one day earlier, at the weekly general staff meeting held in downtown Tel-Aviv, the only agenda item had been combating the rise in reported violations of the military dress code.⁹³

With the C alert order, Israel began preparing for a war that until that very morning had been unthinkable. As Eli Zeira, Elazar's chief of military intelligence asserted, strategic logic prohibited Egyptian President Anwar Sadat from launching a war against Israel at that time. Without the Soviet fighter-bombers with which to neutralize the decisive edge the Israeli Air Force (IAF) possessed and the Scud missiles to menace Israel's population centers from afar, he could not ever hope to win a war.⁹⁴ So why would he start one?

No one answer was forthcoming, but it was becoming increasingly clear that starting a war was exactly what Sadat was intending. At 4:30 AM local time on Yom Kippur, October 6, Elazar was awoken by an urgent call placed by Zvi Zamir, the director of Israel's national intelligence agency. He had just met with a highly-placed source in the Egyptian regime and had gotten confirmation that a two-front war—both in

⁹³ Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004): 66.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

Sinai and on the Golan—would break out that same day.⁹⁵

At that moment, 180 miles south of Tel-Aviv, five Egyptian combat divisions—numbering 100,000 soldiers and 1,350 tanks—were preparing to launch an amphibious assault across the Suez Canal. Opposing them, spread across a more-than-100-mile front, were hardly 450 Israelis in fortifications that resembled nothing more than hardened observation posts.⁹⁶

Simultaneously, 90 miles to the north of Tel-Aviv, five Syrian combat divisions were also reading themselves for that day's mission: to cross the Purple Line, go over the Golan Heights, and plunge down to meet the Jordan River.⁹⁷ For this task, there were on hand 40,000 Syrian infantrymen supporting 1,400 tanks. Contesting their line of advance, spread along a 40-mile front, were 200 Israeli infantrymen supported by just 177 tanks.⁹⁸

At 9:25 AM on Yom Kippur, just as Jews all throughout Israel were drifting into their synagogues to pray that they are inscribed in the Book of Life for another year, the order to mobilize all of Israel's 260,000 reservists was given.⁹⁹ It would be a race against time. The combined Egyptian and Syrian attack had been scheduled for 2:00 PM.¹⁰⁰

The Battle on the Golan

Everyone knew that come the morning of Monday, October 8, the facts on the ground then would determine the course of the rest of the war. In fact, for all that the participants knew, the war could be over by then. Certainly, this is what the Syrian high command desired.

The Syrian battle plan was hyper-focused. In the first twelve hours of the war, all Syrian units were to advance as rapidly as possible to two vital strategic objectives: the B'not Yaakov and Arik bridges. These two bridges were the only fixed crossing points over the Jordan River capable of transferring military units from the Galilee to the Golan and vice versa.¹⁰¹

If the Syrians captured these, they could seal the Golan—trapping the IDF units positioned there as well as the, relatively few, Israeli civilians who lived there without the possibility of reinforcement—and rain rockets with relative impunity on the densely populated lower Galilee. Were this to happen, it would crush Israeli moral at the least and possibly threaten the viability of the state itself. Just the mere threat of it would give Syria immense leverage over Israel. Since the 1967 Six-Day War, Israelis had felt an increasing sense of security as the borders shifted further and further away from their major population centers.¹⁰² No one could predict what would happen if there was a return to what everyone felt where the bad old days.

Command Chaos

The man is nominally responsible for preventing this was Major General Yitzhak Hofi, commander of Northern Command. His headquarters were at Nafakh, the main Israeli base on the Golan that, also, lay just on the major line of approach towards the B'not Yaakov Bridge.¹⁰³

However, the commencement of the Syrian attack at 2:00 PM came as such a surprise to Northern Command that Hofi was actually in Tel-Aviv meeting with Elazar when the shelling began. According

⁹⁵ Ibid., 85-86.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 144.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 142.

⁹⁹ Rabinovich, 54 & 89.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 67.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 144.

¹⁰² Ibid., 8.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 144.

to the reports of frontline troops, the earth along the Purple Line began heaving, a terrifying vision of biblical proportions.¹⁰⁴

Ignominiously, the chain of command on the Golan immediately began breaking down. In his absence, Hofi had hurriedly passed operational command on the Golan to the commander of the already-in-place 188th Armored Brigade. However, the commander of the newly arrived 7th Armored Brigade did not seem to understand why he was receiving orders from an equal in rank and refused them. With no recognized commander in the field, chaos threatened to fall over the northern front before the first Syrian tanks even crossed over the Purple Line. And to some extent, that is exactly what happened. The man who found himself in command throughout the evening and night of October 6—through nothing except the sheer force of habit on the part of the field commanders—was Hofi's operations officer, a mere lieutenant colonel.¹⁰⁵ Crucially, this operations officer ordered, under the full imprimatur of Northern Command, the deployment of the bulk of the newly arrived forces to deploy to Quneitra. He did this barely half an hour after the opening Syrian barrage. His belief, based on some frontline reports but also heavily influenced by the assumptions of prior war games, was that the main Syrian offensive would drive through Quneitra onto B'not Yaakov.¹⁰⁶

Enemy Infiltration

This was an extremely costly mistake, to understate the point, that nearly led a total Israeli defeat on the Golan. First, around 5:00 PM—just hours after the Syrian advance began—Syrian helicopter-borne commandos captured the Mount Hermon intelligence outpost. This effectively blinded Northern Command, risked the exposure of Israel's entire military communications infrastructure to Syrian infiltration, and is still remembered as the single most humiliating episode of the Yom Kippur War.¹⁰⁷

Soon though, even the fall of Mount Hermon would be eclipsed. Deep into the night of the 6th and well into the small hours of the following morning, the forces arrayed along the northern sector of the Purple Line had been reporting bitter, and often desperate, fighting. They were holding on, however. Why was the southern sector so quiet?

The reason was that as night fell on the 6th the Syrian tanks began bypassing the Israelis positions, slipping around them en masse, rather than engaging them. This improbable strategy worked because the Israeli deployment had been so rapid that all the night-sight devices had been left behind.¹⁰⁸

By the small hours of the morning on October 7, then, the southern Golan had effectively been lost to the Syrians. Israeli military intelligence did not know how many Syrian units had infiltrated over the Purple Line under the cover of darkness, nor did they know where those forces might have gone.¹⁰⁹

These were dark hours, indeed. Syrian tanks were spotted from the shores of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 145.

¹⁰⁵ Rabinovich, 146.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 146.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 155.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 159-160.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 190.

the Kinneret perched on the very edge of the Golan, ready to plunge down into the Jordan valley and seize the Arik bridge at any minute.¹¹⁰ That would be the war right there.

The Battle on the Canal

The war was not proceeding any better in Sinai. Even if the battles were further from the major population centers, they were just as terrifying. Just as Mount Hermon fell in the north, each of the five Egyptian divisions had begun establishing their beachheads on the eastern bank of the canal.

Arik on the Canal

In Sinai, the commander of Southern Command up until very recently had been Ariel “Arik” Sharon, a famous Israeli tank commander even then.¹¹¹ In the Six-Day War, Sharon had won himself fame for his high-wire maneuvers in the battle of Umm-Katef, where he risked everything in order to press a decisive victory home. This was characteristic of his style: Sharon understood well, perhaps better than anyone else, wars of maneuver where victory was won fully only by the daring.¹¹²

It is almost comical then that Sharon, as southern commander, was made responsible for the Bar-Lev fortifications along the eastern bank of the canal. The idea of the Bar-Lev Line was position defense. The IDF would sit on the very bank of the canal as a deterrent to the Egyptians even thinking about raiding across it, and if they attempted to cross the IDF would be right there to push them back.¹¹³

However, this strategy was premised on the easy supremacy of Israeli units on the

canal over their Egyptian counterparts—an assumption which proved desperately lacking in the face of battle. This hubris is what led Elazar to declare the status quo on the canal in early 1973—roughly a 3 to 1 disparity in sheer manpower favoring the Egyptians—acceptable.¹¹⁴

Sharon fought this doctrine—although sharing in thinking Israeli units obviously superior to their Egyptian counterparts—but was still responsible for implementing it at Southern Command. So, when the outposts on the line—which, in a breathtaking display of arrogance, were called “fortresses” in the slang of the IDF¹¹⁵—needed repairs, Sharon dutifully repaired and reinforced them. This only deepened the IDF’s dependence on the Bar-Lev forts.

SAM Umbrellas

Another crutch the IDF relied on, particularly in Sinai, was the IAF—another hero of the Six-Day War. Military planners attached to the general staff considered the IAF their almost mystical problem solvers.¹¹⁶ When Sharon and others pointedly would ask what would happen if the Bar-Lev Line was overrun and the soldiers trapped, the answer was that the IAF would hold the Egyptians back for long enough, until reinforcements could be rushed down.

What these planners failed to understand was that the deployment of Soviet SA-6 surface-to-air (SAM) missile systems had fundamentally changed the environment the IAF would be operating in.¹¹⁷ For the first time since the 1948 Independence War, the IAF would seriously struggle to gain air superiority.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ David Landau, *Arik* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013): 96.

¹¹² Ibid., 37.

¹¹³ Ibid., 73.

¹¹⁴ Rabinovich, 7.

¹¹⁵ Landau, 74.

¹¹⁶ Rabinovich, 33.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Enter Gorodish

All these factors combined to place the commander of Southern Command on Yom Kippur, 1973 in a terrible position. That man was Major General Shmuel “Gorodish” Gonen. More so than any other senior Israeli official or policymaker, he saw the supposedly impossible unfold before his very eyes. From his headquarters, Gonen saw his front crumbling.

From the moment the first Egyptian infantrymen set foot on the Israeli side of the canal, things began going wrong—very wrong. It was then that the Egyptians revealed what would turn out to be the most lethal of their tactical innovations: the man-portable AT-3 Sagger anti-tank guided missile. Since the introduction of tanks to the battlefield in World War I, the greatest threats they had always faced had been opposing tanks. Nothing an individual soldier could feasibly carry would be capable of destroying a tank. Crew-served anti-tank guns were a threat, but they were highly visible targets themselves and largely immobile.¹¹⁸ Tanks then came to be treated largely as cavalry had in its day: it was assumed that enemy infantry formations could not withstand a massed charge and would have to break, which supporting infantry would exploit to overrun an enemy position. This doctrine came to be known as armor shock and dominated the thinking of Israeli military planners and strategists.¹¹⁹

The Sagers destroyed the fundamental assumptions of armor shock. And so as the rearward-deployed Israeli tanks surged forward to rescue the men in the Bar-Lev forts from being overrun,¹²⁰ it was the Israelis who were shocked when

they came under extremely accurate and very deadly anti-tank fire.

On the Waterline

With the Israeli armored units being held well back by the Sagger teams, the men in the forts—436 reservists, many of them non-combat soldiers, from Jerusalem¹²¹—were left stranded to face the full Egyptian onslaught, alone. Their pleas over the radio for relief were excruciating to hear. Gonen insisted that they hold the waterline.

This directive was disastrous. Instead of having the men fall back to link up and concentrate their forces, each outpost—consisting of only a few dozen men each—fought its own battle against a vastly numerically superior Egyptian force.¹²² This was clearly a losing strategy.

At 6:30 PM, Elazar authorized Gonen to order an evacuation from the waterline. But Gonen issued no such orders. He still held on to the rationale that the Bar-Lev forts had been constructed under, that it was vital that the IDF takes the war back onto Egyptian territory and to do that they would need to hold the eastern bank of the canal.¹²³

The agony in the water-line forts would continue, then. As night fell on the night of October 6, the men in the forts hunkered down for what would be the longest night of many of their lives.

Decisions

Late Saturday, the general staff assembled in Tel-Aviv. The agenda: to decide how to deploy Israel’s remaining unassigned reserve forces. Their options were sharply limited, largely because in many ways the reserve forces were assigning themselves.

¹¹⁸ Rabinovich, 108.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 35.

¹²⁰ Landau, 95.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Rabinovich, 111.

¹²³ Ibid., 119.

The shock that accompanied the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War was near-total. That said, the public rallied impressively. As word of the mobilization spread, greatly helped actually by the fact that (nearly) everyone was gathered in their synagogue, men did not wait for their individual summons. In small groups, members of the same unit took their own initiative, gathered up their friends, and made their own way to their rally points. Like the militia bells of old which mustered the canton's men-at-arms when danger was spotted, units organically formed up—not always entirely correctly—and advanced toward the closest front.¹²⁴ All along the way, these reservists headed for battle were cheered by their elderly, their wives, and their children as masses turned out along the major roads to see the soldiers off. These were not just the Jewish Israelis, either. News reports record that a convoy passing by the predominately Arab city of Nazareth on the way to the Golan was greeted by Arab women with soft drinks and cakes for the soldiers.¹²⁵

Still, the general staff had to decide what to do with two forces: the IAF and the country's one remaining reserve armored division.

Air Superiority

With the IAF, the choices were agonizing. It was clear that the SAM missile umbrella that both the Egyptians and the Syrians were operating under would have to be breached if the IAF were to be able to reach the fronts and support the ground forces. But given the simple constraints of the number of pilots the IAF had, they could not successfully go after both.

And it was a live question whether they should go after either at all. No less a figure than the very Commander of the IAF believed that an attack on either SAM umbrella—north or south—even at full strength would be at best extremely costly, and at worst merely suicidal.¹²⁶ It would be far better, he argued, to preserve the IAF's full strength and wait until ground forces had destroyed the SAM batteries to unleash the IAF on the defenseless Egyptians.

Assad on the Golan?

The choices with the reserve armored division were no less painful to contemplate. With seemingly both fronts falling apart, how best to use a measly single division?

The seemingly endless hostility the Syrian regime exhibited towards Israel made the prospect of a return to them squatting directly over the Galilee and immediately on the Jordan River's headwaters a truly terrifying one. In fact, Syrian attempts to dam the headwaters of Jordan had been one of the proximate causes of the Six-Day War.¹²⁷

Accordingly, the reserve division should be sent up to the Golan at once. Seemingly buttressing this argument was the fact that the reports from the field were that, inexplicably from the Israeli point of view, the Syrians had stopped short of seizing the B'not Yaakov and Arik bridges. This meant that the window with which to reinforce the desperately overstretched Northern Command was still open, even if rapidly closing.

¹²⁴ Rabinovich, 190.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 336.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹²⁷ Robert O. Freedman, "Understanding the Contemporary Middle East and the Role of the Arab-Israeli Conflict in it," August 29, 2019, Gilman Hall, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD.

Arik in Ismailiyah?

However, this curious fact could also militate the other way. If the Syrians had not yet taken the bridges when they had been given the ideal opportunity, perhaps they did not intend to. If that was true, then it would be better to rush the reserve division to Sinai, where the aggression of the Egyptians was beyond all doubt.

Many still held onto what they believed the lessons of Operation Oz (“Courage”), a war game Sharon had conducted as southern commander in 1972, had been. Namely, these were that decisive victory would come when Egypt was forced to capitulate and that Egypt would only capitulate if Israeli forces re-crossed the canal and threatened Ismailiyah and/or Suez City.¹²⁸

Others felt that the division should be sent down to Sinai simply to relieve the men on the Bar-Lev Line. Many among the senior Israeli leadership, both in and out of uniform at that time, had served in the 1948 war. One of the strongest principles that all the participants in that conflict had taken away with them was that no one—not the dead and certainly not the living—could be abandoned to the enemy.¹²⁹

Nothing in the Israeli experience could be more painful than losing a soldier on the battlefield. In fact, the relationship between Sharon and Moshe Dayan, the minister of defense, as defined by it in 1952, when Sharon served as Dayan’s intelligence officer at Northern Command. One day, two soldiers from the command were kidnapped by the Jordanians. So, Sharon went out and personally kidnapped two Jordanian soldiers to make sure that the command’s soldiers came home safely.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Landau, 88.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

International Isolation

A peek beyond the immediate situation at the fronts revealed an even starker picture. Abroad, diplomatically, Israel was in a challenging position. In September 1973, two Palestinian terrorists had taken several Soviet Jewish emigres on their way to Israel hostage in Austria. They said that they would kill the hostages unless Austria shut down the camp the Jewish Agency used to facilitate the emigration of such emigres to Israel. Shockingly, the Austrians acceded to these demands. Golda Meir, the Israeli prime minister, was already in Europe at the time and so she flew to Vienna to personally confront the Austrians to reverse course and ask them to reopen the camp. Bruno Kreisky, the Austrian chancellor and himself of Jewish heritage, refused her to her face. Publicly defeated, she returned to Israel.¹³¹

Earlier that year, Meir had also picked a fight with American President Richard Nixon. The American president was at that time fighting with Congress to prevent the passage of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which was meant to pressure the Soviet Union to allow greater freedom of emigration for, among other groups, Soviet Jews. Nixon did not appreciate the constraints Jackson-Vanik would place upon his pursuit of détente and was furious when Meir refused to denounce the amendment during her White House visit in March.¹³² Relations since had been strained.

And then there was the Soviet Union itself. Even despite Egypt’s expulsion of its Soviet military advisors in July,¹³³ the Soviet Union was still likely to support Egypt and especially Syria, which was firmly in the

¹³¹ Francine Klagsbrun, *Lioness* (New York: Schocken Books, 2017): 613.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 612.

¹³³ Rabinovich, 25.

pro-Soviet orbit. Everyone was aware that past a certain red line, Soviet intervention to protect its clients would be likely. The question was where that line might be.

History Has Its Eyes on You

Everyone in the room that night knew what a wrong decision could mean. At one point around this time, Meir was reported to have said: “Jews, in general, are not loved; weak Jews even less so.” “They’ll throw us to the dogs” was her glum punchline.¹³⁴

Meir was not alone in feeling the weight of history. Elazar, her top general – whose own surname, El-azar, means “God-helps” – was thinking similarly. “The Third Commonwealth is in danger,” he is also reported to have said.¹³⁵ The Third Commonwealth was a reference to the State of Israel; the last Jewish commonwealth was destroyed in 70 CE, from which time on the Jews were exiled from their homeland for nearly the next 1,900 years.

There would be no second chances.

Questions to Consider

¹³⁴ Klagsbrun, 626.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 626.

1. *How, if at all, will the IAF deploy?*

Will the IAF attempt to target the Syrian SAM umbrella in the north (codename: Operation Dougman 5), the Egyptian SAM umbrella in the south (codename: Operation Tagar), both at once, or neither?

2. *How will the reserve armored division deploy?*

If the IAF strikes against one of the SAM umbrellas, will the reserve division follow up with an attack on that same front? Or will it be used to help reinforce the opposite front while the IAF softens whichever front it has targeted? Otherwise, how will the reserve division be deployed generally? Will it be split? Kept in the center of the country?

3. *Should the IDF retreat from the canal's waterline?*

Should the men in the Bar-Lev fortifications be ordered to hold on and await reinforcements? Should they be withdrawn? Should fresh forces go in to extract them, or should they self-evacuate? Should fresh forces replace them in the fortifications, or should they be abandoned altogether? What should the next line of defense be?

4. *Should the IDF mount a counteroffensive to recapture the Golan?*

Should the IDF blow up the B'not Yaakov and Arik bridges themselves to prevent the Syrians from pouring down into the Galilee? Or should the IDF just seal the Golan but not blow the bridges? Should the IDF mount a counteroffensive into the southern Golan? Should the IDF, having successfully retaken the Golan, push past the Purple Line? Should the IDF, if the opportunity arises, attack Damascus?

5. *How will the Cabinet prevent attacks against major Israeli population centers?*

Should the IDF be ordered to deploy and make ready its short-range missiles batteries? Covertly, or overtly? What payload(s) should be deployed on the warheads of those missiles? Will the Cabinet seek a pledge from an outside Power to intervene if the other side crosses a red line? What will that Power be? What will that red line be?

6. *Who will the Cabinet negotiate with, and under what conditions?*

The Kurds, to try to block the Iraqis from reinforcing the Syrians? The Jordanians, to minimize their involvement as far as possible and avoid a souring of relations? When to open negotiations with the European powers? The United States? What to negotiate *for* with these latter countries? What to say at the United Nations?

Conclusion

To reiterate, the above was submitted by the IDF General Staff's planning staff to describe for the government a worst-case scenario. It was submitted in the hopes that the government would understand what could reasonably be expected to happen in just such a scenario, and take steps now to correct any potential for error that the analysis may have highlighted.

The central issue raised by the analysis is the general state of Israeli military preparedness. Should an attack such as the one described above break out, would the Bar-Lev Line fail? Would the infiltration of the Golan really proceed that rapidly? Would Israel really lose air superiority?

The view presented above, represented by some of Israel's more cynical analysts, answers yes to all those questions. This is not the view of the majority of the General Staff. The General Staff continues to endorse, as it has endorsed for many years now, that the IDF is the greatest military force in the region and maintains a decisive military edge over all of Israel's opponents.

It is true that this view is being revisited more and more as cooperation between Egypt and Syria has clearly deepened, opening up the possibility that despite Sadat breaking off direct military cooperation with the Soviets he may still be receiving their support by proxy through Syria.

Still, it is the steadfast view of the Military Intelligence Directorate that even despite this deepened cooperation, and even despite the chance of continued Soviet support for Sadat, Israel remains safe so long as Sadat does not have the bombers and the Scuds.

The SAM batteries now deployed at either border do threaten to complicate this, but the Planning Directorate remains confident in IAF Plans Tagar and Dougman 5, those being against Egypt and Syria, respectively, to dismantle these missile umbrellas should war break out and should the IDF require air support.

In general, the IDF is confident that come what may, Israel is well prepared to handle any future conflict. Vigilance is all that is required.

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