

CONFLICT IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

The causes of the Six-Day War/Naksa

WHAT WERE THE CAUSES OF THE SIX-DAY WAR / NAKSA?





Arab states wanted revenge

Source 1: Extract from the preamble to the decisions adopted at the 1964 Arab League Summit in Cairo

'The establishment of Israel is the basic threat that the Arab nation in its entirety has agreed to forestall. And since the existence of Israel is a danger that threatens the Arab nation, the diversion of the Jordan waters by it multiplies the dangers to Arab existence. Accordingly, the Arab states have to prepare the plans necessary for dealing with the political, economic and social aspects, so that if necessary results are not achieved, collective Arab military preparations, when they are not completed, will constitute the ultimate practical means for the final liquidation of Israel.'



Arab states wanted revenge

Source 2: Statement by Syrian Defence Minister Hafez Assad, 20 May 1967

On 20 May 1967 the Syrian Minister of Defence announced:

"The Syrian Army, with its finger on the trigger, is united in the view that the battle must be speedily joined. The time has come to enter into the battle of liberation."



Zionists had always wanted a Greater Israel



Source 3:

Propaganda poster made by the Irgun, a Jewish terrorist organisation active from 1931-48. The map is of Greater Israel, which includes much of Jordan (then the Emirate of Transjordan)



Zionists had always wanted a Greater Israel

Source 4: The poem "The East Bank of the Jordan", written in 1929 by Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky

**As a bridge is held up by a pillar
As a man is kept erect by his spine
So the Jordan, the holy Jordan
Is the backbone of my Israel.**

**Two Banks has the Jordan –
This is ours and, that is as well.**

**Though my country may be poor and small
It is mine from head to foot.
Stretching from the sea to the desert
And the Jordan, the Jordan in the middle.**

**Two Banks has the Jordan –
This is ours and, that is as well.**

**From the wealth of our land there shall prosper
The Arab, the Christian, and the Jew,
For our flag is a pure and just one
It will illuminate both sides of my Jordan.**

**Two Banks has the Jordan –
This is ours and, that is as well.**

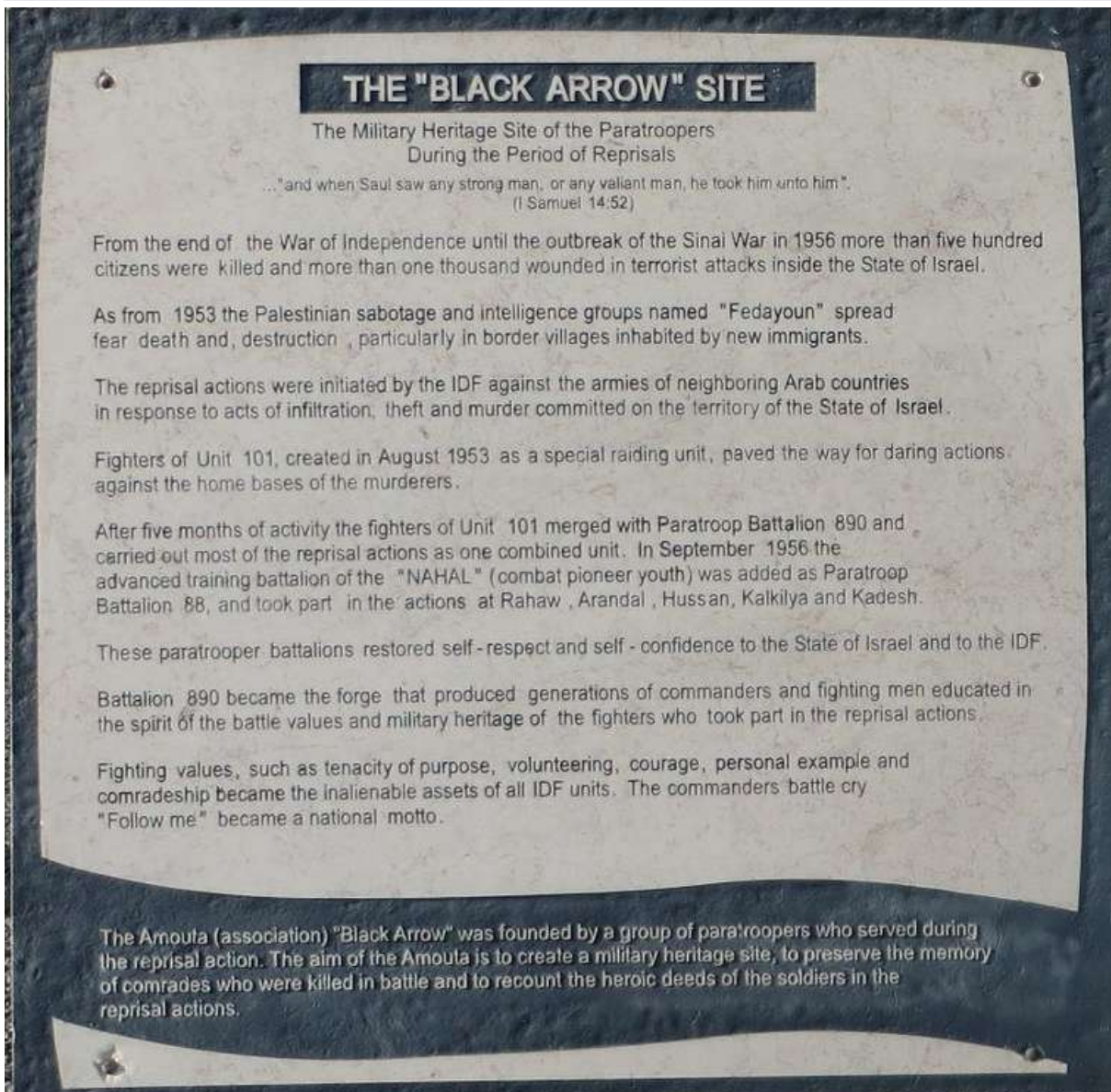
**My two hands I have dedicated to the homeland,
My two hands to sword and shield.
Let my right hand whither
If I forget the East Bank of the Jordan.**

**Two Banks has the Jordan –
This is ours and, that is as well.**



Israel had to stop terrorists

Source 5: Plaque in Negev commemorating Israeli paratroopers who fought Palestinian fedayeen terrorists





Israel had to stop terrorists

Source 6: Fedayeen marauders killed by Israeli border police after an attack Nir Galim, 4th September 1956





Israel attacked to take advantage of Arab divisions

Before the June crisis the Arab world could be viewed as divided into two camps. The radical-revolutionary camp comprised the United Arab Republic, Syria, Iraq, Algeria and the Republican regime in war-torn Yemen.

The other Arab camp could be described, for want of a better word, as conservative or moderate. It consisted of the five Arab monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Libya, Kuwait and Morocco. Definitely anti-revolutionary and bent on preserving their royal establishments,

The struggle between the revolutionary and the conservative camps constituted the essence of Arab politics in the 1950's and 1960's. It overshadowed all other problems, including even that of Arab-Israeli relations.

In the military sector, the most dramatic demonstration of unity was Jordan's plunge into the nearly-suicidal war once Egypt was attacked. By contrast, Syrian action on the front was negligible and showed little evidence of proper synchronization with Egyptian and Jordanian efforts.

Source 7: Extract from "Arab Block Realignments" by George Lenczowski, *Current History* 53, no.316 (1967): 346-84



Israel attacked to take advantage of Arab divisions

Source 8: Aftermath of the Israeli military's attack on Samu, a village in the Jordanian-controlled West Bank, 1967





The Syrian army fired on Israeli farmers

Source 9: Extract from *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict 1881 - 1999* (2002) by Benny Morris, pp.303-4

After Israel began pumping water from the Sea of Galilee into its National Water Carrier on June 5, 1964, Syria responded with a plan to divert the Jordan's sources into its own territory. Israel stepped up patrols in areas adjacent to the sources, around Kibbutz Dan. In November, Syrian positions fired on the patrols, drawing artillery and tank counterfire and, eventually, air power, which silenced the guns. In 1965 there were three major incidents in which IDF tanks and artillery destroyed tanks and earth-moving equipment after the Syrians fired at border patrols or farmers. The water-diversion effort was finally halted in July 1966, when Israeli aircraft bombed a concentration of earth-moving equipment and downed a Syrian MiG-21 which tried to interfere.⁴

In August the Syrians opened fire on an Israeli patrol boat that had run aground in the northeastern corner of the Sea of Galilee, and beginning in January 1967, they sporadically attacked patrols and farmers in the DMZ east of the lake. On April 7, the conflict escalated. Both sides used tanks. The IAF bombed and strafed seventeen Syrian positions, and six Syrian MiG-21s were shot down, two of them over Damascus.⁵ The Syrians found their inability to stop the flight of Israeli aircraft over their capital particularly humiliating. A few weeks later Syrian intelligence sent an agent using a British passport to set off explosions in Jerusalem during the forthcoming Independence Day celebrations. He was caught before he could do any harm.⁶



The Syrian army fired on Israeli farmers

Source 10: Extract from the 1949 Israeli-Syrian General Armistice Agreement

2. In pursuance of the spirit of the Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948, the Armistice Demarcation Line and the demilitarized Zone have been defined with a view toward separating the armed forces of the two Parties in such manner as to minimize the possibility of friction and incident, while providing for the gradual restoration of normal civilian life in the area of the Demilitarized Zone, without prejudice to the ultimate settlement.

4. The armed forces of the two Parties shall nowhere advance beyond the Armistice Demarcation Line.

5.(a)...the area between the Armistice Demarcation Line and the boundary, pending final territorial settlement between the Parties, shall be established as a Demilitarized Zone from which the armed forces of both Parties shall be totally excluded, and in which no activities by military or para-military forces shall be permitted. This provision applies to the Ein Gev and Dardara sectors which shall form part of the Demilitarized Zone.

(b) Any advance by the armed forces, military or para-military, of either Party into any part of the Demilitarized Zone, when confirmed by the United Nations representatives referred to in the following sub-paragraph, shall constitute a flagrant violation of this Agreement.



Israeli generals wanted a war and provoked Syria to get it

Source 11: Address by Menachem Begin, Prime Minister of Israel, at the National Defence College, 8 August 1982

"In June 1967 we again had a choice. The Egyptian army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him.

This was a war of self-defence in the noblest sense of the term. The government of national unity then established decided unanimously: We will take the initiative and attack the enemy, drive him back, and thus assure the security of Israel and the future of the nation.

We did not do this for lack of an alternative. We could have gone on waiting. We could have sent the army home. Who knows if there would have been an attack against us? There is no proof of it. There are several arguments to the contrary. While it is indeed true that the closing of the Straits of Tiran was an act of aggression, a *causus belli*, there is always room for a great deal of consideration as to whether it is necessary to make a *causus* into a *bellum*."



The Jewish Army was well-prepared for war

Source 12: Moshe Dayan, Israeli Defence Minister in 1967, in A.Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, p.251

Never mind that. After all, I know how at least 80 percent of the clashes there started. In my opinion, more than 80 percent, but let's talk about 80 percent. It went this way: We would send a tractor to plow someplace where it wasn't possible to do anything, in the demilitarized area, and knew in advance that the Syrians would start to shoot. If they didn't shoot, we would tell the tractor to advance farther, until in the end the Syrians would get annoyed and shoot. And then we would use artillery and later the air force also, and that's how it was. I did that, and Laskov and Chara [Zvi Tsur, Rabin's predecessor as chief of staff] did that, and Yitzhak did that, but it seems to me that the person who most enjoyed these games was Dado [David Elazar, OC Northern Command, 1964–69].



The Israeli public wanted their country to be defended

Source 13: Israel's GDP per capita per year





The Israeli public wanted their country to be defended

Source 14: Extract from Sarah Ozacky-Lazar. "The Seven Good Years? Israel, 1967 - 1973: The Critical Change." *Israel Studies* 23, no.3 (2018), pp.18

[1966] was marked with economic recession and social distress. The prospect of a third war in two decades was yet another source of melancholy. Many felt that the very existence of the state was at stake. Dark humor was a source of comic relief, and comments like "The last one to leave the airport should turn off the lights" became widespread. Indeed, many did leave the country, exacerbating concerns that the young state might well be no more than a fleeting chapter in history.

Prime Minister Levi Eshkol also served as minister of defense, despite his lack of military background. This only caused further damage to his shaky public image. Army officers pressed him to make a decision and essentially forced him to appoint the legendary General Moshe Dayan in his place as minister of defense just days before the onset of the war.

The ambience reeked of lack of vision, a collective sense of a lost way, nurturing sentiments of national depression and uncertainty.



Israeli politicians wanted a distraction from economic recession

Source 15: The Shalom Meir Tower in Tel Aviv opened in 1965, it was the tallest building in the Middle East at the time





Israeli politicians wanted a distraction from economic recession

Source 16: "From Blossoming Socialism to Successful Capitalism" by Sever Plotzker, 'Economic' supplement Independence Day, "Yediot Achronot" newspaper, 23 April 20073

The intervention of a high rate of growth...earned worldwide amazement...The miracle was interrupted in 1966...100,000 workers were laid-off from work within a year and a half, unemployment jumped from 3.5% to 11.5%, the economy stopped...a sense of frustration and anger prevailed over the public.

A girl of 13 from Beit She'an, who was asked on a radio broadcast summing up 1966 if she was hungry and answered "yes", shook up the country and nearly toppled the Eshkol government. The ethnic tension returned to the headlines...



President Nasser of Egypt triggered the war

Source 17: Extract from the Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World (2001)
by Avi Shlaim, pp.237

[Nasser] could not afford to remain inactive, because his leadership of the Arab world was being challenged. Since the Samu raid the Jordanians had been accusing him of cowardice and of hiding from the Israelis behind the skirts of the UN Emergency Force in Sinai. Syria had a defense pact with Egypt that compelled it to go to Syria's aid in the event of an Israeli attack. Clearly, Nasser had to do something, both to preserve his own credibility as an ally and to restrain the hotheads in Damascus. There is general agreement among commentators that Nasser neither wanted nor planned to go to war with Israel. What he did was to embark on an exercise in brinkmanship that was to carry him over the brink.

Nasser took three steps that were intended to impress Arab public opinion rather than be a conscious prelude to war with Israel. The first step was to send a large number of troops into Sinai. The second was to ask for the removal of the UN Emergency Force from Sinai. The third and most fateful step, taken on 22 May, was to close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. For Israel this constituted a *casus belli*...Nasser understood the psychological significance of this step...In closing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, he took a terrible gamble—and lost.



President Nasser of Egypt triggered the war

Source 18: Cartoon from Lebanese newspaper Al-Farida shows Nasser kicking a Jew into the sea, with the armies of Lebanon, Syria and Iraq supporting him





The USA and USSR both encouraged war

Source 19: The Soviet Union and the Six-Day War: Revelations from the Polish Archives, July 27, 2011, by Uri Bar-Noi, CWIHP e-Dossier No.8

Brezhnev's report shows that Moscow had no intention of inciting an armed conflict in the Middle East and that the June 1967 war was the result of grave miscalculations and of Soviet inability to control the Arabs, rather than a conspiracy. The brief documents that throughout April-May, 1967, the Kremlin suspected that Israel was planning an act of aggression against Syria. Determined to forestall the Israeli offensive and to rescue the new radical-left regime in Damascus, the Soviet government informed Egypt that Israel had mobilized its armed forces on the border with Syria. By doing so, Moscow hoped to manipulate Nasser into assisting Syria by concentrating his armed forces on Egypt's border with Israel. The Kremlin estimated mistakenly, as it turned out – that Israel was militarily weak and could not cope with a war on two fronts. Subsequently, Moscow consented to the ejection of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping forces from outposts on the Israeli-Egyptian border, and to the concentration of Egyptian troops on the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip.



The USA and USSR both encouraged war

Source 20: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68, Volume XIX, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War 1967

Washington, June 1, 1967.

Conversation between Major General Meir Amit and Secretary McNamara – late afternoon, 1 June 1967

...Gen. Amit then went on to describe the situation as he sees it which is to the effect that the blockade of Tiran is window dressing. He believes a grand design, which he termed the “Domino Effect,” has now developed. That is, that the UAR, with Russian backing, hopes to roll up the whole of the Middle East all the way to the borders of Russia, to include Iran, under Arab domination. While this whole matter is close to and vital for Israel, the long range effect would be deeply inimical to U.S. interests...

Gen. Amit, returning to his main theme, stressed his opinion that it is a U.S. problem as much as an Israeli problem, and maybe even more so, and that he feels extreme measures are needed quickly...

In closing the meeting Mr. McNamara thanked Gen. Amit for his candid discussion and indicated that he, the Secretary, would be seeing the President shortly and would convey Amit’s views to him...

Rufus Taylor
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence