

Historical Security Council (1967)

The Six-Day War (Arab-Israeli War)



Forum	Historical Security Council (1967)
Issue:	The Six-Day-War (Arab-Israeli war)
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Introduction

The Six-Day War, also known as the Arab-Israeli War, marks a pivotal moment in the history of the Middle East and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Fought between June 5th and June 10th, 1967, the conflict erupted amidst a backdrop of escalating tensions, regional power struggles, and conflicting territorial claims. The war involved Israel against the combined forces of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, with significant implications for regional security dynamics that continue to reverberate to this day.

This research report delves into the multifaceted issues surrounding the Six-Day War, with a specific focus on its historical context and its far-reaching impact on regional security. By examining the underlying causes, key events, and aftermath of the conflict, we aim to shed light on the complex web of political, military, and socio-economic factors that contributed to its outbreak.

The roots of the Six-Day War can be traced back to long-standing tensions and unresolved conflicts in the region. This includes the Palestinian refugee crisis resulting from the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, which had created a deep sense of displacement and unrest among the Arab population. Additionally, the rise of pan-Arab nationalism and the formation of alliances among Arab states sought to challenge Israeli sovereignty and reclaim what was seen as lost territories.

Moreover, the aftermath of the Six-Day War has had a lasting impact on peace processes and security dynamics in the region. The report will highlight the implications of the war on the Arab-Israeli conflict, subsequent peace negotiations, and the emergence of new challenges, such as the rise of non-state actors and the ongoing struggle for Palestinian self-determination.

This research report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the conflict's causes, consequences, and broader implications. It is our hope that such insights will contribute to fostering



a deeper comprehension of the complex dynamics that continue to shape the Arab-Israeli conflict and the pursuit of peace in the region.

Definition of Key Terms

Occupied Territories

Refers to the territories captured by Israel during the Six-Day War, including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. These areas were previously controlled by Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, respectively. The occupation has resulted in complex legal and humanitarian issues, ongoing disputes, and friction between Israel and the Palestinian people, hindering the prospects for peace and stability in the region.

Territorial Gains

Refers to the acquisition of new territories by a country following a war or conflict. In the context of the Six-Day War, Israel's territorial gains included the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. These territorial changes significantly altered the regional power balance and had enduring consequences for both Israel and the Arab states.

General Overview

The Six-Day War, also known as the Arab-Israeli War, was a brief but intense conflict that took place between June 5 and June 10, 1967, involving Israel and a coalition of Arab states. The war resulted in significant territorial gains for Israel, including the capture of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Golan Heights. It marked a turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East.



Causes

The causes of the Six-Day War can be traced back to the deep-rooted tensions and border incidents between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the region witnessed numerous border clashes, cross-border raids, and terrorist attacks. These incidents fuelled mutual distrust, animosity, and a sense of insecurity on both sides. Israel, surrounded by hostile Arab states, perceived these acts of aggression as threats to its very existence, while Arab nations felt a strong sense of solidarity with the Palestinian cause and viewed Israel as an occupying power. The unresolved Palestinian issue, with its political and territorial dimensions, remained a central point of contention, further exacerbating the already strained relations. A crucial cause of the Six-Day War was the blockade imposed by Egypt on the Tiran Strait. In May 1967, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the closure of the strait to Israeli shipping, effectively cutting off Israel's access to the Red Sea and its southern port of Eilat. This blockade violated international conventions on freedom of navigation and was seen by Israel as an act of aggression and a direct threat to its maritime trade routes and security. Israel considered the Strait of Tiran vital for its economic survival and regarded the closure as a *casus bello*, justifying a military response. The closure of the Tiran Strait also had broader implications for the region. It was perceived as a test of strength and resolve between Israel and the Arab world. Egypt, with its growing military capabilities and support from other Arab states, sought to challenge Israel's dominance in the region and establish itself as a leading Arab power. By closing the strait, Nasser aimed to assert Egyptian control over the strategic waterway and weaken Israel's position. The military build-up undertaken by Arab states, particularly Egypt, played a significant role in escalating tensions and precipitating the outbreak of the Six-Day War. Egypt, under Nasser's leadership, pursued an ambitious policy of modernizing its armed forces with extensive support from the Soviet Union. The Egyptian military received advanced weaponry, including fighter jets, tanks, and ballistic missiles, enhancing its offensive capabilities, and bolstering its confidence in confronting Israel militarily. Moreover, Egypt's deployment of troops in the Sinai Peninsula and the Sinai demilitarized zone, in violation of the United Nations' peacekeeping arrangements, further heightened tensions. Israel interpreted these military movements as a direct threat to its security, particularly considering Egypt's prior rhetoric of wiping Israel off the map. The concentration of forces along Israel's borders, coupled with bellicose rhetoric from Arab leaders, created a sense of imminent danger and compelled Israel to take pre-emptive action to protect itself. The military build-up and increased hostility between Israel and its Arab neighbours set the stage for a potentially explosive



confrontation. The accumulation of grievances, territorial disputes, and ideological differences fuelled by these causes eventually culminated in the outbreak of the Six-Day War.

Events

On June 5, 1967, Israel launched a series of pre-emptive airstrikes against the Egyptian Air Force. The Israeli Air Force meticulously planned and executed a surprise attack, primarily targeting Egyptian airfields to neutralize Egypt's air power. The objective was to gain air superiority, which was considered crucial in modern warfare. The Israeli airstrikes were highly effective, catching the Egyptian forces off guard and destroying a significant portion of their planes while they were still on the ground. The pre-emptive nature of the strikes allowed Israel to swiftly cripple Egypt's air capabilities, giving them a significant tactical advantage from the outset of the war. The success of this operation demonstrated Israel's military prowess and set the tone for the rest of the conflict. In response to the Israeli airstrikes, Arab states launched an offensive against Israel on multiple fronts. Egypt initiated a series of artillery shelling and ground attacks on Israeli positions in the Sinai Peninsula. Jordanian forces bombarded Israeli towns and military installations from the West Bank, while Syria engaged in attacks on Israeli positions in the Golan Heights. Despite the coordinated Arab offensive, Israel was well-prepared and effectively countered the attacks. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) swiftly mobilized and demonstrated their superior training, coordination, and equipment. Israel's military strategy focused on swiftly neutralizing threats and gaining territorial advantages. The IDF successfully repelled the Arab forces, inflicting heavy casualties and capturing key strategic positions. Israel's counteroffensive operations were marked by decisive manoeuvring, precision airstrikes, and efficient ground operations. The coordinated efforts of the Israeli military proved highly effective, allowing them to regain control of the situation and gain significant ground within a matter of days. The successful defence and counterattack operations showcased Israel's military capabilities and reinforced their position as a formidable regional power. As a result of its successful defence and counteroffensive operations, Israel captured several territories during the Six-Day War. These territorial gains had significant consequences for the region, shaping the geopolitical landscape and subsequent conflicts. In the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip, Israel swiftly overpowered Egyptian forces and established control over these territories. The Sinai Peninsula held strategic importance due to its proximity to the Suez Canal, a vital international waterway. The occupation of the Gaza Strip brought Israel face-to-face with the challenge of governing a significant Palestinian population, which would have profound implications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israel successfully pushed back Jordanian forces and gained control over



these areas. The capture of East Jerusalem was particularly significant, as it allowed Israel to reunify the city under its control, including the Old City with its religious sites of profound importance to Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Lastly, in the Golan Heights, Israel repelled Syrian forces and gained strategic high ground overlooking northern Israel. The Golan Heights offered a strategic vantage point and provided Israel with a buffer against potential future attacks from Syria. The occupation of these territories profoundly altered the geopolitical dynamics of the region. Israel now held strategic positions, controlled access to vital resources, and faced the challenge of governing populations with diverse political aspirations. The captured territories would become central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and subsequent peace negotiations, as well as being points of contention with neighbouring Arab states.

Consequences

The Six-Day War resulted in a significant redrawing of borders and the occupation of territories by Israel. Israel's capture of the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria dramatically altered the geopolitical landscape of the region. These territorial gains provided Israel with strategic advantages, such as control over vital waterways, heightened security buffers, and vantage points for military surveillance. However, the occupation of these territories also led to protracted conflicts, disputes over land and resources, and heightened tensions between Israel and neighbouring Arab states. Moreover, the establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories has been a contentious issue, hindering peace negotiations and fuelling resentment among Palestinians. The Six-Day War intensified the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and had profound implications for the Palestinian people. Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem brought millions of Palestinians under Israeli military rule, leading to significant challenges in terms of governance, security, and the exercise of basic rights. The war resulted in the displacement of many Palestinians, exacerbating the issue of refugees, and creating a complex humanitarian situation. The occupation and the subsequent establishment of Israeli settlements further deepened the divide between Israelis and Palestinians, fuelling ongoing tensions, acts of violence, and resistance. The war also amplified the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, leading to the emergence of various political movements, including the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and shaping the trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The Six-Day War had far-reaching ramifications for the balance of power in the Middle East. Israel's decisive military victory over a coalition of Arab states diminished the influence and prestige of Arab nations, particularly Egypt and its President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who



had positioned himself as a leader of the Arab world. Israel's swift and overwhelming success demonstrated its military prowess and signalled a shift in regional power dynamics. The war also highlighted the limitations of the Soviet Union's influence in the region, as Egypt and Syria, both Soviet allies, were unable to withstand the Israeli onslaught. In contrast, the United States emerged as a key player in the region, providing support to Israel and solidifying its position as a major power broker in Middle Eastern affairs. The outcome of the war further entrenched regional rivalries and deepened animosity between Arab states and Israel, shaping subsequent conflicts and peace negotiations.

Major Parties Involved

United States

The United States played a significant role in the Six-Day War, providing diplomatic and military support to Israel. Despite initially urging restraint from all parties, the U.S. saw Israel as a strategic ally in the region and believed that its security was vital for maintaining stability. As the war unfolded, the U.S. provided crucial military aid to Israel, including aircraft, tanks, and munitions. The war solidified the United States' position as a major power broker in the Middle East and led to a closer strategic alliance with Israel.

Israel

As a newly established state in 1948, Israel faced ongoing hostility and security challenges from neighbouring Arab countries. In the lead-up to the Six-Day War, Israel perceived the military build-up and aggressive actions of its Arab neighbours, particularly Egypt, as direct threats to its existence. Faced with the blockade of the Tiran Strait and a perceived threat to its access to the Red Sea, Israel saw itself with no other choice but to launch pre-emptive strikes against the Egyptian Air Force. The war was a pivotal moment for Israel, resulting in significant territorial gains, but also leading to long-term challenges, including the occupation of Palestinian territories and ongoing conflicts with Arab states.

Syria

Syria's involvement in the Six-Day War was marked by an attack on Israeli positions in the Golan Heights on June 5, 1967. The rugged terrain of the Golan Heights presented tactical



advantages for the Syrian military, but Israel's swift and successful counteroffensive led to its complete capture of the region. Syria's defeat in the war had long-term consequences, contributing to a tense and hostile relationship with Israel for decades to come.

Egypt

Under the leadership of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt sought to assert itself as a prominent leader in the Arab world. The blockade of the Tiran Strait was intended to challenge Israel's control of vital waterways and weaken its economy. However, the decision to expel UN peacekeeping forces from the Sinai Peninsula and the subsequent military build-up near the Israeli border created a tense situation that ultimately led to war. The Egyptian military suffered significant losses in the initial Israeli airstrikes, and the war dealt a severe blow to Nasser's regional ambitions, leaving Egypt humiliated and demoralized.

Jordan

Jordan's involvement in the Six-Day War was largely driven by its alignment with Egypt. On June 5, 1967, Jordanian forces joined the conflict by shelling Israeli positions in Jerusalem and other areas within the West Bank. However, the Israeli counteroffensive quickly resulted in the capture of East Jerusalem, a part of the West Bank that Jordan had annexed in 1950. The loss of East Jerusalem and the West Bank deeply impacted Jordan, leading to the displacement of Palestinian refugees and exacerbating tensions between Jordanian authorities and Palestinian factions within the country.

Soviet Union

The Soviet Union had been providing military and economic support to various Arab states, including Egypt and Syria. However, the Six-Day War exposed the limitations of Soviet influence in the region, as the Arab forces were unable to withstand the Israeli military onslaught. The war signalled a setback for Soviet interests in the Middle East and further heightened the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union in the region.

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

The PLO, led by Yasser Arafat, was a key player representing the Palestinian cause during the Six-Day War. The war further galvanized the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and independence, leading to increased support for the PLO's resistance efforts. The occupation of



Palestinian territories by Israel and the subsequent establishment of Israeli settlements further fuelled the PLO's resistance and efforts to gain international recognition and support for their cause.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
May 15 th 1967	Egypt orders the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping forces from the Sinai Peninsula, massing troops along Israel's southern border, escalating tensions.
June 5-10, 1967	The Six-Day War begins with Israel launching pre-emptive airstrikes against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, resulting in swift territorial gains.
June 7 th 1967	Israeli forces capture the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Western Wall, a site of great religious significance.
June 10 th 1967	A ceasefire is established, ending the war with Israel in control of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Golan Heights.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Please do use either British or American spelling (and be consistent) throughout your Research Report. When listing past UN Resolutions, it is suggested that you make use of bullet points and the specified format below:

- UNSC calls for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict and urges all parties to refrain from any actions that could escalate tensions in the region. UNSC Resolution 228 (November 25, 1966).
- In the aftermath of the Six-Day War's outbreak, the UNSC adopts Resolution 233, which demands an immediate ceasefire and cessation of all military activities. UNSC Resolution 233 (June 6, 1967).
- Following Israel's capture of the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Western Wall, the UNSC adopts Resolution 234, affirming that measures taken by Israel to change the city's status are invalid and calls for a return to the pre-war situation. UNSC Resolution 234 (June 7, 1967).



- The UNSC addresses the tragic incident involving the USS Liberty, a US Navy intelligence ship attacked by Israeli forces, expressing grave concern and calling for a full investigation. UNSC Resolution 235 (June 9, 1967).
- The UNSC demands that Israel fully comply with Resolution 233 and calls for the implementation of an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied during the Six-Day War. UNSC Resolution 236 (June 17, 1967).
- In response to Israel's refusal to comply with Resolution 236, the UNSC demands Israel's immediate and unconditional withdrawal from all the territories occupied during the Six-Day War. UNSC Resolution 237 (June 14, 1967).
- Arguably the most significant resolution related to the Six-Day War, Resolution 242 calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied during the conflict, recognition of the sovereignty and political independence of all states in the region, and the acknowledgment of the need for a just settlement of the refugee problem. UNSC Resolution 242 (November 22, 1967).
- Following the Six-Day War, the Arab League adopts the Khartoum Resolution, declaring the "Three No's": no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with Israel. Khartoum Resolution (September 1, 1967).
- The Camp David Accords, brokered by US President Jimmy Carter, lead to the signing of a framework for peace between Egypt and Israel. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin agreeing to negotiate a peace treaty. Camp David Accords (September 17, 1978).
- Building upon the Camp David Accords, Egypt and Israel sign a historic peace treaty in Washington, D.C., ending the state of war between the two nations and establishing full diplomatic relations. Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty (March 26, 1979).
- The Oslo Accords represents a significant step in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the accords aim to establish a framework for Palestinian self-government in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Oslo Accords (September 13, 1993).

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue



Peel Commission (1937)

In response to escalating tensions between Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine, the British Mandate established the Peel Commission. The commission recommended the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under international administration. However, both Jewish and Arab leaders rejected the proposal, and it was never implemented.

United Nations Partition Plan (1947)

As British rule in Palestine came to an end, the United Nations proposed a partition plan that would create separate Jewish and Arab states, with an internationally administered Jerusalem. The plan was accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by Arab states, leading to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

Armistice Agreements (1949)

Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, a series of armistice agreements were signed between Israel and its neighbouring Arab states. These agreements established temporary borders, ending the fighting but leaving many issues unresolved, including the status of Palestinian refugees and the final borders of Israel.

United Nations Resolution 194 (December 1948)

Resolution 194 was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, calling for the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes and the payment of compensation for those who chose not to return. This resolution has been a recurring point of contention in subsequent peace negotiations.

Camp David Accords (1978)

Under the mediation of US President Jimmy Carter, Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David Accords. The accords led to the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, marking the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab state. However, the agreement did not address the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Madrid Conference (1991)

The Madrid Conference, convened by the United States and Russia, brought together Israeli and Arab representatives for the first time to negotiate a comprehensive peace settlement. The



conference established a framework for future negotiations but failed to yield significant breakthroughs.

Oslo Accords (1993)

The Oslo Accords, signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), aimed to create a pathway towards Palestinian self-governance in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The accords established the Palestinian Authority, but final status negotiations stalled, leading to ongoing tensions and violence.

Camp David Summit (2000)

US President Bill Clinton convened the Camp David Summit, attempting to reach a final status agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. While significant progress was made, the summit ended without a final agreement, and violence erupted shortly afterward, known as the Second Intifada.

Roadmap for Peace (2003)

The Roadmap for Peace was presented by the Quartet (United States, European Union, Russia, and the United Nations) as a comprehensive plan to achieve a two-state solution. However, implementation faced numerous challenges and obstacles, and the roadmap's objectives were not fully realized.

Annapolis Conference (2007)

Hosted by US President George W. Bush, the Annapolis Conference sought to revive peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Despite the conference's high-profile nature, progress was limited, and the peace process remained stalled.

Possible Solutions

Solving the Israeli-Arab Conflict and Israeli-Palestinian Issue is a complex and challenging task that requires careful consideration of the historical, political, and social dynamics in the region. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, here are some possible approaches and ideas to foster a peaceful resolution:



Two-State Solution

One of the most widely discussed solutions is a two-state solution, where Israel and a viable, independent Palestinian state coexist side by side. This solution would involve negotiating the borders, sovereignty, and security arrangements of both states, with East Jerusalem serving as the capital of the Palestinian state. The international community's recognition and support for both states' existence would be critical to this approach's success.

Land Swaps and Borders

In the context of a two-state solution, land swaps could be considered to address territorial issues. This approach involves redrawing borders to allow some Israeli settlements in the West Bank to become part of Israel, while equivalent land would be transferred to the future Palestinian state. It would require careful negotiations and the consent of both parties involved.

Status of Jerusalem

The issue of Jerusalem is one of the most sensitive and contentious in the conflict. A potential solution could involve an internationally administered special regime for the Old City, ensuring access to its holy sites for all religious communities. The rest of Jerusalem could serve as the respective capitals of both Israel and the Palestinian state.

Security Arrangements

Ensuring security for both Israelis and Palestinians is vital for any lasting solution. A comprehensive security plan would require cooperation, intelligence-sharing, and potentially the involvement of international peacekeeping forces in sensitive areas during the transitional period.

Refugee and Compensation Issues

Addressing the Palestinian refugee issue is crucial to any peace settlement. Negotiations could explore options such as offering Palestinian refugees the choice of return to the Palestinian state, compensation, or resettlement in third countries, with financial support from the international community.

Regional Involvement



Involvement and support from key regional players, such as Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states, could be instrumental in fostering a sustainable peace. Regional collaboration could also enhance economic cooperation, trade, and development opportunities, contributing to long-term stability.

Confidence-Building Measures

Implementing confidence-building measures to foster trust and goodwill between Israelis and Palestinians is essential. These measures could include the easing of movement restrictions, joint economic projects, and cultural exchanges to promote mutual understanding.

International Diplomatic Engagement

The involvement of international actors, including the United States, European Union, Russia, and the United Nations, as impartial mediators could help facilitate negotiations and bridge gaps between the parties involved.

Civil Society and People-to-People Initiatives

Supporting civil society and people-to-people initiatives that promote dialogue, cooperation, and understanding between Israelis and Palestinians at the grassroots level can help build trust and create a foundation for peaceful coexistence.

Comprehensive Peace Agreement

A comprehensive peace agreement would encompass all key issues, addressing the core grievances of both Israelis and Palestinians. A step-by-step approach that gradually builds trust and confidence toward a final settlement may be necessary to overcome deep-seated historical animosities.

It is essential to recognize that achieving a lasting peace will require compromise, flexibility, and political will from all parties involved. Any successful solution must consider the aspirations, rights, and security concerns of both Israelis and Palestinians, aiming for a just and durable resolution to the conflict.

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Appendix or Appendices

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