# Arab-Israeli Relations

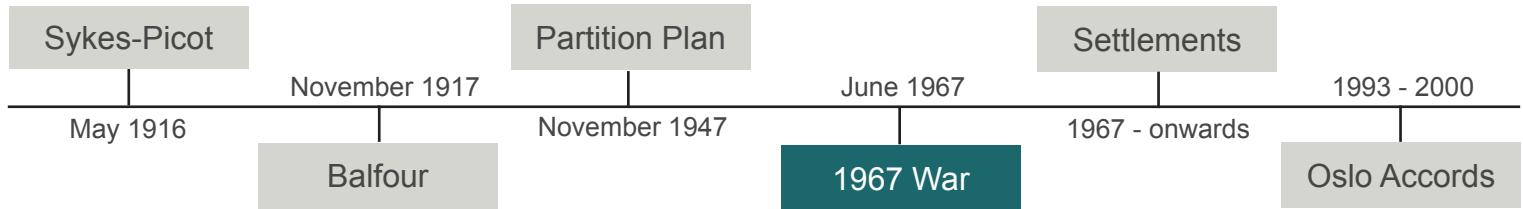| Sykes-Picot | | Partition Plan | | Settlements | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | November 1917 | | June 1967 | | 1993 - 2000 |
| May 1916 | | November 1947 | | 1967 - onwards | |
| | Balfour | | 1967 War | | Oslo Accords |

## 1967 Arab-Israeli War and Resolution 242

**Prepared by Anna Siodlak, Research Associate**

The Arab-Israeli War, also referred to as the Six-Day War, was a bloody and decisive battle fought between Israel and an Egyptian-Syrian-Jordanian alliance. It led to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and has had a lasting impact on subsequent attempts to forge a final status peace agreement.

### Precipitating events

The decades following the 1949 Armistice Agreements saw rivalries, political vacuums, and poor decisions contribute to a state of heightened tension and hostility.

- 17 January 1964: The Arab League diverts water away from Lake Tiberias in retaliation to Israel's 'National Water Carrier' that channeled water from the Jordan River to the Negev Desert. In 1965 Israel launches military attacks on the diversion leading to conflict at the Israel-Syria border.

- 13 November 1966: Israeli forces raid Es Samu, a Jordanian-controlled West Bank village, causing extensive loss of life and damage to infrastructure. Mass demonstrations and riots break out across the West Bank.

- 7 April 1967: Six Soviet-made Syrian MiGs are shot down by Israel.

- 16 May 1967: Responding to requests from Syrian Defence Minister to help ease pressure on the Israel-Syria border, Egypt deploys troops in the Sinai.

- 19 May 1967: Egypt expels the UN Emergency Force from Gaza and the Sinai.

- 22 May 1967: Egypt closes the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Israel considers this an attack entitling it to exercise its right of self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter.[1]

- 30 May 1967: Jordan and Egypt enter a mutual defence agreement, including provisions for an Egyptian-led central command of forces and the entry of Arab troops into Jordan in the event of confrontation.

- 31 May 1967: Iraq deploys troops to Jordan to support the mutual defence agreement.

On 5 June 1967 Israel launched 'Operation Focus', a surprise attack on Egyptian airfields. Lack of military efficiency and coordination among the Arab alliance meant that they were no competition to Israel's Western-sponsored technology and strategy. The conflict was over by 10 June following a withdrawal of Arab forces. Thousands of soldiers died and the alliance lost key strategic territory: Egypt lost the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip, Jordan lost the West Bank, and Syria lost the Golan Heights. A ceasefire was signed on 11 June 1967.

### Security Council Resolution 242

In response to the war, on 22 November 1967, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 242, also known as the 'Land for Peace' deal, under Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter (Pacific Settlement of Disputes). Critical elements of the resolution include the:

- "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war";

- "withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict";

- "termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence

---

[1] Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 26 Statement to the General Assembly by Foreign Minister Meir. (1 March 1967).

of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force"; and

- "Achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem".

## Impact

The war was a military disaster for the Arabs and a massive blow to morale. Israel's land capture created a new wave of displaced persons. From 1967 until the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, the Israeli government revoked the residency rights of those Arabs (some 250,000) who had left the West Bank or Gaza for more than seven years. By 1972, there were 1.5 million registered Palestinian refugees, 650,000 of whom live in 13 camps in Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Israeli forces quelled resistance to the occupation with brutal force: in just a few days after the war the Israeli army destroyed 850 buildings in the town of Qalqilya.



Land gained by Israel following the 1967 War. Map courtesy of BBC News, 2001.

The post-war period led to the emergence of various Fedayeen groups, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which remains the second largest member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). At the time, the PFLP operated within grassroots opposition movements in Arab countries and aimed to topple reactionary Arab regimes. Implications for the various countries included:

- Jordan became known as Israel's North Vietnam; "a foreign launching pad for guerrilla attacks".[2] In 1967 there were 100 attacks on military installations and targets in Israel; by 1970 this had increased to 2000 attacks. Jordan became concerned over a potential PLO takeover as the country hosted thousands of Palestinian refugees who supported the organisation. These concerns manifested in a bloody civil war in 1970 known as 'Black September'. In a ceasefire obtained by Egyptian President Gamal Nasser, the PLO transferred their base to Lebanon.

- An Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 led to severe hostility amongst several radical groups, including the PLO, and acted as a catalyst for the formation of Hezbollah, a Shi'a Islamist group intent on the destruction of Israel and confrontation against the United States.

- President Nasser pursued a war of attrition against Israel that lasted until his death in September 1970. His successor, Anwar Sadat, attempted to reach a peace agreement with Israel based on Resolution 242, but the Israeli government refused to withdraw its troops from the Sinai and Gaza Strip. Consequently, on Yom Kippur in 1973 Egypt and Syria led a joint surprise attack on Israel in an attempt to recover territory lost in 1967. Although the war did not alter the territorial status quo, the initial Arab offensive was strong and revealed the vulnerability of Israel, a nation surrounded by enemies. Egypt and Israel entered secret negotiations at Camp David, which culminated in a peace agreement in 1979 and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Sinai.

[2] I. Pappe, A History of Modern Palestine, (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.187.

## Anna Siodlak

Anna is a Research Associate with the West Asia – North Africa Institute, where she focuses on mechanisms for achieving Arab integration and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Before joining the WANA Institute, Anna was based at a development organisation in the region where she launched a number of initiatives including discussion groups on current affairs and career mentoring sessions for students. She holds a Bachelor of International Relations and is completing a Master's degree in Global Politics at the London School of Economics, specialising in international relations of the Middle East and human security.