

Forum: Historical Security Council 1975

Issue: The Question of Egypt-Israel

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Introduction

The continuous state of conflict between Egypt and Israel grew from Zionism and Arab nationalism. However, the two different ideologies refrained from distinctly clashing until 1948, when Britain, who had controlled Palestine until Israel, declared itself an independent state. For nearly 30 years, Egypt and Israel were bitter rivals, engaging in five wars (in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1969–1970, and 1973), as well as several border conflicts.¹

Bloodshed, destruction, intense mistrust, dread, and hatred were all results of these military clashes on both sides. While many Israelis were worried about Egypt's intentions and attempts to destroy their country (until in the wake of the 1967 war when many Israelis felt scorn for the defeated Egyptians), many Egyptians felt humiliated and retaliated because of their numerous setbacks. In brief, the grounds for conflict between Egypt and Israel were ideological and cultural. To quote the late Egyptian president Anwar Sadat: "70 per cent of the Arab-Israeli conflict derives from a psychological barrier," referring to the mutual ignorance and misunderstanding of each other's history, society, culture, and discernments. Many Egyptians thought of Israelis as foreign intruders, colonialists, and usurpers of Muslim lands. These allegations came from Israel's military victories helped by the US in 1948, 1956, and 1967.²

Between 1967 and 1973 there were intense diplomatic efforts between Egypt and Israel to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nevertheless, the Yom Kippur war with many casualties broke out in October 1973. At the same time, the Cold War was heating up, so the presence of the US and USSR could be felt in the Middle East. This was the closest the USSR and the US had come after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

¹ Yoram Meital, *Egypt's Struggle for Peace* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), p. 2; Peter Mansfield, *Nasser's Egypt* (Penguin Books, 1965), p. 55.

² *The Arab-Israeli conflict 1956-1975: from violent conflict to peace process* by Moshe Gat

On 4th September 1975, the Sinai Interim Agreement was signed by Egypt and Israel in Geneva, to peacefully resolve territorial disputes. As the Sinai Interim states: "In the absence of an agreement, there would almost certainly have been a deterioration of the political situation to the point of another war. This would have caused the most severe consequences for the economies of the US and Europe; for the cohesion of the US and its allies throughout the world; and the strategic balance between the US and the Soviet Union."³

Definition of Key Terms

Zionism

Jewish nationalism, a movement for the re-establishment and now the development and protection of a Jewish nation in Israel. It was established as a political organization in 1897 under Theodor Herzl and later led by Chaim Weizmann.

Cold War

Conflict over ideological differences was carried on by methods short of sustained overt military action and usually without breaking off diplomatic relations, specifically the ideological conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the second half of the 20th century.⁴

The Six-Day war

The Six-Day war was the third in the long line of Arab-Israeli wars that started in 1948, around the time of the creation of the Israeli state. Beginning on June 5, 1967, the war spanned only six days during which Israel almost decimated Egypt's air force and captured new territories.⁵

Arab Nationalism

Arab nationalism, also called pan-Arabism, is a nationalist notion of cultural and political unity among Arab countries. Its central premise is that the people of the Arab world, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean, constitute one nation bound together by common ethnicity, language, culture, history, identity, geography and politics. One of the primary goals of Arab nationalism is the end of Western influence in the Arab world, seen as a "nemesis" of Arab strength, and the removal of those Arab governments considered to be dependent upon Western power. It rose to prominence with the

³ [Israel - Facts, History & Conflicts - HISTORY](#)

⁴ [Cold war Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#)

⁵ [What is the Six-Day war and why is it significant? - The Hindu](#)

weakening and defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century and declined after the defeat of the Arab armies in the Six-Day War.⁶

Golan Heights

The Golan Heights, a rocky plateau in south-western Syria, has a political and strategic significance which belies its size. Called the “Valley of tears” by both Arab nations and Israel.⁷

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is considered the most important holiday in the Jewish faith. Falling in the month of Tishrei (September or October in the Gregorian calendar), it marks the culmination of the 10 Days of Awe, a period of introspection and repentance that follows Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. According to tradition, it is on Yom Kippur that God decides each person’s fate, so Jews are encouraged to make amends and ask forgiveness for sins committed during the past year. The holiday is observed with a 25-hour fast and special religious service. Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah are known as Judaism’s High Holy Days.⁸

Sinai Peninsula

The Sinai Peninsula is a triangle-shaped peninsula located in Egypt that has an area of about 60,000 square kilometres between the Mediterranean Sea (to the north) and the Red Sea (to the south). Its land borders are the Suez Canal to the west and the Israeli-Egyptian border to the northeast.⁹

Interim Agreement

A formal decision about future action which is made by two or more countries, groups, or people, is used to describe an agreement that is intended to be used until something permanent is done or established.¹⁰

⁶ [Arab Nationalism - INSIGHTSIAS \(insightsonindia.com\)](https://insightsonindia.com)

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⁸ [Yom Kippur: Significance, Facts & Traditions - HISTORY](#)

⁹ [Sinai Peninsula - New World Encyclopedia](#)

¹⁰ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/interim>

Explanation of the Question

History

Following the declaration of independence in Israel, five Arab nations –Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon– seize the area. As civil war broke out everywhere in Israel, the West Bank became part of Jordan, and the Gaza Strip a part of Egypt. A ceasefire agreement came to be in 1949. ¹¹

Secondly, the Suez Crisis. Israel held a rocky relationship with Egypt after the 1948 war. In 1956, with the help of French and British forces, Israel attacked Egypt, taking the Suez Canal and the Sinai Peninsula back. ¹²

So, in the span of 20 years, 4 different wars between Arab countries and Israel were fought. These were the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, the Suez war in 1956, the lesser-known war of Attrition in 1969-1970, and the Six-Day war. During the latest, the Six-Day war, the U.S. had backed Israel ensuring it would triple in size. Israel conquered the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights. The Cold War between the USSR and the U.S. was truly heating up.

In February 1971, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat gave the Nixon administration a fresh chance to mediate Arab-Israeli peace. In exchange for an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) pullback from the Suez Canal's east bank and later agreement to a timeline for more withdrawals, Sadat offered that Egypt would reopen the canal. He further stated that if the IDF withdrew to the international boundary, he would reject all accusations of hostility against Israel. However, the Israelis used Sadat's remarks to their advantage by attempting to reach an interim agreement. Kissinger anticipated that the Israelis would reject the Egyptian suggestions for it in addition to the Soviet peace plan which had been put forth in September.

The exordium of the Yom Kippur war

At the beginning of 1973, Egypt began the preparations to start a war with Israel. After the Six-Day war that had begun as defensive for Israel, Israel conquered Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Arab states gathered to negotiate and wrote the famous 3 No's: no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with Israel. Most Egyptians felt they had lost their dignity, and the only way to get it back would be by wiping Israel off the map. Egypt sent the Israeli false sense of security by sending emissaries to tell the U.S. they would be willing to start negotiations with Israel. At the same time, they were holding military exercises near the border. Israel did have warning signs of the upcoming war. An Egyptian spy Ashraf Marwan tried warning Israeli Prime

¹¹ History of Israel: Key events: [BBC NEWS | World | Middle East | History of Israel: Key events](#)

¹² Creation of Israel, 1948: Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State

Minister Golda Meir, but as nothing had happened for months, he managed to create the “boy who cried wolf” effect.¹³

In the early fall of 1973, the Soviets withdrew their diplomats from Syria. 10 days before the war, on September 25, a meeting between Golda Meir and King Hussein of Jordan happened, in which the king warned of war on two fronts. King Hussein had just come from meetings with Arab leaders. Jordan played a clear double game, which would only come to publicity after many years. Despite the warnings, Israel remained still. Israelis still were certain Egypt would not start another war. Meir did not want other countries to think Israel was the aggressor, and the U.S. instructed Meir not to strike first. Despite the acknowledgement of the threat, Meir sent the military away, as it would have been extremely hard on the economy to keep thousands of men stationed.

On October 5th, the day before Yom Kippur, nearly everybody was fasting. Therefore, they had not eaten or drunk for the whole day. At 2 pm, Egypt and Syria launched air strikes. People burst into synagogues. The roads were empty, so it was easy for Egypt and Syria to access everywhere. Starting the war on the day of Yom Kippur held advantages for Jews as well, for everyone was gathered together, so it was easy and fast to spread information and gather up soldiers. Egypt, backed up by the Soviets, launched the Suez Canal and crossed it with 40:1 ammunition and 6:1 manpower compared to Israel. Quickly other Arab nations wanted to join as well. Iraq sends troops, Lebanon Missiles. Only Jordan remained suspicious of both sides, it kept on informing Israel but still publicly showed it wanted to be a true Arab nation. There was no guarantee Israel would come out of the war alive, as so many Israelis, like the defence minister of Israel Moshe Dayan, got distraught and suggested using nuclear weapons. However, Meir wanted anything but that, as well as Henry Kissinger, the assistant for President Nixon in national security affairs.

¹³ [Welcome to Unpacked \(jewishunpacked.com\)](https://www.jewishunpacked.com/)



Picture:¹⁴ Map of Yom Kippur war

The involvement of the U.S.

For the next 3 days, Israel suffered heavy losses. Syria conquered the Golan Heights. In previous wars, Israel's advantage had been the powerful air force giving support to land. Now Israel did not yet have the support of the U.S., but Golda Meir remained calm, assuring the panicking public while making spir of the moment decisions. Meir finally turned to the U.S., but Kissinger told her it would stay clean of this conflict, as they did not want to alienate Arabs. This way, the Americans thought, they could permanently make peace in the middle east. However, when Israel kept on getting worse and worse, president Nixon's opinions changed. Meir had created a false plan of making easily detectable preparations for launching a nuclear weapon. Nixon with his team picked this up, scared that if all hope for Israel was lost, they would start using nuclear weapons. Operation Nicklegrass started. Arab nations quickly found out. They started threatening oil embargoes on European countries. Portugal was the sole country letting U.S. planes on their grounds.¹⁵

While the Americans were making preparations for op Nicklegrass, Israel got Golan heights back from Syria. As the American planes started flying, Israel started making good progress. Israel started getting overly confident, firing now from only 42 kilometres from Damascus, the capital of Syria. The Yom

¹⁴ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yom_Kippur_War_map.svg

¹⁵ [The middle East - peace by piece : the quest for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict \(fes.de\)](#)

Kippur war was dangerously heating up. The US asked for an immediate ceasefire, and the Soviets threatened to send their troops. The US had to make sure Israel would not go near Cairo to keep the possibility of peace still open.

End of the war, the consequences

On October 28th, the Yom Kippur war officially ended. Major General Aharon Yariv (Israel) and Major General Mohammad El-Gamasy (Egypt) shook hands. Arab casualties lay at somewhere around 8000-14 000 dead and 19 000 wounded, Egypt having taken the worst hit. Israel lost only 2,656 men and 7,250 wounded. Thus, Israel prevailed in the 1973 conflict, albeit at considerable American expense. It was the closest the United States had been to a nuclear war with the Soviet Union since the Cuban missile crisis. Additionally, the American military airlift to Israel had prompted Arab oil producers to impose an embargo on oil exports to the United States and other Western European nations, shaking up the global economy. The stage was prepared for Kissinger to make a significant effort to broker Israeli-Arab peace.

Even though the Yom Kippur war seemed like an immense victory for Israel once again, there were benefits for Egypt as well. The Arab nations had united more, and President Sadat no longer felt the humiliation of previous wars in Egypt. Finally, in 1974, the Egypt-Israel disengagement treaty was signed.

Key Member States and NGOs Involved and Their Views

Egypt

Especially after the Six-Day War, Egypt felt that most of its dignity was gone. What had started as a defensive war for Israel ended up with Egypt losing the Sinai Peninsula. Egypt's third president, Muhammad Anwar Sadat felt Egypt had lost its honour, so no peace negotiations with Israel would not have been possible until Egypt had gotten it back. During the Yom Kippur war, Egypt was backed up by the Soviets.

Israel

The greatest prevailing thought in Israel about Egypt was that no direct conflict was needed and that the border skirmishes were not useful. However, as well as Arabs had their strong nationalism, so did Israelis have Zionism.

Syria

Syria had been Israel's most politically and tactically dogmatic Arab foe for many years. Syria, more so than its fellow Arab countries, has regarded itself as the "beating heart of Arabism." It posed a grave hazard to the Arab east's territorial integrity as well as its advancement in both culture and economy.

Jordan

Jordan had, for years, assiduously tried avoiding conflict. It wanted to be both an Arab ally as well as an ally of Israel. However, the supposed peace it had with Israel was no more than lukewarm. During the 1973 war, Jordanian King Hussein negotiated in secrecy with both the Arab states and Israel. About half of Jordan's population was Palestinian, so it held a difficult position with Israel, which many felt had taken Palestinian lands without any right to do so.¹⁶

The United States

As the cold war was heating up, the United States was in a difficult position. It wanted to show its power to the Soviet Union while still holding onto purely diplomatic solutions to the conflicts in the Middle East. Despite the ongoing cold war with the USSR, neither of the countries wanted to keep colonialism alive.

USSR

During the Yom Kippur War, the Soviet Union sent thousands of tons of aid to Egypt. They threatened to intervene on Egypt's behalf if Israel violated the truce. The Soviets viewed Israelis' victories as damaging to themselves and losses in the Cold War.

Timeline of Events

| Date | Description of event |
|-------------------|---|
| November 30, 1947 | The United Nations approves of a plan to partition Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state but the Arabs reject it |
| May 14, 1948 | Israel is officially declared an Independent state as the British leave Palestine |

¹⁶ [IN EFFECT, ISRAEL, JORDAN HAVE BEEN COEXISTING PEACEFULLY SINCE 1967 - The Washington Post](#)

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| May 4, 1956 | The Sinai Campaign, Secret ploy to thwart Egyptian blockade backfires |
| October 13, 1956 | The UN Security Council adopt a resolution setting forth certain principles for the operation of the Suez Canal |
| November 10, 1956 | UN General Assembly calls for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of all foreign forces and the first United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) is established |
| May-June, 1967 | UNEF I withdraws from Egypt at the request of the Egyptian Government |
| 1967 | The Six-Day War |
| 1973 | Yom Kippur War, a war of 18 days |
| September 5, 1975 | Sinai Interim Agreement ¹⁷ |

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events¹⁸

Third-party participation in Egypt-Israel peacekeeping is a persistent phenomenon that has accompanied the changes in the Arab-Israeli conflict since the 1948 war until the Sinai Interim Agreement. The main modality is the deployment of United Nations troops and observers to monitor the implementation of Security Council resolutions calling for a cessation of hostilities or agreements between the parties involved. The uninterrupted presence of UN personnel in the Middle East shows that the entire international community and all parties to the conflict view UN peacekeeping as essential to reducing tensions and helping to end conflicts on the ground.

- Resolution 338 by Security Council, 1967
- Resolution 340 by Security Council, 25 October 1973
- Resolution 3263, 1974
- Resolution 3336, 17 December 1974
- Resolution 3516, 15 December 1975

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinai_Interim_Agreement

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<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/israel-law-review/article/abs/keeping-the-peace-between-egypt-and-israel-19731980/D623FF46F91FB16312F569318C1A8EB5>

Possible Solutions

There are multiple, for example to normalise the relations between Egypt and Israel. One of them is to increase cultural education through mutual programmes. Through these programmes, the trust and understanding of citizens from both countries would increase. Another way is to cooperate in various projects concerning eg. poverty, and hunger. These would put the focus on more important topics and would possibly help forget the hostilities. Direct communication is also extremely important to avoid misunderstandings.

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