

FROM WAR TO WAR, ISRAEL VERSUS ARABS

1. 1948, ISRAEL'S CREATION

Emigres increased the Jewish population of the British Mandate in Palestine from 1900 onward, with an important increase occurring during World War II. In the Balfour Declaration, (issued during World War I), the British promised the Zionists a “Jewish Homeland.” The British found themselves unable to deal with the situation by 1947, and announced their intention to pull out of “Palestine” by 1948. The UN adopted a plan to partition “Palestine” between Jews and Arabs, and Israel came into being on May 15, 1948. The new state was immediately attacked by armies from Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon (and possibly others, who suffered no significant casualties), thus leading to the first Arab-Israeli war, which began in May 1948, and ended in July 1948. Israel survived.

2. 1956, SUEZ. ISRAEL, FRANCE AND BRITAIN ATTACK EGYPT

Partly because of the humiliation suffered by the Egyptian army in the first Arab-Israeli war, a traditional regime under King Farouk was replaced by a revolutionary, nationalist regime under Gamal Abdul Nasser. Nasser intended to modernize Egypt, partly because he wanted to be better able to take on Israel. He nationalized the Suez Canal. He sought and received weapons from the Soviet Union, and got involved in an arms race with Israel.

As a result, Israel, France, and Great Britain (the latter two governments seeing Nasser as a reincarnation of Hitler), plotted to destroy Nasser's regime. The plan was for Israel to launch the initial attack, and then Great Britain and France would offer to intervene to mediate the dispute. Once Nasser turned down this offer, they would

send in troops anyway, turn right, so to speak, and join forces with the Israelis to put an end to the Nasser regime in Egypt.

What the Israelis, and the French and the British had not counted on was that the United States (especially in this an election year) would come out strongly against the war by Israel, France and Britain against Nasser, joining the Soviet Union in strongly denouncing the joint venture against Nasser. (The Soviets even threatened to attack Britain, and possibly even France, with nuclear weapons if they did not cease and desist.) Facing such determined opposition from both “superpowers,” the Israelis, French and British had to withdraw, and give up their dream of dismantling the Nasser regime.

3. 1967. 6 DAY WAR. ISRAEL TAKES SINAI DESERT, GAZA STRIP, WEST BANK, GOLAN HEIGHTS

The 1956 war made a hero out of Nasser. He aspired to form a United States of Arabia, in effect. This plan came sufficiently close to fruition to inspire the US to send tens of thousands of marines into Lebanon in 1958.

By 1967, Nasser’s Arab competitors were giving him a hard time about lack of efficient or effective action against the Zionists in Israel. UN troops had been stationed between Egypt and Israel after the 1956 war. Nasser made a big show of asking the UN troops to leave, implying perhaps, that he was about to launch an attack against Israel.

Israel anticipated an attack by Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, and launched an extremely effective surprise attack against all three. It seized the Gaza Strip and much of the Sinai desert from Egypt, the West Bank from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. It inflicted a devastating defeat on all of those states in Six Days.

4. 1973. YOM KIPPUR. EGYPT ATTACKS, GETS SINAI BACK AT CAMP DAVID

Nasser died, and Anwar Sadat came to power came to power in Egypt. He kicked out the Russians, and started agitating for his new American friends to get back for him the territory Egypt lost to Israel in the 1967 war. His agitation produced no results. To everybody's surprise on the eve of Yom Kippur in 1973, he launched an attack on Israel. Everybody was surprised because everybody assumed that if Egypt attacked Israel, Egypt would lose. But Egypt, joined by Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, did enjoy some initial successes. At one point during the war, the Soviet Union threatened to intervene, causing the US to put all of its military forces around the world on "red alert." (Nixon said later that this was his "Cuban Missile Crisis.") Israel finally took the initiative and threatened to destroy Egypt's Third Army. The US intervened, (diplomatically), and peace ensued.

In the aftermath, Kissinger got involved, and diplomacy eventually led to a peace agreement years later which returned the Sinai Desert to Egypt. In return, the Israelis made some vague promises about resolving their conflict with the Palestinians, which have never been carried out (from the Arab point of view.)

5. 1982. LEBANON. ISRAEL OCCUPIES SOUTHERN PORTION.

Jordan's King Hussein rid the country of many Palestinian settlers in 1970, who settled down in Lebanon. (Others fled their from the West Bank when Israel occupied that in 1967.) The Lebanese government lost control of territory adjacent to Israel, from which various radical groups harassed Israel with attacks of various kinds. Israel decided to put an end to this state of affairs in 1982, especially when it looked like Syria was about to establish control over the whole of Lebanon. The

Israeli's eventually entered Beirut, taking control of refugee camps at Sabra and Chatilla, where right wing Christian "allies" of Israel "massacred" a significant number of Palestinians. The US sent marines into Beirut, to stabilize the situation, it hoped, but retreated soon thereafter when 241 marines were killed by a bomb on a truck driven into their camp by a Moslem "extremist." The Israelis retreated, but maintained control of a southern strip of Lebanon until just recently.