

## The 1967 Arab-Israeli War *Origins and Consequences*

The June 1967 War was a watershed moment in the history of the modern Middle East. In six days, the Israelis defeated the Arab armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and seized large portions of territory including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights. With the hindsight of four decades and access to recently declassified documents, two veteran scholars of the Middle East bring together some of the most knowledgeable experts in their fields to reassess the origins of the war and its regional reverberations. Each chapter takes a different perspective from the vantage point of a different participant, those that actually took part in the war, and the world powers – the United States, Soviet Union, Britain, and France – that played important roles behind the scenes. Their conclusions make for sober reading. At the heart of the story was the incompetence of the Egyptian high command under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser and the rivalry between various Arab players who were deeply suspicious of each other's motives. Israel, on the other side, gained a resounding victory for which, despite previous assessments to the contrary, there was no master plan.

Wm. Roger Louis is the Kerr Professor of English History and Culture at the University of Texas at Austin and Honorary Fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford. A past President of the American Historical Association, he is the editor-in-chief of *The Oxford History of the British Empire*. His books include *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951* (1984) and *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization* (2006).

Avi Shlaim is a Fellow at St. Antony's College and Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford. He is the author of many books, including *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (2000); *Lion of Jordan: King Hussein's Life in War and Peace* (2007); and *Israel and Palestine: Reappraisals, Revisions, Refutations* (2009). He edited with Eugene Rogan *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948, Second Edition* (2007).

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-00236-4 — The 1967 Arab-Israeli War  
Edited by Wm Roger Louis, Avi Shlaim  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

## *Cambridge Middle East Studies*

### *Editorial Board*

Charles Tripp (general editor)  
Julia Clancy-Smith, F. Gregory Gause, Yezid Sayigh, Avi Shlaim,  
Judith E. Tucker

Cambridge Middle East Studies was established to publish books on the nineteenth- to twenty-first-century Middle East and North Africa. The aim of the series is to provide new and original interpretations of aspects of Middle Eastern societies and their histories. To achieve disciplinary diversity, books are solicited from authors writing in a wide range of fields including history, sociology, anthropology, political science, and political economy. The emphasis is on producing books offering an original approach along theoretical and empirical lines. The series is intended for students and academics, but the more accessible and wide-ranging studies will appeal to the interested general reader.

*A list of books in this series can be found after the index.*

# The 1967 Arab-Israeli War

## *Origins and Consequences*

Edited by

**Wm. ROGER LOUIS**

*University of Texas at Austin*

**AVI SHLAIM**

*University of Oxford*



Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-00236-4 — The 1967 Arab-Israeli War  
 Edited by Wm Roger Louis, Avi Shlaim  
 Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India  
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107002364](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107002364)

© Cambridge University Press 2012

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2012

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data*

The 1967 Arab-Israeli war: origins and consequences / edited by Wm. Roger Louis and Avi Shlaim.

p. cm. — (Cambridge Middle East studies; 36)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-00236-4 (hardback) — ISBN 978-0-521-17479-4 (paperback)

I. Israel-Arab War, 1967. I. Shlaim, Avi. II. Louis, William Roger, 1936-

DS127.A55 2012

956.046—dc23 2011021659

ISBN 978-1-107-00236-4 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-17479-4 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

## Contents

<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	page ix
<i>Chronology of the June 1967 War</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvii
Introduction	I
1 Israel: Poor Little Samson <i>Avi Shlaim</i>	22
2 Egypt: Dangerous Illusions <i>Laura M. James</i>	56
3 Syria: Playing with Fire <i>David W. Lesch</i>	79
4 Jordan: Walking the Tight Rope <i>Avi Shlaim</i>	99
5 The Palestinian National Movement <i>Wendy Pearlman</i>	126
6 The Yemen War and Egypt's War Preparedness <i>Eugene Rogan and Tewfik Aclimandos</i>	149
7 The United States and the 1967 War <i>Charles D. Smith</i>	165
8 The Soviet Union: The Roots of War and a Reassessment of Historiography <i>Rami Ginat</i>	193
9 Britain: The Ghost of Suez and Resolution 242 <i>Wm. Roger Louis</i>	219
	vii

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-00236-4 — The 1967 Arab-Israeli War  
Edited by Wm Roger Louis, Avi Shlaim  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

	<i>Contents</i>
viii	
10 France and the June 1967 War <i>Jean-Pierre Filiu</i>	247
11 The 1967 War and the Demise of Arab Nationalism: Chronicle of a Death Foretold <i>Rashid Khalidi</i>	264
12 The Transformation of Arab Politics: Disentangling Myth from Reality <i>Fawaz A. Gerges</i>	285
<i>Index</i>	315

## Notes on Contributors

**Tewfik Acimandos** is based in a research centre in Cairo. He was an associate professor at Cairo University (2000) and the American University of Cairo (2007), and a visiting professor at the Sorbonne (2008). His doctoral thesis is on the rise of political activism in the Egyptian army during the early 1950s. He has written several articles on the Muslim Brotherhood. He is currently writing a biography of Gamal Abdel Nasser.

**Jean-Pierre Filiu** is an associate professor at Sciences Po in Paris. He was a visiting professor at Columbia and Georgetown universities. An Arabist and historian, he has published several books in French with Librairie Arthème Fayard, including *Mitterrand and Palestine* (2005), *The Boundaries of Jihad* (2006), and *The Nine Lives of Al-Qaida* (2009). His *Apocalypse in Islam* (University of California Press, 2011) was awarded the Augustin-Thierry Prize by the French History Convention.

**Fawaz A. Gerges** is Professor of the International Relations of the Middle East and director of the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics. He is author of two recent books: *Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy* (2007) and *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (2005, second edition 2009). His other books include *The Superpowers and the Middle East: Regional and International Politics* (1994) and *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* (2000).

**Rami Ginat** is Professor of Middle Eastern Studies in the Department of Political Studies, Bar-Ilan University, Israel. His books include *The Soviet*

*Union and Egypt* (1993) and *Syria and the Doctrine of Arab Neutralism* (2005). His most recent books are *A History of Egyptian Communism: Jews and Their Compatriots in Quest of Revolution* (2011) and *Egypt and the Second Palestinian Intifada: Policy Making with Multifaceted Commitments* (2011).

**Laura M. James** is a Middle East analyst specialising in Egypt and Sudan. She received a doctorate in International Relations from the University of Oxford, and her book *Nasser at War: Arab Images of the Enemy* was published in 2006. After working for the Economist Intelligence Unit and for DFID, she is now the Economic Adviser to the Assessment and Evaluation Commission supporting the North-South peace agreement in Sudan.

**Rashid Khalidi** is the Edward Said Professor of Arab Studies at Columbia University and past President of the Middle East Studies Association. His books include *Sowing Crisis: American Dominance and the Cold War in the Middle East* (2009), *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (2006), *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East* (2004), and *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (1997).

**David W. Lesch** is Professor of Middle East History and Chair of the Department of History at Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas. He has published nine books, including *The Middle East and the United States: History, Politics, and Ideologies* (fifth edition 2011); *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History* (2008); *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Asad and Modern Syria* (2005); and *1979: The Year That Shaped the Modern Middle East* (2001).

**Wm. Roger Louis** is Kerr Professor of English History and Culture at the University of Texas at Austin and Honorary Fellow of St. Antony's College Oxford. A past President of the American Historical Association, he is editor-in-chief of *The Oxford History of the British Empire*. His books include *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951* (1984) and *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization* (2006).

**Wendy Pearlman** is Assistant Professor of Political Science and the Crown Junior Chair in Middle East Studies at Northwestern University. She is the author of *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement* (2011) and *Occupied Voices: Stories of Everyday Life from*



*the Second Intifada* (2003), as well as articles in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *International Security*, and *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. She holds a PhD in Government from Harvard University.

**Eugene Rogan** teaches Modern History of the Middle East at the University of Oxford. He authored *The Arabs: A History* (2009), which has been translated into several European and Middle Eastern languages, and *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire* (1999), which was awarded the Albert Hourani Book Award of the Middle East Studies Association and the Fuad Köprülü Prize of the Turkish Studies Association. He edited with Avi Shlaim *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (second edition 2007).

**Avi Shlaim** is Professor of International Relations and a Fellow of St. Antony's College, University of Oxford. He is a Fellow of the British Academy. His books include *War and Peace in the Middle East: A Concise History* (1995); *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (2000); *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace* (2007); and *Israel and Palestine: Reappraisals, Revisions, Refutations* (2009).

**Charles D. Smith** is Professor of Middle East history at the University of Arizona. He authored *Islam and the Search for Social Order in Modern Egypt* (1983) and *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (1988, now in its seventh edition). He is published widely on U.S. Middle East policy and the Arab-Israeli conflict and was an invited commentator on a panel on the 1967 War sponsored by the U.S. State Department in 2004.

## Chronology of the June 1967 War

29 May 1964	Creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
23 February 1966	Left-wing coup in Syria followed by increased PLO activity against Israel
9 November 1966	Syria and Egypt sign mutual defence treaty
13 November 1966	Israeli raid on West Bank village of al-Samu'
7 April 1967	Israeli aircraft shoot down six Syrian MiGs
5 May 1967	Attacks by Islamic opposition in Syria against the neo-Ba'athist regime
7 May 1967	Syria shells Israeli village of Ein Gev
9 May 1967	Soviets receive information from Tel Aviv indicating possible Israeli operations against Syria
12 May 1967	Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin threatens Syria; reprimanded by Prime Minister Eshkol
13 May 1967	Soviet Union delivers secret message to Nasser about Israel amassing troops on the Syrian border
14 May 1967	Nasser deploys troops in Sinai
18 May 1967	Nasser requests withdrawal of UN Emergency Force from Sinai
21 May 1967	Egyptian troops occupy Sharm al-Sheikh
22 May 1967	Nasser closes the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping
23 May 1967	President Johnson warns Egypt against interfering with shipping rights in the Gulf of Aqaba; Israel's Ministerial Committee on Security Affairs discusses the army's recommendation to launch a preemptive war
26 May 1967	Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban meets President Johnson after talks with de Gaulle and Wilson
27 May 1967	Israel sends request to meet with the Soviet leadership; Nasser cancels operation against Israel planned for the following morning

- |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 28 May 1967      | First meeting between Israeli government and Israel Defence Force (IDF) high command; Eshkol delivers hesitant speech to the nation                                                                                                          |
| 30 May 1967      | Egypt and Jordan sign mutual defence pact in Cairo                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 31 May 1967      | Mossad chief Meir Amit meets with U.S. Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officials                                                                                                                  |
| 1 June 1967      | Government of National Unity formed in Jerusalem, with Moshe Dayan taking over as Minister of Defence; Egyptian General Riad assumes command of the Jordanian armed forces                                                                   |
| 2 June 1967      | Second meeting between the Israeli government and high-ranking military officials; Nasser warns senior officers of imminent Israeli strike                                                                                                   |
| 4 June 1967      | Israeli Cabinet decides to go to war; CIA alerts King Hussein of impending Israeli attack on Egypt                                                                                                                                           |
| 5 June 1967      | Israel launches surprise attack on Egypt's air force, destroying most of it on the ground; Israel urges King Hussein to stay out of the war; Jordanians open hostilities against Israel; Israeli air force destroys most of Syrian air force |
| 6 June 1967      | IDF conquers Gaza; Egypt orders a general retreat; Jordan retreats from the West Bank                                                                                                                                                        |
| 7 June 1967      | IDF captures East Jerusalem; Nasser turns down UN cease-fire initiative                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 8 June 1967      | IDF occupies Hebron and destroys Jordanian bridges; Israeli forces attack USS <i>Liberty</i> ; Egypt accepts cease-fire                                                                                                                      |
| 9 June 1967      | United Nations passes Resolution 235 calling for immediate end to hostilities between Syria and Israel; IDF captures the Golan Heights; Israeli forces reach the Suez Canal; Nasser accuses United States and Britain of aiding Israel       |
| 10 June 1967     | The Soviet Union breaks off diplomatic relations with Israel                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 27 June 1967     | Israel annexes East Jerusalem                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 1 September 1967 | Arab League summit at Khartoum rejects negotiations and reconciliation with Israel                                                                                                                                                           |
| 22 November 1967 | UN Security Council Resolution 242 calls on the Arabs to make peace with Israel and calls on Israel to withdraw from the territories it occupied during the war                                                                              |