

50th anniversary of the Six-Day War - Israel and the Messiah's ass

Monday 5 June 2017, by [MACHOVER Moshé](#) (Date first published: 1 June 2017).

On the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War Moshé Machover looks at the background and consequences.

Contents

- [Global and regional roots](#)
- [Israel-US relationship](#)
- [Five 'Sinai's'](#)
- ['Empty' market-place](#)
- [Religious Zionism](#)

Much has been written about the sequence of events leading to the June 1967 Six-Day War: the series of missteps through which Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser stumbled into the fatal trap of a war he had not intend to fight.¹ The course of the war is also well documented: the crushing defeat of Egypt - sealed in the first few hours of the war, when virtually the entire Egyptian airforce was destroyed on the ground, like a badling of sitting ducks - followed by the defeat of Jordan and Syria, which subsequently got sucked into the war.²

As for the consequences of the war, to say that it "was a watershed moment in the history of the modern Middle East"³ is, like most clichés, evidently true. (This also applies to the cliché 'most clichés are true'...) Secular Arab nationalism was dealt a blow from which it has not recovered, while Israel emerged as a regional strongman, America's local enforcer. Indeed, due to the geopolitical and strategic centrality of the Middle East, the outcome of the war had a considerable global effect: the defeat of the USSR's main regional allies was a severe blow to its standing as a world power, contributed to its decline and presaged its demise.

In this, the 50th anniversary, much more is and will no doubt be written about all this: the lead-up to the war, its battles and aftermath. But here I would like to consider another aspect of that history: the pre-war roots of trends and developments that became manifest after June 1967. Like every major political crisis, the war was a moment of historical discontinuity: local, regional and to some extent even global reality took an abrupt turn. Yet, like every such crisis, it was also a juncture that amplified some pre-existing tendencies. That these were discernable in the preceding period - at least since 1956 - does not necessarily imply that the post-war shape of things could have been predicted with certainty. Rather, of the various alternatives that seemed possible before June 1967, the war selected some and suppressed others.

Global and regional roots

I cannot dwell here on the pre-1967 indications that the Soviet Union had entered a downward trend - which was to be its terminal decline - internally and internationally. Let me just mention the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, when Nikita Khrushchev was forced into a humiliating climbdown. The Brezhnev era, which started two years later, is generally recognised as one of stagnation, presaging ultimate collapse. Given this background, it could come as no surprise that the Soviet Union had to look on impotently, as its two Arab allies were thoroughly routed and their Soviet military hardware destroyed. This led directly within a few years to Egypt, the leading Arab country, leaving the Soviet orbit and becoming a US client.

While for the Soviet Union the war was but one in a series of steps, midway along its downhill slide, for the Arab world it was a calamity, marking the downfall of progressive - self-styled 'socialist' - secular Arab nationalism.

The decade following the Suez war of 1956 was one of euphoria in the Arab world, upswing of Arab nationalism and great personal prestige for Abdel Nasser. That war had ended very well for Egypt; the French and British imperialists and their Israeli co-conspirator had to withdraw empty-handed. But the euphoria was ill-founded. Egypt was only extricated from total defeat and loss of the recently nationalised Suez Canal thanks to the political intervention of the US. President Dwight Eisenhower and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, were incensed by the presumption of their subordinate French and British allies, who secretly plotted to re-establish their imperialist presence in the region.

Egypt's political success masked its economic, social and military backwardness. In purely military terms, the confrontation with Israel did not go at all well for it: Egypt's armed forces were no match for the Israeli onslaught and were badly thrashed. Besides, while for France and Britain the Suez war signalled the end of their imperialist hubris, Israel came out of it with a major strategic gain: it became a nuclear power - a reward paid by France to Shimon Peres for his pimping services in securing Israel's part in the dirty tripartite plot.⁴

As a matter of fact the progressiveness of Arab nationalism, even at its best, as personified by Abdel Nasser, was quite limited, its socialism fictitious, and even its secularity not all that radical. Based on the petty bourgeoisie and led by the military, it failed to modernise and industrialise the countries where it held power. Its professed aspiration to unite the Arab world politically - a historical imperative - came to nothing, as the United Arab Republic, a union of Egypt and Syria (1958-61), was a short-lived fiasco.

The fatal backwardness and stagnation of even the most 'progressive' Arab countries, which made their 1967 defeat a foregone conclusion, was mercilessly exposed by my late friend, Sadik al-Azm, in a devastating critique, published in 1968.⁵

I will say no more about the global and Arab regional pre-1967 roots of the war's outcome. The rest of this article will deal in some detail with the Israeli aspect of the 1967 transformation.

Israel-US relationship

There is a widespread belief that Israel became a regional junior partner of the US following the 1967 war. This is inaccurate: Israel's military prowess, displayed in that war, indeed confirmed its value as an American strategic asset, and cemented the US-Israel relationship, but this relationship

had been developing since 1961, when France was forced to give up its colonial war in Algeria. Until then France was Israel's main imperialist patron and arms supplier.⁶ In 1955-56 France sold Israel a great deal of heavy military equipment, including 18 105mm artillery pieces and hundreds of AMX-13 tanks. The Israeli air force acquired French warplanes: first the Mystère II, and from summer 1956 the more advanced Mystère IV. An additional consignment of these transonic fighter-bombers were delivered a few days before the Suez war, in which they played a crucial role.⁷

The chief French motive for this relationship was the belief that the Algerian resistance depended on Egyptian help and would collapse if the Nasserite regime, which Israel regarded as its main enemy, were toppled. This motivated the Franco-Israeli Suez war conspiracy, which Britain's Eden government idiotically joined. But after France had lost its major imperialist position in the region - first in the 1956 Suez debacle and then in 1961 with Algeria's independence - the Franco-Israeli relationship was deprived of its *raison d'être*, and Israel sought and found a new patron.

In 1962 Israel was allowed for the first time to purchase advanced US weapons: Hawk anti-aircraft missiles. In 1966, the year before the Six-Day War, US military aid to Israel rose sharply to \$90 million (originally in the form of a loan, which was later forgiven). This works out at about \$680 million in 2017 prices, and was more than twice the total in all the preceding years. Clearly, it marked a major upgrade of the relationship. Of course, it was much less than the current US military aid to Israel (mostly as a straight grant), which is measured in billions of dollars - but this hike was to come years later, beginning with the October ('Yom Kippur') 1973 war.⁸

So by 1967 Israel was already a firmly established US client; and - having learnt the lesson of Suez - it made sure to obtain Washington's green light before attacking Egypt on June 5. Indeed, recently released Israeli cabinet minutes reveal that the secret diplomatic negotiation this involved was what stayed prime minister Levi Eshkol's hand for a few days, tarnishing his public image as he appeared to hesitate and procrastinate. At a June 2 joint meeting of the cabinet's security committee and the army, chief of general staff (CGS) Yitzhak Rabin and general Ariel Sharon urged immediate action; the latter disparaged the diplomatic "rushing around, not to say pleading". Eshkol rejected this impatient badgering and pointed out that a US green light was vital because Israel was and would continue to be dependent on foreign military aid. He pointed out to Sharon that Israel's might had its limitations:

*"All that we have in the material might of our army has come from this 'rushing around'. Let us not forget this and let us not regard ourselves as Goliaths. With bare knuckles, unarmed and unequipped, we are powerless."*⁹

Five 'Sinai's'

A central role during the Six-Day War, as well as in the post-war period, was played by Moshe Dayan. A charismatic figure, he represented the dominant hawkish wing in Israel's military and political elite. A couple of years after leading Israel's forces in the Suez war as CGS, he retired from the army and switched to a political career (a common move among Israeli generals), serving as minister of agriculture in the last government headed by Ben-Gurion (1959-64). From 1965 he was out of office, but in the tense days leading to the war Eshkol appointed this most prestigious and popular former military leader as minister of defence.

Given his leading role, it is well worth taking due note of Dayan's public statements - all the more so, as, unlike most politicians, he was often brutally frank. Had Abdel Nasser paid close attention to Dayan's past pronouncements, he might have avoided trapping himself into a war that he did not really intend to fight, but that Dayan had long been looking forward to.

On March 31 1957 - just a few days after Israel had completed its US-imposed withdrawal from all the territories it occupied (and wished to annex) in the Suez war - CGS Moshe Dayan addressed a meeting of the officers of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) northern command. In his speech, published in the Histadrut daily *Davar* on the third anniversary of the Suez war, he dealt with the lessons of the 'Sinai campaign' (Israel's official euphemism for its part in that war):

"We must ask ourselves what, if anything, we have achieved regarding our general relations with the Arabs. In my opinion, the answer to this question lies less in what we achieved in the Sinai campaign itself and more in how the state of Israel will behave in the future, in the period after the Sinai War ... The question is who will draw the lesson from what ...

Will the lesson be for the Egyptians, the lesson of their defeat in Sinai; or will the lesson be for the state of Israel, the lesson of the withdrawal, and we will say that it was impossible to hold on to Sinai because the entire world opposed it, we had to withdraw, and therefore this path is not the right one? The question is whether the Egyptians will know that, even if Israel assumes that it would probably be forced to evacuate what it has conquered, it would nevertheless strike again in future if it is intolerably provoked. And most important: if the state of Israel says, 'We are ready, if we have to, to do a second, third, fifth round even if it ends in withdrawal' ...

If we throw up our hands, then the Sinai campaign will become a negative asset, a failure. But if we do not despair, then the Sinai campaign is a first-class achievement, a buttress of our security ... The Sinai campaign signifies that the state of Israel is prepared for any action for the sake of its vital needs - its survival, security and securing its rights. And if this means that if [another] Sinai campaign is required - then Sinai it will be, even in the face of serious political difficulties. And if tomorrow five 'Sinais' will be required, then five 'Sinais' it will be. If this is how we see matters, then the Sinai campaign will be a warning to the Arab countries, evidence of the state of Israel's ability and willingness to intensify the struggle and not to compromise on our interests."¹⁰

This became part of Israel's military doctrine. What it amounts to is readiness to use any challenge as an opportunity for asserting Israel's military dominance against any of its neighbours, especially Egypt, the leading Arab country. In the second half of May 1967, Abdel Nasser provided Israel with such an opportunity.

At the end of the Suez war, euphoric at Israel's swift military success, prime minister David Ben-Gurion announced the annexation of the Sinai peninsula and the creation of a much-expanded Third Kingdom of Israel,¹¹ before hastily eating his words under American pressure. But in any case, as implied by Dayan in his speech quoted above, the Sinai was not a high-priority target of Israel's expansionist ambitions, more a desired buffer between it and mainland Egypt.

'Empty' market-place

Matters are very different when it comes to the parts of Palestine that Israel had failed to 'liberate' in the 1948 war, especially the West Bank. Ever since the end of that war, the hawkish wing of Israel's military and political elite had been itching to complete the 'liberation' of the whole of the country, which Zionist ideology regards as belonging to the Jewish people. As argued by Ilan Pappé,

"The Israeli political and military elite regarded [the 1948 war] as a missed opportunity: a historical moment in which Israel could, and should, have occupied the whole of historical Palestine from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. The only reason they did not do so was because of an agreement they had with neighbouring Jordan. This collusion was negotiated during the last days of the British mandate and, when finalised, it limited the military participation of the Jordanian army in

the general Arab war effort in 1948. In return, Jordan was allowed to annex areas of Palestine that became the West Bank. David Ben-Gurion, who kept the pre-1948 agreement intact, called the decision to allow Jordan to take the West Bank ... "a fatal historical mistake".

Ever since 1948, important sections of the Jewish cultural, military and political elites had been looking for an opportunity to rectify this mistake. From the mid-1960s onwards, they carefully planned how to create a greater Israel that would include the West Bank. There were several historical junctures in which they almost executed the plan, only to draw back at the very last moment. The most famous are 1958 and 1960, when David Ben-Gurion aborted the execution of the plan due to fears of international reaction in the first instance and for demographic reasons in the second (calculating that Israel could not incorporate such a large number of Palestinians). The best opportunity came with the 1967 war."

For further details I refer the reader to chapter 6 of Pappé's recent book, from which I have just quoted.¹²

Let me make here some additional remarks, supporting Pappé's assessment. After June 1963, when Ben-Gurion finally left office and his restraining authority was no longer effective, the hawkish faction became more assertive and there was frequent open discussion of the business left unfinished by the 1948 war. Thus on January 31 1964, the evening newspaper *Ma'ariv* published a series of interviews on this topic with leading public figures, conducted by Ge'ulah Cohen, extreme rightwing nationalist politician and former terrorist.¹³ All interviewees shared the view that the existing borders of Israel (which had in fact never been finalised and were merely armistice lines established in 1949) fell short of the "entire homeland". While some accepted these borders as an inevitable compromise, others were not resigned to this reality. While Shimon Peres opined that "Israel can exist even within the present borders", Moshe Dayan asserted that "the present borders are an outcome of the [1948] war, not an achievement of [our] objective". And Aryeh Ben-Eliezer, a leader of Herut (forerunner of the Likud), was even more explicit: "Israel's existence depends on not giving up on the entire country."

A few months later, Yigal Allon - like Dayan a prestigious general turned politician and a prominent hawk - declared:

*"The country has remained divided and its borders distorted not due to lack of correct strategic planning or lack of military capability, but only because of political restraint, for which prime minister and defence minister D Ben-Gurion was responsible. Indeed, when [he] ordered our army to halt, we were at the peak of our victories in all the decisive fronts, from the Litani river in the north to the heart of the Sinai desert in the south-west. With just a few days of fighting it would have been possible to achieve the final defeat of the invading Arab armies and liberation of the country in its entirety."*¹⁴

Allon, like Dayan, was in the June 1967 cabinet; and both pushed for implementing their hawkish line at the time of the war and in the following period.

They had to overcome some resistance by part of the old labour-Zionist guard, who had reservations about Israel incorporating areas populated by too many Arabs. A typical objection of this sort was voiced by Yosef Weitz, who had long been an advocate of ethnic cleansing, and was active in implementing it in 1947-49. But now, in 1967, he warned against holding on to the newly conquered territories, because "the majority of the inhabitants of the liberated [sic] territories have remained 'stuck' to their places - a fact that may undermine the very foundation of our state."¹⁵ Territorial expansion without ethnic cleansing was dangerous. This position was also shared by Ben-Gurion himself, now in retirement. In an interview filmed in 1968 (whose footage was rediscovered in 2016)

he said that Israel should immediately relinquish most of the territories it had taken a year earlier in the Six-Day War, keeping only the Golan Heights (most of whose population had been ethnically cleansed) and east Jerusalem.¹⁶

A parenthetical remark: I must take this opportunity to correct an error of mine. In several articles I quoted an important speech made by Dayan in February 1973, in which he quoted approvingly a statement of Ben-Gurion dating from 1937, in which the latter had said:

*"Among ourselves [the Zionists] there can be no debate about the integrity of the land of Israel [ie, Palestine], and about our ties and right to the whole of the land ... When a Zionist speaks about the integrity of the land, this can only mean colonisation [hityashvut] by the Jews of the land in its entirety."*¹⁷

I was under the impression that Dayan was delivering a message on behalf of Ben-Gurion (who died later in 1973). But it is now clear that in fact Dayan was tacitly reproaching his old mentor for backsliding from his former doctrine.

Let me now return to May-June 1967. An important reason why the hawks, led by Dayan, were able to have their way and overcome whatever resistance they met is that they were supported by the prevailing mood of the Hebrew public, product of systematic indoctrination by the Zionist political and cultural establishment. This mood found an emblematic expression in a song composed (both music and lyrics) by Naomi Shemer for a musical festival held on Israel's 19th Day of Independence, on May 15 1967. She must have written it at least a few days earlier, before the Six-Day War was on the horizon. Entitled 'Jerusalem of gold', the song is imbued with yearning for the Old City, across the armistice line with Jordan. Remarkably, it describes the Old City as desolate, uninhabited:

"... How the cisterns have dried

The market-place is empty

And no-one frequents the Temple Mount

In the Old City.

And in the caves in the mountain

Winds are howling

And no-one descends to the Dead Sea

By way of Jericho.

Jerusalem of gold

And of bronze, and of light

Behold I am a violin for all your songs.

But as I come to sing to you today,

And to adorn crowns to you

I am the smallest of the youngest of your children

And of the last poet.

For your name scorches the lips

Like the kiss of a seraph

If I forget thee, Jerusalem,

Which is all gold."¹⁸

Of course, this was a pack of lies or, as we say nowadays, alternative facts. The road to Jericho was busy with traffic, the Temple Mount thronging with worshippers, and the market-place bustling with shoppers. But they were Arabs - and, being natives, were non-existent to the exclusionary colonising vision.

Religious Zionism

Shemer's song soon became a hit, and was incessantly played on the radio during the following weeks, from the moment expectation of war began to mount.

On May 24 I was called up for duty in the reserve section of the Jerusalem brigade. As we were waiting to be kitted up, we were handed a duplicated sheet. On its verso side was printed ... yes, you guessed it: Naomi Shemer's song. On the other, recto side, entitled "Battle page", was a message from the Jerusalem district commander, colonel Eliezer Amitai:

"Soldiers and commanders!

This time we have not come for exercises or training. We have come to prove that all the exercises and training were worthwhile.

This time we have come to warn the nearby enemy that he should not dare to move. We have come to remind him that if he starts hostilities his own territory will be the battlefield.¹⁹

This time we have come to remind the enemy that if we will it - the [Wailing] Wall, Mount Scopus and even Jericho are ours.

Defenders of Jerusalem!

I am proud of those whom I have recently arrived to command. Your devotion, fitness and equipment instil in me, in the IDF supreme command, and in the inhabitants of Jerusalem trust that you can be relied upon.

The handful of fighters who defended the city with scant arms and who broke its siege in 1948 is succeeded by a generation trained and equipped to complete the task - if called to do so."

I realised at once that this was a significant document, and made sure to keep my copy safe. It is still with me today, after all these years.

But, at that moment, something happened that astonished and alarmed me. My reserve unit was made up of a cross-section of the male Hebrew population of Jerusalem in the late 20s and 30s age group - excluding the ultra-orthodox, who are exempt from military service. As such, it included a fair proportion of religious men, mostly national-religious Zionists. These - unlike the black-garbed,

long-bearded ultra-orthodox - did not differ in appearance from the rest of us, except for one tell-tale item of clothing: a knitted skullcap. The moment that group finished reading the colonel's message, they started jumping up and down, singing and dancing ecstatically. They clearly felt that their great era is about to dawn.

This surprised me, because at the time the religious Zionists, represented in the Knesset by the National-Religious Party,²⁰ were on the whole quite dovish. Or so they appeared to be, because of their moderate old political leadership, traditional allies of labour Zionism. After 1967, knitted-skullcap national-religious Zionism was to mutate and become ultra-hawkish, and the NRP was replaced by the extremist messianic Jewish Home party. But this mutation, like other post-1967 transformations, had germinated and taken root well before the Six-Day War.

Its main hotbed was a Jerusalem yeshiva (religious college), Mercaz HaRav Kook, founded in 1924.²¹ Its founder, rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), was a Zionist of a kind very rare in his day. While most Zionists were unbelievers, and most orthodox rabbis were adamant in opposing Zionism, AI Kook was a messianic Zionist theologian. According to his theology, Zionist colonisation of Palestine and the eventual founding of a Jewish state were part of a divine plan, culminating in the coming of the messiah. His sophisticated political doctrine advocated alliance with the secular Zionists, tolerating their godlessness.²² They should be humoured, even indulged: he compared them to the messiah's ass - a dumb brute but a divine instrument, bearing the saviour on its back.²³ This doctrine, in a cruder and more extreme form, was preached by his son and disciple, Zvi Yehuda Kook, who headed the yeshiva in the crucial years 1951-82. In that nest were hatched vipers such as Moshe Levinger, Hanan Porat and other main leaders of the post-1967 fanatic religious settlers. Many others were influenced by its theology - as no doubt were the ecstatic members of my reserve unit.

Over the 50 years since 1967, extremist religious Zionism has become the energising powerhouse of Israeli politics, particularly of the colonisation drive. While still a political minority, it is a determined one, whose messianic zeal cannot be matched by the pusillanimous pale and bankrupt secular Zionist opposition.

Marxists will not be surprised to find that an ideology that becomes dominant in a society is one best suited to its material reality. In the present case the material reality is military possession by Israel of adjacent colonisable territories - an almost irresistible attraction for a settler state that enjoys overwhelming advantage in the local and regional balance of power, as well as unstinting support by the global hegemonic empire.

Messianic religious Zionism provides the zeal needed for implanting colonising outposts in hostile ground stolen from its indigenous people. Moderate Zionists have no real intellectual or moral weapon against this ideology. Because, as AI Kook surely realised, it is not the case that his doctrine was a theologised version of secular Zionism; on the contrary, mainstream Zionism has always been a superficially secularised version of a messianic theology. This was from the very start of Zionist colonisation the basis for claiming legitimacy for its project of taking possession of a populated land. This too is today the underlying logic of the claim that "Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people". A worldwide 'Jewish people' is fundamentally a religion-based concept; as Sa'adia Ga'on (882/892-942CE), one of the highest authorities of Judaism, put it, "Our people is a people only because of the Torah (religious law)".²⁴ And its claim over the 'Land of Israel' is based on nothing but theological cod-history.

In earlier phases of the Zionist project, when colonialism was supported even by large sections of international social democracy, 'leftwing' labour Zionism could provide adequate ideological cover for the 'pioneering' colonisers of Palestine. The messiah's silly ass could imagine it has no rider. But

in the post-colonial era this would no longer do. Thus, in the public controversy that erupted in Israel after the Six-Day War, moderate, 'left' Zionists found themselves at a disadvantage faced with the hawkish annexationists.

For example, Amos Oz, worried by the demographic peril posed by a large Arab population, came out against the horrifying overtones accompanying the annexationist orgy. He described the arguments citing Jewish "historical" rights over the "entire Land of Israel" as "hallucinations of a myth". He went on to assert that territorial rights and political borders can only be based on the demographic principle: every people has a right over the territory it inhabits and in which it constitutes a majority. Any other principle is baseless.²⁵

An annexationist polemicist had no trouble pointing out the weakness of Oz's position:

"This criterion - 'who inhabits this piece of land today' - can in no way be the sole criterion. Because if Amos Oz would apply it, and it alone, Zionism has no justification at all.

If Amos Oz approves of the borders within which we existed so far because they have a demographic rationale, he should ask himself whether that demographic situation that determined the borders had always existed or was created in a colonising process. Indeed, according to a demographic criterion we did not have, at the start of the realisation of Zionism, any right over this country! The entire right followed from hallucinations of a myth. This is what the anti-Zionists have always claimed. Nevertheless we were not prepared to accept a given demographic situation as the sole criterion. We did everything to alter the demographic situation. Is it permissible to do this? If it is not - there is no justification to our very existence here. If it is - there is nothing sacred about the borders determined by one specific military confrontation [ie, the 1948 war - MM], and it is permissible to alter the demographic reality in other zones as well."²⁶

I could cite many more illustrations showing how easy it was for the annexationists to win the intra-Zionist debate. Thus it has come to pass that, 50 years later, a leader of the messianic Jewish Home party, deputy speaker of the Knesset and member of the ruling coalition Bezalel Smotrich, made a public speech in which he offered Israel's Palestinian Arab subjects three options: leave the occupied territories, continue to live there with second-class status, or continue resisting, in which case "the Israel Defence Forces will know what to do". Asked if he intended to wipe out whole families, including women and children, Smotrich replied, "In war, as in war."²⁷

Professor Daniel Blatman rightly described Smotrich's kind offer as "chilling words that are liable to lead Israel into committing the horrific crime of genocide." He went on to say:

*"Smotrich's admiration for the biblical genocidaire, Joshua bin Nun, leads him to adopt values that resemble those of the German SS. Naturally, he didn't take the trouble to make such comparisons, since someone who supports genocide doesn't try to understand the world view of the genocidaire who preceded him."*²⁸

Comparison of Israeli politicians with the SS is strong stuff, but prof Blatman must know what he is talking about: he is described by Ha'aretz as a "historian of the holocaust and [sic] genocide at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem". And in any case it is odious to assume that genocide can only be committed by gentiles.

Moshe Machover

Notes

1. A good overview is Avi Shlaim's 'Israel: poor little Samson' in A Shlaim and WR Louis (eds) The

1967 Arab-Israeli war: origins and consequences Cambridge 2012. Other essays in this collection provide important many-sided background material. The Wikipedia entry - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six-Day_War - is heavily biased in favour of Israel's viewpoint; in particular, it omits to mention Israel's deliberate escalation of the border skirmishes with Syria during May 1967, which started the chain of events leading to the war. It is silent on the threat made by Israel's army chief of staff, general Yitzhak Rabin, in a newspaper interview on May 12, to occupy Damascus and overthrow the Syrian regime (see A Shlaim op cit).

2. The Wikipedia entry, despite its ideological bias, is a useful reference for the course of the war itself.

3. Blurb of A Shlaim and WR Louis op cit.

4. See A Shlaim, 'The protocol of Sèvres, 1956: anatomy of a war plot' International Affairs, 73:3 (1997), pp509-530. Reprinted in D Tal (ed) The 1956 war: collusion and rivalry in the Middle East London 2001, pp119-43.

5. English translation: Self-criticism after the defeat London 2011. See also R Khalidi, 'The 1967 war and the demise of Arab nationalism: chronicle of a death foretold' in A Shlaim and WR Louis op cit.

6. This relationship started before the creation of Israel, when France secretly assisted the Zionist underground terrorist activity against the British Mandate. See J Barr A line in the sand: Britain, France and the struggle that shaped the Middle East New York 2011.

7. See B Morris Israel's border wars 1949-1956 Oxford 1993; and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dassault_Mystère_IV.

8. For data on US aid to Israel, see JM Sharp US foreign aid to Israel Congressional Research Service, December 22 2016: <https://fas.org/srg/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf>.

9. Ha'aretz (Hebrew) May 18 2017: www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.789980.

10. Davar (Histadrut daily) October 30 1959.

11. Message to the Israeli forces in Sharm al-Sheikh, broadcast on Israel radio November 6 1956; repeated the following day in a speech to the Knesset.

12. I Pappé Ten myths about Israel London 2017. Also see his more recent The biggest prison on Earth: the history of the Israeli occupation London 2017.

13. Her autobiography, Woman of violence: memoirs of a young terrorist, 1943-1948, was published in 1966.

14. Lamerhav (labour-Zionist daily paper) March 8 1964.

15. Davar September 19 1967.

16. The Forward July 26 2016: <http://tinyurl.com/m5wmeyv>.

17. Ha'aretz February 18 1973.

18. With additional verse celebrating the 'liberation' of the old city: http://israelforever.org/interact/multimedia/yerushalayim_shel_zahav;

<http://hebrewsongs.com/?song=yerushalayimshelzahav>. By the way, the song's title and refrain bear a passing (?) resemblance to a devotional composition by the 12th-century mystic and polymath, St Hildegard of Bingen: O Ierusalem, aurea civitas, ornata regis purpura; o edificatio summe bonitatis que es lux numquam obscurata. See and listen: www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dw.asp?dc=W2932_GBAJY8403904.

19. In the event it was Israel that made the first move against Jordan: early on June 5 it destroyed not only the Egyptian airforce, but also all but one of Jordan's serviceable combat airplanes, as well as three Hunters on loan from Iraq. See www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/jordan/rjaf.htm.

20. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Religious_Party.

21. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercaz_HaRav_Kook.

22. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Isaac_Kook.

23. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Messiah's_Donkey; 'The Messiah's donkey: settlers fire on Palestinian villagers as the Israeli military watches': <http://tinyurl.com/ybd2njgb>.

24. Quoted by I Shahak, 'The Jewish religion and its attitude to non-Jews' KhamsinNo8, 1981: <http://tinyurl.com/yak2wpbr>.

25. A Oz, 'The minister of defence and the Lebensraum'Davar August 22 1967.

26. A Renan Davar September 14 1967. Emphases in the original.

27. T Persico, 'Why religious Zionism is growing darker' Ha'aretz May 16 2017: www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.789226.

28. D Blatman, 'The Israeli lawmaker heralding genocide against Palestinians' Ha'aretz May 23 2017: www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.791115.

P.S.

* <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1157/israel-and-the-messiahs-ass/>