

1994

## Six Days in June: How Israel Won the 1967 Aral- Israeli War

Cole C. Kingseed

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Kingseed, Cole C. (1994) "Six Days in June: How Israel Won the 1967 Aral-Israeli War," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 47 : No. 1 , Article 16.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol47/iss1/16>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

operational and organizational doctrine. The main fault of *The Roots of Blitzkrieg*, however, is that it leaves one with the impression that Seeckt and his successors overcame the restraints of Versailles. Corum shows how German industry, with Soviet cooperation, did in fact design, build, and test prototypes of armored vehicles and aircraft prohibited by the Treaty. Yet Germany's defeat in 1945 was due in part to the dismantling of her defense industrial base after 1919. Although able to manufacture prototypes, German defense industry never sufficiently recovered its mass production capacity to meet the requirements of the war of 1939–1945.

On the whole, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg* is a valuable addition to the military bookshelf and can be of great interest to force planners. As of 1 September 1939, the 10,000-man Treaty Army of 1920–1933 had grown into an army of over 3.7 million and an air force of 550,000. The *National Military Strategy of the United States* (January 1992) tasks our own forces with immediate and delayed crisis-response capabilities and with a surge of reconstitution capability. How Seeckt built the Reichswehr for potential expansion should be valuable to those planning our own future forces.

WALTER J. JOHANSON  
Commander, U.S. Naval Reserve  
Yonkers, New York

---

Hammel, Eric. *Six Days in June: How Israel Won the 1967 Arab-Israeli*

*War*. New York: Scribner's, 1992. 452pp. \$30

The Six Day War of 1967 had profound repercussions in the Middle East. For the third time in as many decades, a qualitatively superior, albeit numerically inferior, Israeli force inflicted a crushing defeat on the combined Arab armies. In this latest examination of the conflict, author Eric Hammel analyzes its origins and conduct and concludes that victory was the product of two decades of Israeli military preparation.

Written from a decidedly pro-Israeli bias (the author's grandfather died at the hands of the Nazis, and Hammel uses almost exclusively Israeli sources), the author attempts to justify Israel's preemptive strike on 5 June as a fulfillment of the first rule of war—that an enemy must be judged on the basis of his capabilities and not on the basis of his intentions. Two decades of Arab-Israeli strife dictated that national survival could be preserved only if Zahal (the Israel Defense Force, or IDF) attained a massive qualitative advantage over its adversaries and if the army used all its power decisively in the form of a lightning preemptive offensive designed to take the war into the enemy lands. By June 1967 Syria, Egypt, and Jordan were capable of launching a three-front war against Israel; therefore, Israel had to assume they would. While many readers may question the (im)morality of this logic, Hammel sees few strategic alternatives available to Israel in 1967.

## 128 Naval War College Review

The author makes his greatest contribution in examining the evolution of the Zahal into a world-class military organization. Created in 1949, it struggled to develop an operational doctrine. A host of influential military theorists and practitioners, including Yigal Yadin, Chaim Laskov of the Armored Corps, IDF chief of staff Yitzhak Rabin, and Ariel Sharon all played leading roles in creating an effective military force. Foremost of the reformers, according to Hammel, was Moshe Dayan, whose most significant achievement lay in "identifying encouraging, and institutionalizing the innovations of other younger leaders in the profoundly interconnected doctrine of flexibility and fighting spirit."

The IDF came of age during the 1956 Sinai campaign, which served as a dress rehearsal for war in 1967. Led by Dayan, the IDF carefully analyzed every facet of the war and developed detailed operational plans for the inevitable showdown, which came eleven years later when President Nasser of Egypt ordered his army into the Sinai. The author believes that the lightning victory that startled the world in 1967 was actually preordained, a result of Israeli *elan*, a proven doctrine of offensive mobile warfare, and the complete synchronization of arms and services toward a single objective—the total destruction of Arab military forces.

While Hammel's description of the operational and tactical engagements is superb (particularly the fighting

around Jerusalem), the book does contain some shortcomings. The absence of endnotes and the author's over-reliance on secondary sources, save autobiographies of the principal participants, detract from the text. Additionally, the author's obvious infatuation with Zahal leads him to denigrate any capability of Arab forces, so much so he states that whatever Arab operational plans did exist in 1967 were doomed to failure. Moreover, disciples of Clausewitz will cringe as the author laments that the IDF's goals have "sometimes become enslaved to hateful political intentions."

These debits aside, Hammel has written a highly readable, albeit one-sided, popular history of the war that forever changed the political and military face of the Middle East. The Six Day War was Zahal's finest military hour. In the final analysis, Israel's continued existence as a nation rests on the shoulders of Zahal, a military force that demonstrated its military effectiveness during one week in June when it defeated the combined armies of three nations in a modern *blitzkrieg*.

COLE C. KINGSEED  
Colonel, U.S. Army  
West Point, New York

---

Lucas, W. Scott. *Divided We Stand*. Kent, United Kingdom: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992. 330pp. \$40  
A combined Anglo-French airborne force landed in the Suez Canal zone