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Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962)

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The Algerian War of Independence was one of the most controversial military conflicts associated with “decolonization,” the dismantling of European overseas empires after World War II. The great majority of Algeria’s population live in a long coastal plain along the southwestern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, and in mixed forest and mountain country intermingled with that coastal plain. Its location made Algeria coveted by ambitious empires throughout its history. Conflict between France and the Ottoman Turkish Empire prompted a French invasion in 1830, which framed the twentieth-century war of independence.

French hegemony in Algeria produced three developments that made the ultimate war of independence unique, complicated, and controversial. First, France declared its Algerian territories to be part of metropolitan France itself, not overseas colonial territories. Second, a large population of European settlers put down roots in Algeria. Third, successive French governments treated Algeria as part of France, but denied full political and civil rights and equality to residents of Algeria other than the European settler communities.

The Algerian population was diverse before France annexed the country. Berber peoples tended to live in the mountainous and desert areas, Arabs and Turks along the coastal plain. United to an extent by a shared religion, Islam, they were also frequently divided by disputes over land and customs. French rule was imposed by force in bitter campaigns stretching to the end of the 1840s. “Resistance” to French rule tended to be driven by local, ethnic, and religious factors, but did lay the foundation for an Algerian “national myth” of unified struggle against alien rule. The dispossession of non-Europeans from political and economic power reinforced that perception of suppressed national identity. But French efforts to integrate Algeria into French civilization also affected perceptions of identity. By the 1930s Algerians tended to divide into three broad groups. Many, led by Messali Hadj, wanted to oust French rule from Northwest Africa and restore independent states in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. Many Muslim religious leaders saw the problem as a cultural struggle against French efforts to Europeanize a Muslim community. Their slogan was “Arabic is my language, Algeria is my country, Islam is my religion” (Horne 1977: 38). A smaller group of mainly urban professionals, led by Ferhat Abbas, distinguished between an ideal France of liberty, equality, and fraternity,

and the inequality imposed by European settlers in Algeria. They argued there was no reason Algerians could not be Muslim and French at the same time, providing liberal France lived up to its progressive ideals.

World War II was the decisive event that changed the course of modern Algerian history. The German conquest of France in June 1940 divided it politically and brought the war directly to Algeria. General Charles de Gaulle, a junior minister in the last government of the Third Republic, escaped to England to continue the war, and called on the French armed forces and people to rally to his call. But the constitutional government, taken in hand by Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain, accepted an armistice yet retained control of most French overseas territories – including Algeria. Pétain's Vichy France collaborated militarily with the Axis Powers. The French Empire became a military and political battleground between Vichy and Free France over the “French future.” In Algeria, Vichy policies favored the political and economic dominance of the European community and widened the gulf between them and the non-Europeans. The Free French countered by declaring they would grant French overseas territories self-determination after the war. When Allied forces invaded Algeria and Morocco in November 1942 to drive Axis forces out of Africa, they ignited a confusing struggle for control of French territory and the armed forces. When France itself was liberated in autumn 1944 de Gaulle and his Free French established themselves as the Provisional Government of France. After the war ended with Allied victory in 1945, a Fourth Republic emerged. It faced daunting challenges. France was devastated physically, humiliated and divided politically. French leaders were determined to rebuild French prosperity, power, and prestige. To do this they needed to draw on the resources of the overseas territories. This clashed with rising expectations for political change in those territories.

Such expectations were spelled out in Algeria in June 1943 in a manifesto agreed by Messali Hadj and Ferhat Abbas, demanding post-war political independence. Algerian nationalism began to focus more on evolution outside any framework defined by France. This movement, combined with serious economic problems, triggered protests in May 1945 in the town of Sétif, during celebrations to mark the end of the war.

Police efforts to disperse the protests triggered violent reaction by Algerian farmers. The clashes escalated into an anti-European rampage, to which European settlers and the security forces responded massively. More than 100 Europeans and thousands of Algerians were killed. Sétif was a shocking wake-up call that exposed stark divisions pushing Algeria toward open conflict. Three agendas clashed. First, growing numbers of Algerians were no longer prepared to tolerate being second-class citizens in their own country. Common ground still existed, with many channels of intercourse. But dividing lines were very real: Muslim and non-European on the one hand, Christian and European on the other. Second, the French government needed first to rebuild France and simply could not drive radical changes overseas. Third, and most vexing, the European community was determined to prevent political change that would jeopardize its dominance of Algeria. This explosive combination of French weakness at home, European settler intransigence, and changing Algerian expectations produced the war of independence.

The clash at Sétif changed the political atmosphere in Algeria. The moment was met by a younger generation of Algerians, many of them veterans of the French armed forces. Frustration drove them forward, as did a larger international groundswell for political change and the dismantling of European overseas empires. Some of these younger leaders organized a political-military coalition to unite Algerian aspirations in a common front, to end the divisions that weakened Algerian nationalism. The formation of the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) shaped what became the war of independence.

The FLN wanted to establish an independent modern Algerian state organized on socialist principles. It emerged from three things: French failure to satisfy Algerian demands for change, violent faction feuding between Algerian nationalist movements, and events elsewhere. French refusal in 1947 to grant real equality of status between Europeans and Algerians accelerated a shift towards armed struggle against French power. The principal nationalist party, the *Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques* (MTLD), organized a paramilitary underground wing: the *Organization Spéciale* (OS). Most OS leaders wound up being arrested

by French police. But this experience forged bonds between younger men from different regions and groups, bonds reinforced by growing impatience with pre-war leaders. They were also encouraged by nationalist challenges to European dominance elsewhere. French defeat in Indochina, culminating in the debacle at Dien Bien Phu in spring 1954, inspired a breakthrough in Algeria – it demonstrated that French power could be beaten.

Younger militants formed the *Comité Révolutionnaire pour l'Unité et l'Action* (CRUA), expressly to unite Algerian nationalists in armed struggle to end French rule in Algeria. CRUA leaders organized the FLN, and its military wing: the *Armée de Libération Nationale* (ALN). On November 1, 1954, the FLN staged more than 30 coordinated attacks, all over Algeria, against police stations, army barracks, factories, French civil servants, and Algerians working as state officials. The FLN announced itself to the world by claiming responsibility for the attacks, which killed seven people and provoked the French government to send paramilitary police and troops from the mainland to crush the outbreak. This launched a conflict that dragged on until July 1962, cost possibly half a million lives from a total population of 10 million, destroyed the Fourth Republic in France, sparked three rebellions against the Fifth Republic, provoked nearly the whole one-million-strong European community in Algeria to flee into permanent exile, and shaped both modern France and Algeria.

The FLN defined this conflict. They did so by waging a revolutionary war that ultimately forced France to abandon physical control of Algeria. This French–Algerian War combined three conflicts: civil war between the FLN and rival Algerian nationalist groups; guerrilla war between the FLN and the French army and police; *de facto* civil war among the French, in France and Algeria. The FLN identified three tasks: to convince the “Algerian people” to truly be the Algerian people; to establish the FLN as the undisputed leader of that people; to force the French government to leave Algeria to them. French war aims were more confused. The French government tried to bring about a stable Algeria still associated politically with France. The French army tried to preserve French power in Algeria by defeating what they wrongly identified as a “communist” military

challenge to that power. And European settlers tried to prevent any change that would end their dominance of a French Algeria. Two other protagonists played vital roles by facing essential questions, pushed onto the agenda by the FLN. The Algerian people had to decide whether they were a united people, who wanted an independent nation, and if so what kind of nation, governed by whom. The people of France had to decide whether France should remain associated with Algeria, and if so how. The FLN’s revolutionary war, designed to change Algeria as well as win independence, revolved around a central political question. This question became the preoccupation of French governments: could they find a “third voice” of moderation, lying between Algerian nationalism and European settler intransigence, with whom France could redefine its relationship with Algeria?

The central theme of FLN strategy was to force all Algerians into definitive conflict with the French. The “nine historic leaders” organized the movement into an external wing that would concentrate on winning international sympathy and support, led by Ahmed Ben Bella, and an internal wing that would wage revolutionary guerrilla war inside Algeria, whose major leaders included Belkacem Krim, Larbi Ben M’Hidi, and Rabah Bitat. From the first wave of attacks crucial targets were the so-called *béni oui ouis*, Algerians working for the French state, and MTLN supporters of Messali Hadj. The FLN insisted on forging one unified Algerian movement, through violence. But the structure of the organization reflected the country’s internal divisions. The FLN divided Algeria into six districts, called *wilayas*, plus a special zone for the city of Algiers. Early operations in the *bled*, or countryside, did not gain much active support from Algerians. But they did provoke an uncompromising French government response. It could not negotiate independence with any Algerian groups because “ici, c’est la France.” This position was at first popular in France, not least with an army smarting from defeat in Vietnam and determined to draw a line in Algeria. FLN external efforts enjoyed more success, sparking sympathy from the new Non-Aligned Movement and more tangible support from Arab nationalism, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. The struggle to make any progress in Algeria provoked FLN leaders deliberately to escalate the war in August 1955

by directly attacking European settlers near Philippeville, killing 103 civilians. The severe French military and civilian retribution that followed further poisoned relations between European settlers and Algerians. FLN terrorism, answered by French *ratonnade* (“rat hunt”) retributions, sparked an escalating spiral of violence against civilians that played into FLN hands.

Such escalation reflected the center of gravity of the war: the political struggle to determine how civilian populations would answer those questions about the relationship between France and Algeria. French belated efforts to play catch-up by more liberal integration and social/economic development were directly attacked by the FLN strategy to target the European population and provoke retaliation. In March 1956, the French government granted “special powers” to Algerian authorities to suppress the FLN. In April, Ferhat Abbas disbanded his moderate party and joined the FLN. French executions of FLN prisoners provoked FLN attacks on policemen in Algiers; European policemen retaliated by planting bombs in the Casbah, the Arab quarter of the city.

The spiral of escalation prompted the FLN to organize its only wartime congress, in August, in the remote rural village of Soummam. This congress was controversial; none of the external leaders could attend and several denounced it. Nevertheless, the congress made two crucial decisions. First, the internal political struggle would remain paramount. Second, war aims and strategy were confirmed: violence would be used to destroy all voices of moderation or compromise, to force Algerians and French to answer their questions through conflict. To provoke this rupture, the FLN launched an even more aggressive campaign of urban terrorism in the heart of French Algeria: the capital city, Algiers.

The Battle of Algiers proved to be the major turning point in the Algerian War of Independence. The French won a military victory, but suffered an irreversible political defeat. On September 30, FLN guerrillas in Algiers, led by Larbi Ben M’Hidi and Saadi Yacef, launched a campaign of bombing attacks on civilian targets in the city, such as cafés and offices, frequented by Europeans. The FLN unit operated from the Casbah, provoking French police and troops to cordon off the quarter and strictly control movement in and out.

Yacef responded by using female fighters to smuggle out explosives and carry out attacks. On December 27, the FLN assassinated the European mayor of Algiers. This enraged the European community; hardliners tried to assassinate General Raoul Salan, the army commander in chief in Algeria, denouncing him as too weak to prosecute the war. Such rage forced the French government to turn over the capital to the army; on January 7, 1957, the 10th Parachute Division, commanded by General Jacques Massu, took over the defense of Algiers. The paratroopers were hardened regular veterans, more formidable and aggressive than the conscript soldiers they replaced. The FLN found out just how aggressive when it called a General Strike for January 28, to unite the Casbah in passive resistance to the French. The paratroopers broke the strike by forcing residents back to work. But this was just the beginning.

Massu’s division worked with the clandestine 11th Shock Battalion, a counterintelligence unit secretly authorized by the French government to do “whatever it takes” to smash the FLN guerrillas in Algiers (Aussaresses 2005: 124–126). The paratroopers and the clandestine unit devised a strategy to implode the FLN, by smothering the Casbah with intrusive search and interrogation operations, using *agents provocateurs* and Algerian auxiliaries, or *harkis*, to identify FLN sympathizers, then using physical torture to force detained suspects to reveal the names, ranks, and locations of FLN fighters. The plan was to identify the enemy, then dismantle his force from within. This “urban protection” plan soon paid dividends. Larbi Ben M’Hidi was arrested then secretly executed by 11th Shock Battalion, his death proclaimed a suicide. French forces methodically hunted down and rounded up Saadi Yacef’s unit, arresting Yacef himself on September 24. When paratroopers trapped and killed Ali LaPointe on October 10, the Battle of Algiers came to an end. But its repercussions changed the war, dividing the French, putting them on the political defensive, allowing the FLN to compete for the moral high ground.

During 1957, both the garrison commander of Algiers and its secretary general of police resigned in protest over the use of torture on detainees. Two governments in Paris were toppled by Algerian controversies. And in January 1958, Henri Alleg, a communist journalist in Algiers,

made the issue an international scandal by publishing *La Question*, claiming he was tortured by the French army and police as part of a systematic policy. This inflamed already bitter controversies in France and abroad over French conduct of the war. In October 1956, the French forced a Moroccan airplane carrying Ben Bella and other external FLN leaders to land in Algeria, and arrested them. This helped turn Arab opinion against France, as did the French–British attack on Egypt over the Suez Canal controversy in November. After the French air force bombed the Tunisian village of Sakiet in error in February 1958, Algeria's now independent neighbors became even more willing to allow the ALN to operate from their territory. The Fourth Republic could not survive, especially because it could not control the European settlers in Algeria. When a European mob occupied government offices in Algiers on May 13, Massu and other senior officers and officials formed a Committee of Public Safety; the next day Salan declared the army had assumed temporary control of “French Algeria.” Massu called on de Gaulle to come out of retirement to “save France.” De Gaulle proclaimed: “I shall hold myself at the disposition of my country” (Horne 1977: 286–293).

The French turn to de Gaulle underlined a cardinal fact: France was paralyzed. The French people could not accept the tactics used to suppress the FLN. But the army insisted on following through its victory in Algiers, the European settlers insisted on *Algérie Française*, and the Fourth Republic could not bring either to heel. By June 1, de Gaulle agreed to form a government in France, with a mandate to govern with emergency powers for six months and draft a new Constitution to form a new republic. De Gaulle visited Algeria, parading in Algiers on June 4 in front of huge and delirious crowds, telling them “I have understood you.” But the crowds did not understand what he really meant; nor did they realize it was already too late to preserve “French Algeria.”

French divisions gave the FLN a chance to regain the initiative, a chance it seized ruthlessly. French success in Algiers, plus the arrest of Ben Bella, shifted momentum to the hard men of the field army. In May 1957, an ALN unit massacred more than 300 supporters of Messali Hadj in the village of Melouza. Such brutality, combined with the ongoing violent campaign to eliminate “Messalists” in

the large Algerian community in France, cemented FLN dominance of Algerian nationalism. In December, ALN commanders lured Ramdane Abane, architect of the Soummam congress, to a meeting in Tunisia and assassinated him. ALN hardliners became ascendant in the FLN. They reworked its strategy: keep the army in being, pressure the French from outside Algeria, and galvanize “the people” inside the country (Stora 2001: 65–67). De Gaulle had to find the way forward between an Algerian nationalism now rallying behind a hard-line FLN and European settlers standing fast on *Algérie Française*.

De Gaulle tried to create a “middle voice” by offering a “peace of the brave,” launching a strategy combining carrot and stick. France launched its Fifth Republic in December 1958 with a Constitution shifting much power to the executive branch, and elected de Gaulle as president. De Gaulle pulled together efforts to promote social and economic development in Algeria in a new systematic Constantine Plan, to persuade Algerians to grow in association with France. This was balanced by the Challe Plan, named for the new commander in chief in Algeria, General Maurice Challe. The Morice Line, a deep belt of electronic sensors and fixed defense obstacles, was extended to cover the entire border with Tunisia. This impeded ALN incursions long enough to allow mobile forces to catch and smash them. Inside Algeria, conscript army units plus police forces were concentrated in one district at a time, to isolate and saturate it. This flushed out the ALN *katiba* – the typical combat unit, ranging from 30 to 100 fighters, equipped with a variety of weapons. The exposed *katiba* were then pounced on by regular army mobile units sweeping the target area, who scattered or shattered them. The offensive peaked in Operation Jumelles in the rugged Kabylia district in August 1959. ALN forces were punished so severely that their units inside Algeria were reduced to “penny-packets of shaken guerrillas” (Horne 1977: 339). But it was all too little too late.

The FLN responded by forming a Provisional Government of Algeria, insisting it would only negotiate one issue: full independence. Algerian opinion now lined up strongly behind the FLN, while the ALN remained “in being,” posing a continued threat. De Gaulle was determined to “win” the war, to negotiate from a favorable military

position – but not necessarily in order to keep Algeria as a French territory. He had a very different vision: to revive and redesign France as a united, strong, and modern Great Power. To his confidantes he spelled out the agenda bluntly: “I shall have to tell everyone concerned that colonies are finished. Let us come together and create a Community, with a common defense, foreign, and economic policy. Those that don’t agree can go their own way and we will build a new French community with the rest” (Malraux 1968: 101).

De Gaulle wanted a new France to lead the way in the European Economic Community, to modernize itself as an economy, state, and society. Those overseas territories that could still fit into that vision would be welcome; the others would be let go. French power would no longer rest on territorial empire.

This left open the possibility for a continued relationship with Algeria, something de Gaulle certainly hoped to achieve. French ambitions to develop an independent nuclear deterrent relied on using the vast Algerian Sahara desert for testing, while oil and gas deposits being developed there would do much to support de Gaulle’s agenda. This all made the FLN’s success at rallying the Algerian people so important. By the time France was ready to talk about change, there was no one else to talk with. De Gaulle’s willingness to consider real change – telling his advisors “the old Algeria is dead” (Stora 2001: 76) – provoked another European civilian uprising in Algiers in January 1960. “Barricades Week,” escalating to violent clashes with the police, put another French government to the test. This time de Gaulle stood firm, faced down the demonstrations, assumed “special powers” for a year, and demonstrated he could not be intimidated by mob politics. His turn away from *Algérie Française* destroyed his relationship with the Europeans in Algeria and provoked a growing backlash among regular army officers. That made him more determined to resolve the Algerian conflict and move on with his larger agenda for change.

In 1960, de Gaulle tried hard to forge some sort of compromise that would leave a French presence in Algeria. On November 4, he went so far as to refer to “an Algerian Republic which will one day exist” (Horne 1977: 422). But when he visited Algiers in December the FLN organized four days of massive demonstrations that this time brought

the capital to a standstill. They followed this show of strength by persuading the United Nations (UN) to support independence for Algeria. This turned the corner. When de Gaulle asked the French people in a referendum in January 1961 to support his policy to negotiate in Algeria, they did so. That launched the final stage of the conflict: direct negotiations between the FLN and the French government over the future of Algeria. These talks provoked virtual civil war between the French, which did much to determine the final settlement.

This final war within the war escalated beyond the point where the European community could remain in Algeria. Disgruntled army officers and European settler *ultras* formed in February a secret army dedicated to preserving *Algérie Française*, the *Organisation de l’Armée Secrète* (OAS). Days after the announcement that talks between the French government and the FLN would be held in the French town of Evian, the OAS murdered its mayor. In April, de Gaulle publicly referred to “a sovereign Algerian state” (Stora 2001: 256). Days later, Generals Salan and Challe launched a *putsch* in Algiers, supported by alienated army units led by the 1st Foreign Legion Parachute Regiment. They took over the city, called on the army and police to depose de Gaulle, and insisted Algeria would remain part of France. De Gaulle assumed drastic powers in a state of emergency and broadcast directly to the nation, reaching conscript soldiers through their transistor radios, denouncing the coup as illegal, calling on France to stand behind him. Senior French officials seriously feared a paratrooper assault on Paris, but the great majority of the army rallied to de Gaulle. Challe surrendered, but most other *putsch* leaders went underground and joined the OAS. The OAS now launched a violent campaign to destroy the negotiations, including a failed attempt to assassinate de Gaulle.

European settlers lined up behind the OAS as violence spread to France itself. OAS terrorism provoked such a backlash in France that in February 1962 de Gaulle openly conceded the majority now favored independence for Algeria. The final stage of negotiations provoked the OAS to switch their target, launching terror attacks against Algerians. Such attacks failed to prevent the signing of the Evian Accords on March 18, calling for an immediate ceasefire and a referendum in

Algeria within three months, on the question of independence. The OAS declared French forces “occupation troops in *Algérie Française*,” rallied settler hardliners, and occupied the European working-class district of Bab El Oued in Algiers (Horne 1977: 523). Pitched battles with police and army provoked the final insanity. European settlers began to leave Algeria, provoking the OAS to order them to stay and fight for *Algérie Française* on pain of death. Good as their word, OAS terror attacks in Algerian cities became so violent the FLN warned that a race war might erupt as soon as the French army departed, if the indiscriminate terror did not stop. The OAS “scorched earth” response lashed out at the infrastructure of the cities of Algiers, as if to deny anyone the fruits of any victory. By the time the OAS and FLN declared a ceasefire on June 18 the damage was done. Algerian cities emptied, as European settlers, also known as *colons* or *pieds noirs*, emigrated in a mass flight for survival. More than 95 percent departed in 1962, reducing the European community to a tiny remnant. On July 1, the Algerian people voted overwhelmingly to support “an independent Algerian state cooperating with France,” as per the Evian Accords. France recognized the Republic of Algeria as an independent sovereign state.

The lasting importance of the Algerian War of Independence comes from how the war was fought, and how it ended. The settlement allowed de Gaulle to forge his modern France. But this France remained bitterly divided by the Algerian experience. The *pieds noir* exodus left Algeria impoverished and France embittered. Algerian dependence on French aid and investment only increased, as did Algerian emigration to France. Controversies over torture and tactics were hidden away; not until 1999 did the French National Assembly resolve, in total silence, to declare that the Algerian conflict had indeed been a “war.” Amnesties were granted to protect French officers from investigation. Full disclosures about 11th Shock Battalion and government policy only emerged in the twenty-first century, renewing bitter controversy. Algerians also had to swallow “fruit of the poisoned tree.” One of the most famous justifications for violent resistance to colonial rule was written by Frantz Fanon, a medical doctor from Martinique who served in Algeria and came wholeheartedly to support the FLN. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon argued

that the only way for a people suppressed by alien rule to regain self-confidence, self-respect, and the strength to win back true freedom was to use force to evict the imperial power. This fit the FLN consensus that a people so long divided, in so many ways, could only unite against an outsider, and only armed struggle could build a united Algeria. FLN leaders won the war by persuading Algerians to accept them as the leader of a common cause – then lost the peace by refusing to accept pluralism in a plural society. The new leaders encouraged wholesale massacres of Algerians deemed to have collaborated with the French, then fell out among themselves even before French forces left Algeria. Authoritarian government produced such economic and social stagnation that in the 1990s a violent civil war erupted between Islamic reform movements and the army–FLN alliance. Fanon did not live to see how a country made by violence became one defined through it.

The twenty-first century “War on Terror” sparked renewed interest in the Algerian conflict. It seemed an example of a successful revolutionary war waged against western forces in a Muslim-dominated country. American military planners rediscovered *The Battle of Algiers*, one of the most powerful *cinéma vérité* films ever made. Filmed on location in Algiers, supported by Saadi Yacef himself, the film documented the political–military struggle between the French army and the FLN for control of the city. It captured the central themes: the social complexity of both European and Arab populations; the use of torture and terrorism; failure by French governments to control European settlers; FLN political success in imposing leadership on Algerians. Released in 1966, the film was banned in France for many years. Perhaps its most lasting lesson is the central lesson of the war. Revolutionary war separated the French and Algerian states. But it could not reinvent a French–Algerian relationship ultimately defined by economic forces. Nor could it heal the divisions inside Algeria that the long period of French rule only concealed. Algeria still suffers from the victory that made it independent.

SEE ALSO: National Liberation, Wars of; Terrorism, War Against; Vietnam War (1959–1975); World War II: Mediterranean Campaign; World War II: The Defeat and Occupation of France.

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Angolan Civil Wars (1975–2002)

IAN VAN DER WAAG

The Angolan conflict is in many ways the foremost African insurgency case study. Not only did this conflict follow a national liberation war, but it was also cast against the backdrop of the Cold War. Moreover, it covers the full range of combat, from low-intensity, insurgent conflict through to

conventional warfare. The insurgency was fought throughout most of southern, central, and northern Angola, while the larger, semi-conventional war, conducted in southern Angola, involved until 1989 South African and Soviet-bloc forces (Turner 1998). The first civil war, ended by a fragile ceasefire, was followed in 1992 by renewed conflict, without the foreign forces, that continued, despite ongoing negotiations, through to the assassination of the leader of *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA), Jonas Savimbi, in 2002. It had additionally become a personal war; UNITA finally became indistinguishable from Savimbi, whose termination had become the only precondition for the end of the war.

The civil war was a continuation of the liberation war (1961–1975). As the Portuguese colonial empire collapsed, the nationalist movements, fractured along ethnic and ideological lines, intensified their struggles with each other. The *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA), essentially a Marxist party founded by “mestiços” (people of mixed European, native born indigenous Angolan and/or other indigenous African lineages), proclaimed a government in Luanda. A rival government was proclaimed in Ambriz by the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA) and UNITA, groups that enjoyed strong support among the Bakongo and Ovimbundu. The MPLA, occupying the colonial capital and the major ports, drew Soviet and Cuban support. Cuba, acting independently of Moscow, soon took the lead (Glejises 2002). The FNLA looked to the United States and Zaire, and UNITA to South Africa, a country that was soon drawn to more direct involvement as a result of a growing refugee crisis and the presence of Soviet-bloc troops.

The MPLA faced a two-front war when Angola received formal independence on November 11, 1975. UNITA, cooperating with elements of the South African Defence Force (SADF) that crossed the Cunene River (which formed the border between Angola and the then South African occupied Namibia) in August, mounted an offensive in the south. The MPLA was repulsed and the SADF and UNITA, in a series of operations over difficult territory, occupied the southern ports as far as Lobito. However,

the SADF advance soon outstripped supply. Moreover, the MPLA forces had been stiffened with Cuban troops and Cuban and Soviet weaponry. South Africa, concerned for casualties and the failure of American promises, withdrew from Angola in February 1976. The MPLA now had the upper hand, as the FNLA had been annihilated in an impulsive attack on Luanda, so ending Luanda's two-front war. The separatist movements in Cabinda, the northern exclave, were also contained.

The MPLA could concentrate on UNITA for much of the remainder of the war. Yet, despite the arrival of increasing numbers of Cubans, East Germans, Russians, and Vietnamese, the MPLA failed to secure victory. Support at critical times from South Africa and Zaire, whose president, Mobutu, enjoyed the support of the Bakongo within Zaire, bolstered UNITA. A revised SADF strategy included the creation of a UNITA insurgent army, and periodic, powerful, cross-border raids. As a result, UNITA harassed government forces, at times closing the Benguela railroad, which linked the Angolan port of Lobito with Zaire, and attacking strategic targets. Growing Soviet-bloc support for the MPLA tipped the balance. By 1989, the SADF had lost air superiority due to arms sanctions and the presence of East German aircrews. A major MPLA–Cuban offensive, launched toward the southeast and the UNITA capital at Jamba, was halted at the Lomba River. Attritional battles were fought around Cuito Cuanavale, with neither side able to destroy the other. Multinational negotiations led to the withdrawal of foreign troops and independence for Namibia in 1990.

The southwestern zone of operations closed with the South African withdrawal. The MPLA now focused on UNITA, which, deserted by erstwhile allies, was mauled in early 1990. Negotiations continued and the Bicesse Accords, resulting from pressures exerted by Washington, Moscow, and Lisbon, were signed in Portugal in May 1991, but the transition to a multi-party democracy foundered when Savimbi refused to accept the results of an ostensibly fraudulent election. The MPLA, who attacked demobilizing UNITA soldiers and civilian supporters in Luanda, controlled

the seaboard, while UNITA, rooted firmly in the central highlands, controlled the hinterland. The MPLA devised a strategy to drive UNITA from its central position in the country and push the rebels further east, away from the oilfields and the sea. UNITA converged in the southeast, around Jamba, to regroup. Fortified with supplies stolen from the United Nations (UN) Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) or acquired from Zaire, UNITA regained control over several provinces. The battles for Huambo and Cuito were particularly severe, exacerbating the refugee and food crisis.

Ongoing negotiations led to further agreements, but these too collapsed under the weight of mutual distrust, poor international oversight, and the continuing importation of arms. UN sanctions followed and restrictions were placed on the trade of Angolan diamonds, a major source of UNITA wealth. Despite offensives against UNITA in 1998 and 1999, the MPLA could not bring Savimbi to a decisive battle and faced renewed separatist challenges in Cabinda. The war increased in fury. Civilians were used increasingly as targets and shields. Large areas were devastated by insurgent and counterinsurgent forces, both of whom used food as a weapon and strategy. Thousands of land mines were laid, maiming, killing, and disrupting patterns of life. The MPLA emptied the countryside of farmers, destroying Savimbi's base areas. UNITA had in the meantime lost American support, sanctions against conflict diamonds were biting, affecting the purchase of weaponry, and with the fall of Mobutu in 1997, Savimbi lost his remaining ally. The final blow came on February 22, 2002, when Savimbi was assassinated.

A new agreement was signed in April 2002. UNITA demobilized in August and became a political party. The war impacted heavily upon Angolan society and virtually destroyed the economy. Some 4.5 million people were internally displaced. Thousands of child soldiers had been impressed into service on all sides. The UNAVEM-III mission ended in December and the civil war, which saw seemingly irreconcilable violence and embraced the widest variety of forms, was over.

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Arab–Israeli Conflict

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The Arab–Israeli conflict is usually seen as seven main wars: the 1948 war that followed Israel's independence; the Suez War of 1956; the June 1967 Six-Day War; the Israeli–Egyptian War of Attrition from 1968 to 1970; the October 1973 Yom Kippur War; the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon; and finally the 2006 Second Lebanon War. There were also two major Palestinian insurgencies directed against the Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank: from 1987 to 1993, which

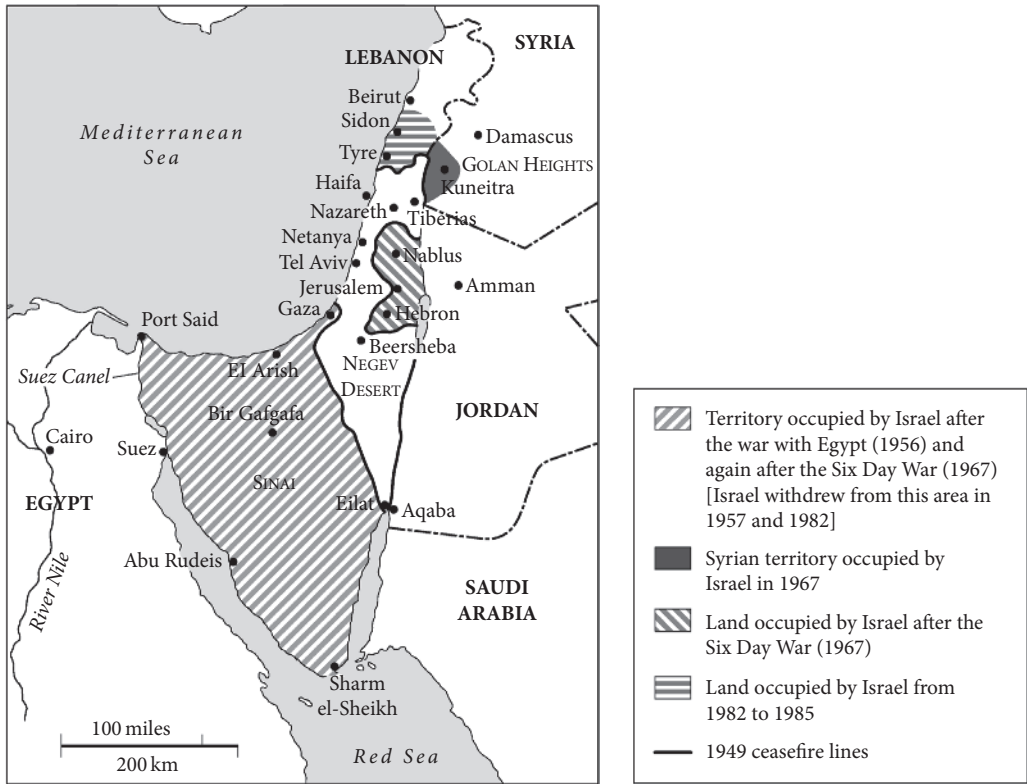
came to be known as the first *intifada*, and from 2000 to 2005, which is called the second, or the *Al-Aqsa intifada*.

However, before all of these conflicts there was a bloody civil war between Arabs and Jews in Palestine, an area that was under British control from 1917 to 1948. What sparked it was the changing demography of Palestine brought about by the influx of Jewish immigrants who came to Palestine in search of shelter from pogroms and persecution in their native countries. While the number of Jewish immigrants to Palestine was quite limited until the 1930s, the rise of Nazism in Germany led to some 200,000 Jews immigrating to Palestine between 1932 and 1938. Jews, who comprised only 4 percent of the total Palestinian population in 1882, formed 13 percent in 1922, 28 percent in 1935, and about 30 percent in 1939. By 1947 there were 608,230 Jews in Palestine, compared with about 1,364,330 Arabs (Bregman 2000: 4–5). This demographic transformation was accompanied by a geographical change as the new arrivals purchased large tracts of Palestinian land. The demographic and geographical changes increased tensions between Jews and Arabs in Palestine and led to violent clashes.

To end the Jewish–Arab strife, on November 29, 1947, the United Nations (UN) proposed to partition Palestine between the two peoples, allowing each community to form its own independent state on some of the land; it offered the Jews 55 percent of Palestine and the Arabs (still the majority) 45 percent. The Jews accepted the offer, but the Arabs objected and threatened that any attempt to divide Palestine would lead to war. The UN proceeded anyway and passed the partition resolution (United Nations Resolution 181); on the next day a civil war broke out in Palestine and went on until May 14, 1948.

The 1948 War

Friday, May 14, 1948, was the day the British departed Palestine and the Jews declared independence. Thus, the State of Israel was born and the Jews of Palestine became "Israelis." In response to the Israeli declaration of independence, the



Map 9 Arab-Israeli conflict.

Arab armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Transjordan, supported by units from Saudi Arabia and Yemen, invaded. Their aim was to destroy Israel, help Arab Palestinians, or perhaps, as some scholars claim, to grab some land for themselves in the absence of the “British policeman.” Thus, what started as a civil war between Jews and Arabs within Palestinian boundaries now became an all-out conventional war between the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and neighboring Arab armies. For the Israelis, this became their “War of Liberation,” or “War of Independence,” while for the Arab Palestinians, some 750,000 of whom became refugees as a result of the war, it became *al-Nakba*, “The Catastrophe.”

The IDF managed to contain the Arab onslaught, counterattack, and seize some of the lands the UN had partitioned off to the Palestinians in 1947. Of the rest of this land allotted to the Palestinians, Egypt managed to capture the Gaza Strip and Transjordan took the West Bank. Thus, by the end of the first Arab-Israeli

war, Palestine was indeed partitioned – not, however, between Jewish and Arab Palestinians as envisaged by the UN, but between Israelis, Jordanians, and Egyptians.

In terms of warfare, the 1948 war was quite a primitive encounter where the single soldier played a leading role while large formations – battalions, regiments, divisions, and so on – played little. Sophisticated weapons, tanks, and aircraft were hardly used at all. Contrary to popular belief, this war was not one between the “few” Israelis and “many” Arabs, or, as it is often put, a clash between David (Israel) and Goliath (the Arabs). In fact, careful analysis shows that the number of Israeli troops committed to the battle on the eve of the Arab invasion was roughly equal to that of the invaders. As the war progressed, the number of Arab troops increased only slightly, while the number of Israelis grew steadily, and, by the end of the war, Israel’s fighting force was larger in absolute terms than that of the Arab armies put together. It was not a “miracle,” as is

often claimed, that led to Israeli victory, but numerical advantage, better organization, and sheer determination (Bregman 2000: 23–24).

The 1956 War

Unlike 1948, when war was imposed on Israel, in 1956 it was Israel, in collusion with Britain and France, who went on the offensive. On July 26, 1956, President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal Company, of which France and Britain had been the majority shareholders. The two colonial powers resented Nasser's unilateral decision, as they would lose control over an important international waterway through which vital supplies came to Europe. France and Britain began considering the use of force to regain control of the Suez Canal. Israel was secretly invited to join the coalition against Nasser, which provided an opportunity to achieve some of her own aims – mainly to gain control of the Straits of Tiran. The Straits, at the foot of the Gulf of Aqaba, were Israel's primary trade route to East Africa and Asia, but had for several years been blockaded by Egypt. Now, Israel conditioned that if she was to join the planned war she should be allowed to move her troops south to the Straits and remove the blockade.

A simple plan emerged: Israel would provide a pretext for French and British intervention by attacking Egypt from the east, approaching the Suez Canal. The British and French governments, as if taken by surprise, would appeal to the governments of Israel and Egypt to stop the fighting. They would stipulate that Egypt should: (i) halt all acts of war; (ii) withdraw all troops 10 miles from the canal; and (iii) accept temporary occupation by Britain and France of key positions on the canal. Israel (who of course would know the terms in advance) would be asked to: (i) halt all acts of war; and (ii) withdraw all troops 10 miles to the east of the canal. Israel would then accept the terms, and it was hoped that Egypt would follow suit, allowing French and British troops to regain effective control of the canal without bloodshed. However, if Nasser were to refuse the terms, France and Britain would intervene militarily and forcibly regain control of the canal.

The IDF struck on the afternoon of October 29, 1956, with aircraft parachuting troops at the

Israeli end of the Mitla Pass, some 30 miles east of the Suez Canal. Following this, Egypt moved forces to face the invaders, and on October 30, Britain and France issued their ultimatum. When Egypt rejected it, the Anglo-French coalition struck from the air the following day, October 31, and on November 5 sent in ground troops to seize key positions along the Suez Canal. In the meantime, as planned, the IDF moved south and removed the blockade at the Straits of Tiran. In the course of this operation, Israel occupied the entire Sinai Peninsula, destroying Egyptian forces and killing hundreds of enemy troops at a cost of 172 Israeli soldiers killed and 700 wounded.

There was international outrage, particularly from America, at this blatant action, which smacked of old-fashioned colonial arrogance. The Eisenhower administration forced France and Britain to halt operations, accept a ceasefire, withdraw their troops, and agree to UN monitors replacing them along the canal. In March 1957, the Israelis, also under international pressure, withdrew from the Sinai – not, however, before issuing a stark warning that should Egypt ever again blockade the Straits of Tiran they would regard it as a *casus belli* and launch war on Egypt.

The 1967 War

Imposing a blockade on the Straits of Tiran to all Israel-bound ships was precisely what President Nasser did 10 years later on May 23, 1967. The debate continues as to why Nasser took this action, knowing full well that it amounted to a declaration of war. Perhaps Nasser – a self-declared leader of the Arab world – did it in response to growing pressure on him to stand up to Israel, or maybe he felt it was too good an opportunity to miss as Israel's aging premier and defense minister, Levi Eshkol, who lacked any military experience, might not respond to the challenge. Whatever the explanation, the blockade, along with other warlike actions such as removing UN observers from the Sinai, combined with bellicose rhetoric from Syria and Jordan, led to a significant escalation of tension in the Middle East. Feeling cornered, Israel decided to preempt any Arab attack and strike first.

Using almost all its aircraft, the Israeli Air Force (IAF), flying low to avoid Egyptian radar,

came from behind Egyptian lines and in a massive three-hour attack destroyed almost the entire Egyptian air force (most of it still on the ground). It was a textbook strike, which can be compared to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. But wars are rarely won from the air alone and Israeli ground forces then invaded the Sinai Peninsula and engaged the Egyptian army. Lacking any air support, the Egyptians stood little chance and retreated in a most unorganized fashion, chased by Israeli tanks and attacked intensely from the air. The Israelis again seized the Sinai Peninsula, reaching the Suez Canal; they also took the Gaza Strip, which had been under Egypt's control since 1948. The war quickly expanded to other fronts, where the IDF continued to inflict major defeats on Arab armies: from Jordan it occupied the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem; and from Syria it captured the strategic Golan Heights. It was a short war that, as it is often put, changed the face of the Middle East.

The 1968–1970 War of Attrition

The Egyptian army, though badly beaten, had not been destroyed in the 1967 war, and reequipped by the Soviets with new arms, it attacked the IDF, which was now deployed along the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. The first major incident between Egypt and Israel after the June 1967 war took place on October 21, 1967, when an Egyptian destroyer torpedoed and sank the Israeli destroyer *Eilat* not far from Port Said. Israel retaliated by shelling Egyptian oil refineries close to the city of Suez and setting alight the adjoining oil storage tanks. Gradually, the situation along the Suez Canal escalated with more and more clashes. These, it is worth noting here, were not random incidents but rather part of a well-planned Egyptian military program which envisaged a total war against Israel in three main phases. The first of these was the “holding out” phase, or the steadfastness stage; the second was the “state of deterrence”; and the third was to be a total war of attrition against Israel. In a speech on January 21, 1969, President Nasser explained, “The first priority, the absolute priority in this battle, is the military front, for we must realize that the [Israeli] enemy will not withdraw [from land it occupied in 1967] unless we force him to withdraw through

fighting” (*Al-Ahram*, January 21, 1969). As the fighting dragged on and the number of casualties mounted, the Israeli general staff was obliged to seek ways of protecting the troops along the Suez Canal. This led to the construction of a defensive line of fortifications named after the chief of staff, Haim Bar-Lev. The line was a chain of 32 strong points stretching 180km from Ras el-Aish in the north to Port Tawfik in the south. Each fort had firing positions, as well as a courtyard big enough to hold a few tanks and allow soldiers space to carry on with their daily lives and routines. A paved road linked the strongholds, and a sand ramp was built between it and the canal to prevent the Egyptians from observing the movements of troops inside the forts. The Bar-Lev line was completed in March 1969. That month, after a relatively calm period, Egypt resumed the war and carried out massive barrages of the Bar-Lev line, with 35,000 shells being fired between March 8 and 10. To this attack and those which followed, Israel's response was to send ground forces to carry out raids across the canal. But with Egyptian shelling of the Bar-Lev line continuing, the Israelis devised a new strategy of deep penetration by the air force, aimed at bombing positions deep within Egypt, thus relieving pressure on Israeli troops along the canal. The IAF began its bombardment on January 7, 1970, by attacking Egyptian military camps and other targets near the cities of Ismailia, Cairo, Insha, and Hilwan, and between January 1 and April 18, 1970, the period of the bombing campaign, the IAF flew 3,300 sorties and dropped 8,000 tons of ammunition on Egyptian positions. The pressure on the Egyptians was such that they were forced to reduce resources along the canal in order to protect the Egyptian interior, which in turn eased pressure on the Israelis along the Bar-Lev line and reduced casualties. But Israel also suffered heavily because the Egyptian anti-aircraft defense system, 30 times as powerful as it had been before the 1967 war, hit hard at the IAF. In August 1970, a ceasefire was agreed, and until the 1973 war the front was calm.

The 1973 War

After the 1967 war, Israel made it clear that she was reluctant to return the captured lands. She embarked on a creeping annexation, building

settlements on the seized territories and exploiting resources such as oil in the Sinai and water in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. This deeply upset the Arabs. What is more, it seemed that the superpowers of the time – the United States and the Soviet Union – were enjoying an unusual period of détente and were reluctant to have their Middle Eastern clients ruining the improved atmosphere. Both, therefore, seemed to accept the new status quo and ignore Israel's gradual annexation of the seized lands. To break the deadlock and prevent the annexation becoming permanent, Egypt and Syria decided to launch a military attack on Israel, to liberate at least some of their lost land and perhaps force Israel into diplomatic negotiations over withdrawal from the rest.

Egypt and Syria decided to attack on October 6, 1973, which was Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, thus catching Israel by surprise and unprepared. The Arab offensive started with a massive Egyptian–Syrian air bombardment on Israeli targets in the Sinai and Golan Heights. In the Sinai, soon after the air strike, Egyptian guns opened a tremendous bombardment along the Suez Canal and, in the first minute of the attack, 10,500 shells landed on Israeli positions – a rate of 175 shells per second. In the Golan, Syrian guns opened a similar barrage on Israeli positions. Back at the Suez Canal, at 2:20 p.m., the 4,000 Egyptian troops of “Wave One” poured over the ramparts and slithered in disciplined lines down to the water's edge to begin crossing in small boats. Every 15 minutes a wave of troops crossed, and in 24 hours the Egyptians had managed to land 100,000 men, 1,000 tanks, and 13,500 vehicles on the Israeli side of the canal. Facing this invasion were a mere 505 Israeli troops, who could do little to stop the Egyptians. The Bar-Lev line of defense, which the Israelis had built along the canal after the 1967 war, quickly crumbled. On the Golan Heights, in the meantime, a first wave of 500 Syrian tanks, closely followed by a further 300, crashed through the Israeli lines along the entire front and penetrated deep into the Golan Heights.

It took the Israelis some time to mobilize their reserves – which form the main bulk of the IDF – and it was a number of hours before they began to get a grip on the situation. Their first priority was to contain the Syrian invasion of the Golan, where there was no strategic depth and Jewish

settlements were close to the front line, unlike the Sinai where it would take Egyptian troops many hours before they came close to Jewish settlements or the Israeli border. They successfully halted the Syrian advance and began to push them back gradually, but it would take a week before it was the Syrians who were on the defensive as Israeli troops crossed east of the Golan toward Damascus.

Back in the Sinai, the IDF tried but failed to counterattack on October 8. Six days later, on October 14, they tried again and this time succeeded, inflicting heavy losses on the Egyptians, who made the mistake of moving away from their ground-to-air missile umbrella that so far had shielded them from the IAF. On the ground, General Ariel Sharon, a division commander, located a gap between the Egyptian 2nd and 3rd armies, through which he pushed his forces and approached the Suez Canal. He then crossed the canal to form a bridgehead on the Egyptian side of the water; by October 18, the IDF had a substantial force of three armored brigades and an infantry brigade on the western bank of the canal. Then, in a daring maneuver, Sharon completely cut off the 3rd Egyptian army from the rear, isolating about 45,000 Egyptian troops and 250 tanks from the rest of the Egyptian forces. By the end of the war, IDF forces were on proper Egyptian soil west of the canal and closer to Damascus than before the start of the war. It would not be wrong to say that, in military terms, the IDF's performance in the 1973 war – the way it recovered from the initial surprise, mobilized, and counterattacked – was even more impressive than its performance in the 1967 war. But in most people's minds at the time Egypt and Syria were the victors.

The 1982 War in Lebanon

Israel's military hero in 1973 was General Ariel Sharon. By 1982, he was no longer a soldier but defense minister. From the day of his appointment, Sharon's attention was firmly focused on Lebanon, where he identified two main problems. The first was the presence of Syrian troops and their ground-to-air missile system in the Bekaa Valley, which hindered the IAF's freedom to fly over Lebanon; the second was the presence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), led by

Yasser Arafat, whom Sharon suspected of wanting to take over Lebanon and turn it into a base to attack Israel. Sharon wished to strike at both the PLO and the Syrians in Lebanon.

The opportunity came on June 3, 1982, when gunmen of a dissident Palestinian faction led by Abu Nidal shot the Israeli ambassador to London and seriously injured him. There was no reason intrinsically why such an incident should necessitate a substantial Israeli invasion to wipe out the PLO in Lebanon, especially given that Abu Nidal was a sworn enemy of the PLO. But such was the mood in Israel following the attempt on the life of the ambassador that hardly anyone seemed to care that the assassins were from Abu Nidal's group rather than Arafat's and most were willing to accept the view that Israel needed to attack the PLO.

At 3.15 p.m. on June 4, Israeli aircraft struck at nine PLO targets in Lebanon. The PLO hit back and for 24 hours shelled villages in northern Israel. On June 5, the Israeli cabinet convened and authorized an invasion of Lebanon, which it gave the name Operation Peace for Galilee; it would later come to be known as the War of Lebanon. It gave the IDF the mission of "freeing all the Galilee settlements from the range of fire of terrorists" and instructed that "the Syrian army [stationed in Lebanon] should not be attacked unless it attacks our forces." Defense Minister Sharon made it clear that the operation's objective was to remove the PLO from firing range of Israel's northern border, "approximately 45 kilometers" (Resolution 676 of the Israeli cabinet).

On June 6, 1982, the IDF invaded Lebanon. In the western sector along the Lebanese coast, forces moved northward, but, rather than stopping 45 km from the international border as instructed by the cabinet, Sharon ordered them to proceed up to Lebanon's capital Beirut in order to hunt down PLO leader Arafat. By July 1, Beirut was encircled and under siege.

In the eastern sector, after crossing the international border into Lebanon, troops advanced in the direction of the Syrians without firing at them. The Syrians, however, faced with Israeli tanks and troops moving in their direction, opened fire. With his forces "under attack," Sharon allowed them to return fire, sparking all-out war between Israeli and Syrian troops in Lebanon. Claiming that Syrian ground-to-air

missiles in the Beka'a Valley hindered IAF efforts to support the ground forces, Sharon persuaded the cabinet to allow him to destroy the Syrian missiles. The attack was delivered on June 8 by F-15 and F-16 aircraft that knocked out 17 of 19 Syrian batteries and severely damaged the remaining two (they were finally destroyed the next day). The Syrian air force intervened and lost 96 Mig's without a single Israeli plane lost.

In the meantime, an immense artillery and air bombardment against Beirut also produced results (and many casualties among civilians), forcing the Lebanese government to demand that the PLO and its leader Arafat leave the city. On August 22, the first contingent of 379 PLO men departed and, over the course of the next 12 days, 14,398 Palestinian guerrillas were evacuated to other countries, including Arafat who went to Tunis; 5,200 Syrian troops also left Beirut for Syria. With Israeli permission, a Lebanese Christian militia entered the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila between September 16 and 18 in order to remove the 2,000 armed PLO fighters who, according to Israeli intelligence, remained in the camps after the Palestinian evacuation. The Christian militia found no armed Palestinians, only women, children, and the elderly – but they massacred hundreds of them anyway.

From a military point of view, the architect of the war, Defense Minister Sharon, did manage to achieve at least some of his aims: the IDF pushed the PLO and Syrian forces out of Beirut and the IAF destroyed the Syrian ground-to-air missiles in eastern Lebanon. But the price was high, as the war brought on Israel unprecedented international condemnation, particularly after the massacre in Sabra and Shatila. Israeli troops were to remain in Lebanon for 18 years, under constant harassment. Here was a lesson that the Israelis should have learned from the experience of others, notably from the Americans in Vietnam; that it is relatively easy to invade, but much more complicated to disengage. Armies can occupy territory in days, but getting out can take years.

The 1987 Intifada

Until 1987 the Arab-Israeli conflict had mainly been an encounter between conventional armies, but things were about to change when the IDF

was confronted by an uprising in lands under its occupation. Like many other major events in history, notably World War I, the Palestinian uprising was sparked by a minor event – a car crash. On December 8, 1987, an Israeli vehicle collided with a Palestinian one, killing four Palestinians and wounding seven others. Rumors spread among the Palestinians that the car crash was somehow deliberate. At the victims' funerals in the Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza, angry Palestinians hurled stones at nearby Israeli army units. A soldier opened fire and killed a Palestinian, which led to riots. These quickly spread from Jabalya to refugee camps throughout the Gaza Strip, and then engulfed the more secular and affluent West Bank. These events were the beginnings of the *intifada*, “shaking off” in Arabic, which saw the highly trained and well-equipped Israeli army come into conflict with loose gangs of Palestinians, often no more than children, often armed only with rocks. This asymmetry was to prove a major problem for the Israelis. By avoiding a classic guerrilla war, the Palestinians effectively neutralized Israel's vast military superiority. Faced by civilians wielding stones, bottles, iron bars, and burning tires, the best military in the Middle East was simply too powerful to apply its might.

The IDF was caught off guard by the riots and was initially slow to react. It had neither the appropriate equipment nor the expertise to deal with what turned out to be an all-out civilian uprising, where women and children led demonstrations. The army was slow to send in reinforcements and was too selective in its use of the curfew – a standard means of restoring order by providing an opportunity to cool off. Thus, Palestinian demonstrations continued without respite and grew in size and vehemence. But the army soon got a grip on the situation and, by mid-January 1988, deployed two divisional commands to the West Bank and a third in the Gaza Strip, and started to use a variety of measures to put down the uprising. Unable to use its sophisticated arsenal against civilians with only primitive weapons, the IDF had to downgrade its weapons to suit, while retaining an advantage over the Palestinians. This would later lead to the invention of such “weapons” as a stone-hurling machine to counterattack youthful rock throwers, or vehicles equipped to fire canisters of hard rub-

ber balls and small explosive propellants into crowds. The army made mass arrests which it conducted under curfews, deported activists, demolished houses of suspected terrorists, uprooted orchards to eliminate areas from which Palestinians could strike, and applied enormous pressure on the Palestinian population to submit.

By the end of 1988, the army was in fairly firm control of events in the occupied territories, but still they were just managing the situation rather than solving it. The uprising would continue for some six years, and it was to be a political deal between Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Oslo in September 1993 that ended it, rather than military might.

The Second Intifada

Seven years after the end of the first *intifada*, a new uprising erupted, which soon came to be known as the *Al-Aqsa intifada*, named after the mosque in Jerusalem's Old City where riots first began. The perspective of history will probably identify this insurgency in the occupied territories, from 2000 to 2005, as the continuation of the first *intifada*, though there are significant differences between the two events. While the stone and the bottle were the symbols and indeed the main weapons of the Palestinians during the first *intifada*, in the second uprising they were superseded by rifles, pistols, hand grenades, mortars, and suicide bombs. And while in the first *intifada* clashes between Palestinian insurgents and Israeli security forces took place in the center of Palestinian towns and cities, by the time of the second *intifada* these urban areas were no longer routinely patrolled by Israeli forces – the Israelis having withdrawn from them as part of the 1993 deal – and as a result, clashes now took place on the edges of towns and cities.

The second *intifada* was sparked by a visit of the right-wing opposition leader Ariel Sharon on September 28, 2000, to Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism, located in Jerusalem. On the ruins of the Jewish Temple stands a compound the Muslims call Haram Al-Sharif (“the Noble Sanctuary”), which Sharon planned to tour, and which contains a number of mosques, including Al-Aqsa, which is holy to Muslims. Palestinians therefore regarded Sharon's visit as a deliberately

provocative move. There were only limited disturbances during the visit, but for the remainder of the day there were sporadic outbreaks of Palestinian stone throwing at Israeli police on Temple Mount and in its vicinity. These incidents, we know in hindsight, were the opening of the *Al-Aqsa intifada*. Violence intensified while international efforts to stop it failed, and, with suicide bombers blowing themselves up in Israeli towns and cities, the Israelis resorted to a variety of measures to stop the insurgency, including assassinations of Palestinian leaders.

The emergence of Sharon as Israel's prime minister in 2001 marked a new phase in the second *intifada*. Sharon ordered F-16s to fire rockets against Palestinian targets, intensified Israel's policy of assassinations and, following a suicide attack during Passover 2002, he ordered an all-out invasion of the West Bank – this was Operation Defensive Shield, which also included a siege on Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah.

In August 2005, Prime Minister Sharon withdrew Israeli forces and settlers from the Gaza Strip. Now, with no targets to attack in Gaza proper, Palestinians resorted to a new tactic: the firing of missiles and rockets from the Strip into Israeli territory.

The Second Lebanon War

On July 12, 2006, at 9:03 a.m., Hezbollah guerrillas attacked an IDF border patrol on the Israeli side of the border with Lebanon, killing three soldiers and capturing two others. Hezbollah planned to hold the two captives to ransom, wishing to exchange them for Lebanese held in Israeli prisons. Responding to an attack from across an internationally recognized border was perhaps justified; however, the sheer scale of the Israeli military reaction was such that it led to an all-out war with Hezbollah. Indeed, when attacked, Hezbollah responded by launching 22 rockets against towns and villages in Galilee, northern Israel. This was not the first time Israel's populated areas had come under rocket or missile attack – in the 1991 Gulf War Saddam Hussein fired 39 Scud missiles into Israel – but here, in July–August 2006, sustained and continuous rocket and missile strikes against the Israeli home front became the backbone of Hezbollah's tactics.

On July 13, the IAF carried out a lightning 34-minute strike and, in what came to be known as the Night of the Fajrs, it destroyed almost all of Hezbollah's arsenal of 240-mm Fajr-3 missiles, which were armed with a 45-kg warhead and had a range of 45 km. In the coming days the IAF would also wipe out most of Hezbollah's 320-mm Fajr-5, which had a range of more than 75 km. Still, despite pulverizing air strikes, Hezbollah continued to carry out rocket attacks; on July 13 it fired 125 rockets, some of which hit Haifa, Israel's third-largest city.

Sustained air strikes were aimed at depleting Hezbollah's military ranks and arsenals (including, vitally, their stocks of rockets and launchers), but also at damaging their morale. Israel also targeted Lebanon proper: its roads, bridges, power stations, and, most notably, Beirut International Airport, a transfer point for weapons and supplies to Hezbollah. The IDF's chief of staff, Dan Halutz, a former pilot and chief of the IAF who had learned the lessons of the air campaigns in Bosnia and Kosovo, strongly believed that air strikes alone would be sufficient to bring Hezbollah to its knees. But, while successful in eliminating Hezbollah's long- and medium-range missiles, the IAF failed to destroy Hezbollah's short-range rockets, which continued to land on Israel.

The only way for Israel to tackle this latter problem was to embark on a full-scale ground assault into southern Lebanon. Transferring war into the enemy's territory has always been one of the main tenets of the IDF doctrine of warfare. Moving the battle into enemy territory ensured that the damage was done far from home, and it forced the enemy to protect itself, thus leaving it little time to strike at Israel. However, there was little appetite in the Israeli political–military establishment to embark on such an operation at a time when it was still believed that decisive attacks from the air, coupled with other measures, would gradually degrade Hezbollah's military capabilities and motivation to prevail.

However, as it became apparent that a major ground operation was needed, on August 7 the military reported that preparations for an all-out invasion of southern Lebanon were complete. Its plan called for an invasion by a force composed of three divisions, whose task would be to reach the Litani River and then, over a period of three to four weeks, clear the area between the Litani and

the international border, searching for and destroying Hezbollah's short-range rockets. On August 11, at 9 p.m., 9,800 Israeli troops moved across the border into Lebanon. But their advance was slower than expected and the diplomatic clock was ticking fast: on August 12 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1701, calling for a halt to hostilities in Lebanon. The Lebanese government accepted it and, on the next day, cracking under growing international pressure, the Israeli government accepted it too; the UN then announced that the ceasefire would come into effect on Monday, August 14, at 8 a.m. That day Hezbollah fired a barrage of 217 rockets into Israel to show that it was keeping up the bombardment right up until the end of the war and the Israelis, on the morning of August 14, just before the ceasefire came into effect, launched their last attack against Dahia, in southern Beirut.

In 34 days of battle, Israel lost 164 people of whom 109 were soldiers and 45 civilians; many more were wounded. Close to 4,000 rockets landed on Israel's home front causing much damage and disrupting day-to-day life. More than 1,000 Lebanese were killed during the war and scores more were wounded. Israel failed to achieve most of the goals it had set for itself at the onset of the war. The Winograd Commission, set up by the government to investigate both the political and military leadership of the war, concluded: "The IDF ... failed to fulfil its missions ... in most cases ... the IDF demonstrated ... powerlessness ... in its contest with Hezbollah."

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