

ISRAEL:2

CAN ISRAEL WIN ANOTHER WAR?

DREW MIDDLETON

The sun was bright and comfortably warm on the terrace of the casino at Suez. The young Israeli soldiers took turns peering through field glasses at the Egyptians of the Third Army, trapped a quarter mile away. It was December, 1973; they were in Egypt, the war was over and, they thought, won.

"No more wars, no more fighting, all over now," a lieutenant said.

That was December, 1973. One wonders how the lieutenant feels today. For wars, like elections, while settling some questions, inevitably raise new ones in the military as well as the political sphere. The Yom Kippur War was no exception. Now, 18 months later, it is apparent that the overall military situation in the Middle East is drastically changed from what it was when General Sharon's tanks came to a halt a scant 60 miles from Cairo. The balance of military power, then tipped in Israel's favor, is climbing toward a dynamic equilibrium, influenced by new weapons, new tactics, and by old mistakes and surviving misconceptions.

Each of the four Arab-Israeli wars has had a distinctive military character. The War of Independence was a triumph of guerilla tactics carried out by Israeli forces in which fervent patriotism was mixed with experience gained on the battlefields of World War II. The Jews fought and won over Arab armies that were better armed and more numerous, but poorly led.

The Suez War of 1956, on the Israeli side at least, demonstrated brilliantly how far Israel had gone in fashioning modern fighting forces. The

Egyptian performance revealed that the advent of Nasser and his bellicose colleagues had had little effect on the country's military capabilities. Fighting between Israelis and Egyptians confirmed the belief that the former were better trained and tactically more flexible in the mechanical complexities of modern war.

The 1967 war produced the legend of Israeli invincibility; a legend ultimately damaging to Israeli psychological preparedness. It was the Six Day War, but from a military standpoint, it could have been called the One Day War. For on the first day, the Israeli Air Force knocked out the Egyptian Air Force, the strongest Arab air arm, thus paralyzing the strongest of the Arab armies. Some Egyptian army units fought well. The Jordanians, also fighting without air cover, displayed discipline and resolve. But modern armies cannot operate without air cover and ground support, and once the Israeli pilots had done their job on the first morning of the war, the conflict was won.

The ease with which Israel won the Six Day War almost proved her undoing six years later. Visiting the Bar Lev Line along the east bank of the Suez Canal in 1971, I was told by a young colonel that he had only two understrength battalions in line, plus a third, also below battle strength, in reserve. This, he conceded, would not be enough if his brigade were facing Americans or British, but it would suffice to deal with anything the Egyptians could mount against him. Besides, he pointed out, the Israeli Air Force had control of the air space from the canal west to Cairo. "Not to worry," he said, proud of his English idiom.

This over-confidence was the source of many of Israel's problems early in the Yom Kippur War. There was a refusal, unusual in a people of such prescience, to believe that the Arab Forces, Syrian or Egyptian, could improve, or that Soviet weapons pouring through Alexandria and Latakia and the drastic overhaul of

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missiles resulted in a reduction in effectiveness of the tank-fighter-bomber team and may well have foreshadowed a new tactical era when a single infantryman with a highly sophisticated missile can knock out an aircraft costing \$15 million or a tank priced at \$800,000.

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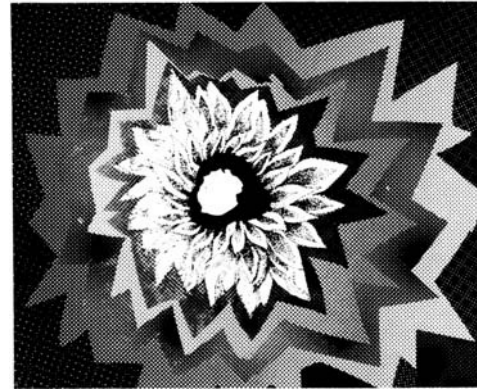
The use of these weapons will have far-reaching consequences. Deployed in conjunction with other anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, they may alter the battlefield balance in favor of the defense over the offense, where it has rested since the German Panzers and Stukas swarmed over Poland 36 years ago.

The delivery by the United States and the Soviet Union of these weapons systems that are even more sophisticated than those available in 1973 argues that although a fifth Arab-Israeli war may begin somewhat like the fourth, it will, with the new weapons, change into a different type of conflict: one that will have no neat, circumscribed battlefields such as the Sinai and that will inevitably involve civilian casualties and cities far from the combat zone.

Consequently, Israel's current military position should be measured against the probabilities of the fifth war rather than the facts of the fourth. Does the Israel Defense Force still possess the trained manpower, weapons systems, logistical support and leadership to fight and win a fifth war? The answer must be a highly qualified "yes."

Israel, although inferior in manpower, has the most technologically advanced forces in the Middle East competent to employ to the greatest advantage sophisticated weapons systems that compensate for lack of numbers.

The Israeli Air Force, at this writing, retains its qualitative superiority over the combined Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi and Jordanian air forces. This superiority goes well beyond the experienced skill of the Israeli air crews.



command, from generals down to lieutenants, would make any difference.

In the end, Israel won, but by a margin far less than her supporters in this country believed.

Because the fighting on the Israeli-Egyptian front was the most fluid and spectacular, and because the Sinai desert was the scene of the hardest fighting, there was a tendency to see the entire war in terms of World War II desert battles between Rommel's Afrika Korps and the British Eighth Army. There was some similarity but not much. The fighting in the Sinai and, against Syria, on the Golan Heights was influenced significantly by new weapons. These weapons, predictably, produced new tactics. Rather than being another of the old style wars, it probably was the first of the new.

Consider two factors. The fighting devoured matériel at a rate unknown in World War II save in one or two of the fiercest battles. This was the result of the development of new "one shot, one kill" weapons which knocked out tanks and aircraft in unprecedented numbers considering the number of these engaged. Also, the advances in surface-to-air and surface-to-surface

It extends as well to the air force's ability to maintain their aircraft and to the air commanders' ability, proven in many a battle, to derive the fullest benefit from that qualitative superiority through flexible and often unorthodox tactics.

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Since 1973, this air force has been immeasurably strengthened by the acquisition from the United States of the new "smart" bombs or, as the United States Air Force officially calls them, Precision Guided Munitions. A further increase in air capabilities would result in the purchase of any one of three new American fighters, the F-14, F-15 or F-16.

Finally, the intangibles, so difficult to measure in peace, so desperately important in war: training, combat leadership, morale.

Four wars have not blunted the high morale and efficient aggressiveness of the I.D.F. There is probably no other force in the world so highly motivated. The complacency of the years between 1967 and 1973 has given way to a sober recognition of Arab improve-

Arab forces. Training since has stressed the coordination of all arms in battle.

In Israel's arsenal, the "smart" bombs are perhaps the most significant. The Walleye bomb and the Maverick air-to-ground missile, both guided by TV devices, and the family of laser guided bombs, provided by the United States since 1973, are unmatched on the Arab side. The Russians are known to be working feverishly on similar weapons, but thus far none has reached Soviet air squadrons in Europe, and none is believed to be in Arab hands.

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With these weapons, an air force that in the past has consistently demonstrated a superiority in flexibility and tactical skill over the Arabs enjoys a significant advantage over its potential adversaries. Translated to battlefield terms, their possession by the Israelis means that in a new war Egyptian bridges across the Suez Canal, such as those which survived Israeli air and artillery attack in 1973, would be taken out in a matter of hours.

According to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Israel now has 85 per cent more guns or approximately 700; nearly 50 per cent more tanks, a total of 2,250; 25 per cent more armored personnel carriers and half tracks, around 1,250; and 20 per cent more fighter aircraft, about 400, than in 1973.

Why, then, is it necessary to qualify an assumption of Israeli victory in a fifth war? Simply because the balance of military power, whether it is expressed in weapons or trained manpower, shifts continually. Israel has strengthened her position. But so have the Arabs.

Consider the Arab position in a fifth war in which, to take the worst possible case for Israel, all the combatants of 1973 (Egyptians, Syrians, Iraqis and Jordanians) renew their attacks. Israel would again be fighting on two, possibly three fronts, and because of the improvement in Arab surface-to-surface missileery, the interior lines of

communication that in previous wars enabled her to shift forces from one front to another would be vulnerable in another conflict.

Until 1973, assessments of the balance of power in the Middle East, while conceding the Arab advantage in manpower, stressed that to a considerable extent this was balanced by the greater mechanical aptitude, and superior training and morale, of the Israelis. Today, the Arabs retain their edge in manpower: 575,000 active forces at the outbreak of war compared with 375,000 Israelis *on mobilization*; in aircraft: 1,384 compared with approximately 500. However, the Arabs are closing the gap in mechanical aptitude and training. In the 1973 war their fighting qualities matched those of the Israelis—badly trained, unmotivated soldiers do not take on medium battle tanks with hand-held surface-to-surface anti-tank weapons as the Arabs did.

This striking improvement in training and leadership must be recognized in most of the Arab forces. Command and control of large units, anything more than a division, remains rather slipshod in the Syrian and Iraqi forces especially where allied operations are concerned. Generally, however, Israel cannot assume any longer that, man for man, her soldiers are greatly superior to those in the Arab forces, particularly the Egyptians, Syrians and Jordanians.

On the Arab side, Egypt is the major question mark. But not because of the fighting quality of her soldiers. The problem is equipment. The Egyptian armored formations suffered serious losses in the last week of the Yom Kippur war, particularly in their attacks against the corridor east of the Suez Canal through which General Sharon's men passed to cross the waterway. The air force also suffered heavy losses both of aircraft and experienced pilots.

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ment and the realization that another war will demand more from the tank crew, the infantryman and the pilot.

A question mark must be placed beside combat leadership. Israel's most grievous blow in 1973 was the very high casualty rate among officers, particularly captains, majors and lieutenant colonels. Such men, with experience in two or more wars, cannot be easily replaced. New men have come forward, but at the outset, at least, they will lack experience in command.

Standards of training today appear higher than they were in the years between the two last wars. In addition to the salient lesson that it is unwise to underrate an enemy, the I.D.F. appears to have assimilated another basic lesson, one that apparently must be relearned by every service after every war: victories are won by the combined efforts of all services.

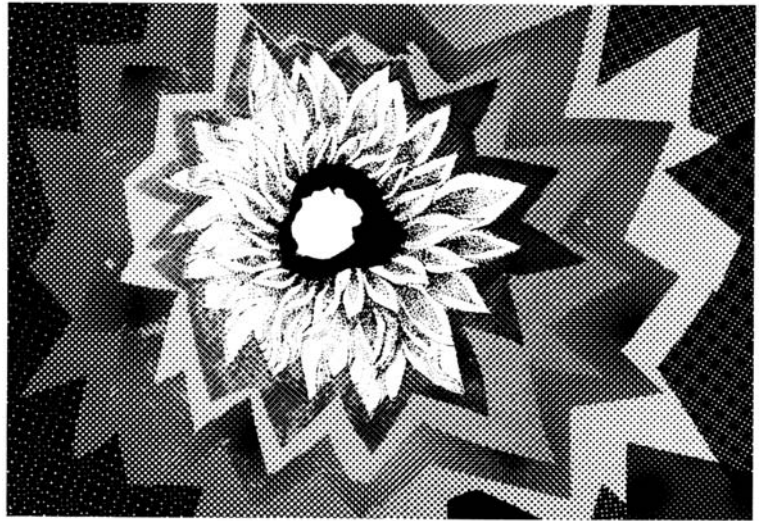
In 1967, the air force and tanks had been so effective that in 1973 there was a tendency to relegate the infantry and artillery to supporting roles. The fighting proved that the air and the armor could not do it all themselves against much improved, better led

Russian deliveries of spare parts to the army and air force. Egypt's ability to fight another war successfully depends on the answer. Obviously, Cairo could launch another offensive today. But it could not be sustained without a larger stock of sophisticated weapons systems and adequate supplies of spare parts.

President Anwar Sadat has claimed that he will buy the weapons he needs from France and elsewhere. He has, in fact, bought 22 Mirage F-1's from the French for early delivery and 22 Mirage F-1E's, a much more formidable aircraft, for delivery in 1978. But it is clearly impossible to rearm the very large Egyptian forces from Western Europe. Those forces — air, land and sea — are equipped with Soviet weapons firing Russian ammunition. To suddenly shift to western weapons would bring about a logistician's nightmare and, of course, impose a serious delay on Egypt's capacity to make war. Troops and airmen would have to be trained in the use of the new weapons. Supply systems and maintenance regulations would have to be refashioned to suit the new supplies.

The realistic assumption must be that President Sadat's remarks were intended to put pressure on Moscow for the resupply of sophisticated weapons rather than to announce a new policy of arms procurement. There is some evidence that his words had the desired effect. Early in February, 18 Mig-23's arrived at Alexandria from the Soviet Union. Twelve more are expected by May and another 18 by autumn; 48 aircraft in all or four squadrons in the Egyptian table of organization. At the same time, an intelligence service (unworried by Congressional investigation) reported that T-62 tanks and sophisticated missiles also were arriving from the U.S.S.R.

Cautious folk at the Pentagon conceded that Mig-23's were arriving in Egypt. But they stressed that it would take a long time before Egyptian pilots were ready to employ these sophisticated aircraft in battle. This was an odd echo of the warnings of 1972 that, although the Egyptians did have



T-62 tanks and sophisticated missiles, it would take many months, perhaps years, before the crews would master their use. In 1973 the Egyptians demonstrated they were able to use the weapons with deadly efficiency.

Israel and her supporters in this country would make a serious mistake if they believe that Egypt will not be able to use the new aircraft by the autumn of this year. Whether she will use them depends upon political factors outside the limits of this assessment.

Syria's forces must be considered better prepared for war than Egypt's. The Soviets had made up Syria's losses in weapons by early 1974. The first Mig-23's to appear outside the Soviet Union were sent to the Syrian Air Force. There are approximately 3,000 Soviet officers, instructors and technicians in Syria working with the forces.

These forces were formidable enough in 1973. Too little attention has been paid to the fierce battles fought on the Golan Heights in the initial three days of the war when the first, furious Syrian thrust was held by outnumbered (but not outfought)

Israeli forces. On the first day, the Syrians came very close to breaking through, a development that would have altered the whole character of the war by forcing Israel to divide her forces between the two fronts rather than deploy larger forces in the Sinai and carry out an inspired holding operation in the Golan Heights.

The Syrians, then, must be accounted well armed and, operating on their own, well led. Syrian tank strength has surpassed the 1973 total. Syrian pilots have benefited from Soviet tutelage. The difficulties multiply, however, when Syrian forces are employed with allies: Iraqis or Jordanians, for example.

One other factor is important. My impression is that the Syrians, unlike the Egyptians, were unhappy about the cease-fire of 1973. Crossing the Suez Canal and fighting on even terms with the Israelis for the first week satisfied many Egyptian leaders. The Syrians, on the other hand, felt then and feel now that, had the war continued, they would have been able to retrieve the initiative and drive the Israelis off the Heights. They may be mistaken in this. But

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the belief will stimulate them in another conflict.

The military contribution that Iraq could make to the Arab cause in a fifth Middle East war is questionable. The track record of the Iraqi army and air force in 1973 was unimpressive. The troops fought reasonably well, but it was obvious to neutral observers that the functions of command and control in battle were badly handled by inexperienced commanders and that cooperation between air and ground forces was minimal.

Since then the Iraqis have received large stocks of Soviet equipment. One Israeli estimate is that approximately one third of the military supplies landed by the Russians at Latakia in Syria goes to Iraq. As the Syrians, the Iraqis have received Mig-23 interceptors to supplement their one hundred Mig-21's and 60 Su-7 fighter-bombers. The 600 Soviet advisors and technicians in Iraq last autumn have been augmented by 250 newcomers. Iraqi surface-to-air missilery, particularly the SA-6's, has been reinforced by new shipments from the U.S.S.R.

However, full Iraqi intervention in a fifth war would give Israel a serious problem. The deployment of the two armored divisions through eastern Jordan could be the preliminary to an attack on the right flank of the Israelis fighting Syria.

The consensus is that the Jordanian army is the best trained of all the Arab armies. Its equipment, however, leaves much to be desired, and the tiny air force of 50 planes, most of them old, could not be an important factor in any new war. Jordanian participation, like that of Iraq, would open a third front for Israel, thus stretching her commitments.

Overall, the picture is one of Syrian and Iraqi forces that are better equipped today than in 1973, of Egyptian forces that must assimilate new aircraft and tanks before they regain their old edge, and of Jordanian troops and airmen whose skill is of little use until they acquire modern weapons.

If it comes, what shape will the fifth war take?

Israel is unlikely to be surprised again as she was in 1973. Defense intelligence received a thorough overhaul in 1974, especially at the higher levels. It is worth remembering that intelligence officers at lower levels did not err in their estimates of Arab strength and intentions. The mistakes were made in the upper echelon where the massing of Egyptian and Syrian forces was discounted as only another autumn maneuver staged for political purposes. However, it is clear from the voluminous writing on the subject, made public since the war, that the Israeli cabinet did consider preemptive action against the Arab forces, but in the end, agreed with Defense Minister Moshe Dayan's estimate that such action before the outbreak of war would alienate American and European public opinion.

If the signs of an impending Arab offensive become as clear as they

were on Oct. 5, 1973, United States and European defense analysts agree that Israel will use its air force, equipped with "smart" bombs, against Arab missile sites, especially the surface-to-surface medium range SCUD missiles, airfields, supply depots and troop concentrations in a preemptive strike.

The strategic object would be to deprive the Arab forces of the sophisticated weaponry necessary to support an offensive by ground forces. Success would mean that the Israeli army, backed by the tactical air arm, would fight the Arabs on far better terms than it enjoyed in the opening battles of 1973.

A successful preemptive strike is likely to be far more difficult in a day of extensive radar networks, high performance interceptor aircraft and well sited surface-to-air missiles—those around Damascus are manned by Russians, according to the Israelis—than it would have been in 1973 and was in 1967. The dispersal of aircraft to concrete and steel hangars, built under Soviet instruction, is another obstacle to success. It is prudent to assume that, although the Israelis would be able to knock out a sizeable percentage of the Arabs' advanced weapons systems and do extensive damage to depots, the attacks would not be 100

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per cent effective and that the Arabs would retain enough strength in this important category of weapons to support the ground forces for a limited period.

The Arab high commands are aware of the danger to them of a preemptive strike of this kind, and they also have betrayed their concern over another type of surprise military move. This is an Israeli armored thrust through the Arkub hill mass onto the valley of the Beqaa river in Lebanon and thence northeastward onto the Homs plain in Syria. The consequences of such a drive would be Israeli possession of the nexus of roads centered on Homs, enabling them to halt all ground traffic south to Damascus and east to Iraq.

What is the scenario if Israel does not implement either or both of these preemptive strategies?

If, at the start, the boundaries remain at the post-Yom Kippur lines, the first few days of the war would resemble the first few days of the Yom Kippur War except that the Egyptian starting line would be east rather than west of the Suez Canal and hence closer to the Mitla and Gidi passes through the mountains. Israel's possession of these passes is a blue chip in her bargaining for a peace settlement with the Egyptians. But, in the altered conditions of 1975, it is worth asking whether, in a day of advanced missilery on both sides, the passes still have the enormous tactical advantage assigned to them by Israeli politicians.

In a fifth war, it is likely that the Egyptians would use their surface-to-surface missiles against the passes and the Israeli air base and supply center at Bir Gafgafa further east. Under contemporary conditions, Egyptian armored penetration of the passes is unlikely until they have been saturated with missiles and the Bir Gafgafa base neutralized.

Should Egypt avoid the use of medium range missiles, and instead follow the tactical pattern of 1973, armor, covered by mobile surface-to-air missiles and interceptors, is

likely to push toward the passes. Younger Egyptian field commanders believe that the high command's failure to move out of the southern bridgehead across the Suez Canal toward the passes was one of the cardinal tactical errors of the Yom Kippur War. One armored commander told me in December 1973 that his leading tank was 40 minutes from the Mitla Pass when it was withdrawn on orders from headquarters in Cairo.

Israel's high estimate of the value of holding the passes is understandable, if the high command in Tel Aviv is convinced that the Egyptians will fight a fifth war exactly as they fought the fourth. It is unlikely, however, that the high command would make this mistake. The Yom Kippur War provided the salutary lesson that Arabs, too, can learn from experience and shift tactics.

However, in this situation, the motivating element is not what the high command considers the passes worth in the two tactical situations outlined above—the use of missiles to neutralize the passes or an all-out Egyptian armored thrust through them—but what Israeli diplomacy can obtain from the Egyptians in return for withdrawing forces from the passes. For their part, the Egyptians must consider possession of the passes by their forces, or even by United Nations forces, as a tangible guarantee against a further Israeli attack toward the Suez Canal.

The Syrians would, in a fifth war, resume their thrust across the Golan Heights toward northern Israel hoping that, this time, an Iraqi offensive would be powerful enough to divert Israeli forces from the Golan Heights front. Such a diversion is more likely if the Jordanians enter the war and deploy more than the single armored brigade which fought with distinction in 1973.

For their own purposes, the Arab guerrillas have exaggerated the role they would play in a new conflict. Undoubtedly, guerrillas

have been a troubling but not militarily serious problem for Israel along the Lebanese frontier. But their contribution in a general war is likely to be minimal. Guerrilla war flourishes in mountainous and heavily forested terrain; it is at a disadvantage in open country because of high visibility. Guerrillas fighting in the Sinai would represent little more than a supplementary irregular force ill-trained to fight tanks and all too visible to reconnaissance aircraft or helicopters. True, guerrillas might make some impression in the north around the Golan Heights. But that was and probably will be a relative narrow front occupied by sizeable armies—not the most advantageous area for guerrilla operations.

Any realistic scenario of the fifth war must take into account the probability that the sophisticated weapons on both sides will gradually slow the pace of offensive operations and that combat may decelerate into static warfare, a stalemate comparable to that which existed for nearly four years in Europe in World War I. When that kind of situation develops, generals and their war ministers invariably cast about for weapons which can break the stalemate. Both sides have such weapons.

Since 1973, the Soviet Union has supplied Egypt, Syria and Iraq with SCUD-B surface-to-surface missiles. These have a range of 250 miles, enough to bring Israeli cities, supply depots, and internal communications

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under attack. Of course, the SCUDS would be a priority target for Israeli aircraft in a preemptive strike or in normal operations after the outbreak of hostilities. But the missiles are mobile and it can be assumed that they would be well hidden and adequately protected by surface-to-air missiles.

The SCUD would provide the Arabs with a means of breaking the stalemate, soaring over battlefields to strike targets long kept inviolate by the Israeli Air Force. The Israelis have comparable weapons: their Jericho surface-to-surface missile with a range believed to be approximately 280 miles, enough for Damascus and Cairo to become targets, and the Lance missile to be supplied by the United States.

Missile war does not automatically mean the use of nuclear warheads although the SCUD, the Jericho and the Lance all have a nuclear "capability;" that is, they can be fitted with nuclear warheads. While most intelligence communities firmly believe that the Israelis have a nuclear capability, few analysts believe that the government would sanction the *initial* use of nuclear weapons in war. As far as the Arabs are concerned, there has never been any objective evidence that the Soviet Union has ever supplied either the Egyptians or the Syrians with nuclear weapons of any kind.

The use of long-range missiles—long, that is, for the Middle East environment—would change the character of the conflict, widening the war to include areas hitherto out of range and creating destruction and confusion behind the battle lines. There are no historical guidelines to tell us which way the war would go as a result of the uninhibited use of missilery. We do know, from the experience of the British and the Germans in World II, that homogenous, deeply patriotic peoples can endure much more punishment than pre-war predictions anticipated.

There is a reasonable prospect that a stalemate on the ground and in the air, enforced by sophisticated weapons, would lead to a far wider war that, inevitably, would cause the super-powers to stand behind the two sides—the Soviet Union for the Arabs and the United States for Israel. (It should be taken for granted, I believe, that the Arab oil embargo will be reimposed on the outbreak of war.) What courses are open to the two giants?

One course, obviously, would have both nations replenish losses in weapons and equipment and restock missiles, shells and small arms ammunition used in the opening rounds. This will be an imposing job for both the Soviet Union and the United States, for one of the contemporary lessons of the Yom Kippur War was

the high rate of wastage in material. A prolonged conflict would represent a drain even on the large Russian war stocks and would impose a serious reduction of the smaller American supplies, particularly tanks and the newest missiles.

America would face another handicap in resupplying Israel during a fifth war. In 1973, the United States had the use of Portugal's Azore islands for refueling the giant C-5A transports. This enabled the C-5's to carry their full pay load of approximately 140,000 pounds to Israel. The use of the Azores in another war is highly doubtful in view of the advent of a left-leaning government in Lisbon. Consequently, the American supplies would not get to Israel as rapidly as they did in 1973.

Beyond the problem of supply looms the momentous question of active military intervention by either or both of the super-powers.

What would be the conditions that would lead to Soviet intervention?

One, probably, is clear evidence that the Israelis were successful on all fronts and that Cairo and Damascus were in danger of being taken or, more probably, cut off and put under aerial siege by bombers and missiles. Under these circumstances, Soviet intervention to save Russia's Arab clients would be a possibility. The concentration of Soviet airborne divisions, which led to the United States alert in October 1973, occurred when Israeli forces on the southern front had thrust west of the canal and surrounded the Egyptian Third Army, with the option of pushing on to Cairo and Alexandria, and when Israeli guns on the northern front were shelling the outskirts of Damascus.

The second situation that might lead to Soviet intervention would be prior landings by United States forces in support of an Israel that was reeling under the blows of Arab armies and Arab missiles. Admittedly, it is difficult to envisage such a battlefield situation in the light of the past. But it is well to remember that

war of intervention in the Middle East than is the United States.

The Soviet advantage in the immediate theater rests on a number of factors.

The first is geographical. The Middle East is closer to the centers of Soviet military power than it is to

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the American military resources. The American "alert" in 1973 was triggered by the concentration of four Soviet airborne divisions in the Budapest area and by the movement of transport aircraft, additional to those being used in the air lift to Syria and Egypt, to the same area. The 82nd Airborne Division of the United States Army was in Fort Bragg; there was one airborne battalion in Germany and two Marine Corps battalions with the Sixth Fleet.

At sea, the Sixth Fleet received the reinforcement of an additional aircraft carrier task force, while the Soviet squadron in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea moved to an all-time high of 98 ships: combatants and service.

The assumption must be that if the super-powers decided to reinforce their clients in the Middle East with active forces, the Russians stand the better chance of "gettin' thar fustest with the mostest." Qualitatively, American airborne and Marine units are considered better than their Soviet opposites. But this edge might not compensate for the earlier Russian arrival.

The Soviet Air Force would have the use of fields in Egypt, Iraq and Syria. Planes from the United States Air Forces, from Europe, or from the Sixth Fleet, could use only the Israeli fields.

Should Soviet and American intervention in the area develop into open conflict, other factors would come into play. The closest and most powerful American reinforcement is the Seventh Army in Germany. But withdrawing units from that force would weaken the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on the critical central front. The Russians would

have no such problem. They would be able to intervene in the Middle East with ground and air units stationed in the western Soviet Union, leaving the Soviet Forces in Germany in an even greater position of quantitative superiority over the NATO forces facing them.

Any scenario considering American or Russian intervention, or both, must take into account the probability that this intervention could lead to armed conflict between the super-powers. If it did, it would be extremely difficult to localize the battle and we might be faced with the immediate prospect of a third World War.

The fifth war: if it comes, will it be simply another round in the long duel between Arab and Jew fought over the old battlefields and for the old objectives, or will it be Armageddon, a confrontation between the super-powers that could set the world alight? No one, naturally, can say. What can be said with confidence is that another war will not be like the last. ★

it was difficult in March 1973 to envisage Egyptian troops forcing the Bar Lev line along the Suez Canal in an afternoon, or Syrian troops driving to within five miles of the shores of Lake Tiberias.

The possibility of American intervention in that situation would be heightened, as an added rationale, by the Arab oil blockade. The landing of American troops would not be solely to help defend a friend and political ally, but could well be the precursor of a larger operation aimed at the oil states of the Persian Gulf. Such American operations certainly would lead the Soviets to consider the military option, for whether Americans like it or not, the Persian Gulf and its oil fields today are one of the strategic centers of the world. The Soviet Union, presumably, has as much interest in denying their occupation by the United States as the United States has in assuring a supply of oil.

Beyond that is the Soviet sensitivity to American military activity, no matter how small, in the area from the eastern Mediterranean Sea to the Arabian Gulf which Soviet strategists consider a glacis guarding the southern areas of the U.S.S.R.

All these scenarios are capable of endless permutations. In their consideration, one factor should be kept in mind: the Soviet Union, today, is infinitely better prepared to fight a