An architecture for peace: deciphering the UN's multidimensional approach to the Israel - Arab Conflict (1967 - 1982)

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Chapter 4

Architect or Builder? The Political Role of the United Nations Secretariat in the Israel-Arab Conflict

Introduction

Through the peacekeeping operations, we can conclude that the UN Secretariat played an essential tactical role in managing the conflict. They reduced the tension on the ground and served as a valuable vessel for informal communication between the belligerent parties. The insights provided by Chapter 3 are a vital piece of the puzzle. What about politics? Was the UN Secretariat a critical player in the political discussions? Alternatively, was it merely an executor of the countries will? These will be some of the guiding questions of this chapter.

In the multidimensional and explosive landscape of the Israel-Arab conflict, the Secretariat has had duties, which go beyond peacekeeping. Chapter 4 wides the scope by way of stepping back from the field to focus on the broader political dynamics. This portion of the dissertation sheds light on the nuanced strategies, intentions, and actions of the UN Secretariat, positioning it within the larger narrative of post-Yom Kippur War and Operation Litani negotiations. By doing so, it seeks to uncover the overarching question: did the Secretariat craft and pursue a regional strategy? In addition, if so, how effectively was it executed?

Treading this complex political minefield, the Secretariat finds itself constantly juggling the dual challenges of impactful intervention and impartiality. The delicate equilibrium between exerting political influence and maintaining neutrality is of paramount importance, especially in the eyes of the ever-watchful Security Council. Understanding the Secretariat's role in the Arab-Israeli conflict's political processes requires widening Chapter 3's scope to include the period between the Six-Day War and Yom Kippur Wars (hereafter: inter-war period). There are a couple of reasons why. First, at the political level, the Secretariat's activities and diplomatic initiatives in this period directly impact their agency level after the Yom Kippur War. Of course, many external factors affected the actions and the room to manoeuvre they had; it is also fundamental to understand how the Secretariat set itself up to be a successful policy broker after the war. Second, at the military level, the work done by UNTSO in this period planted the seed for the entire peacekeeping architecture; we have to include its record to evaluate the success of UNEF II, UNDOF and, much later, UNIFIL.

All Secretaries-General invested time and resources to find a peaceful solution to the conflict at the political level. Trygve Lie adamantly supported the creation of UNTSO, facilitated the negotiations for its deployment and provided a forum for the various military armistice commissions (Nachmias, 1996). Dag Hammarskjöld single-handedly created UNEF I and secured its deployment even when two of the five permanent members of the Security Council were actively involved (Walker, 1996). The following two Secretaries-General channelled their political role through the Jarring mission between 1967 and 1973. The failure of this endeavour reduced the Secretariat's influence in dealing with the conflict after the War (Waage & Mørk, 2015). During Thant's tenure, the General Assembly and the Security Council increased scrutiny of the Secretariat's role, reducing its room for manoeuvre. As the chapter shows, Thant knew beforehand that the Jarring Mission had a minimal chance of actually succeeding, and, at the same time, he was aware that Cold War politics reduced the power of his office.

Kurt Waldheim managed the organisation's involvement in the conflict after the Yom Kippur War; the Secretariat had to manage three operations (four as of 1978) and fight for its presence in the political sphere (more on this later). In addition, the chapter treats the Secretariat as a political actor with its plan and, to an extent, agency. As Chesterman (2007) and Skjelsbæk (1991) discuss, the different Secretaries-General have interpreted the article differently; some were more entrepreneurial than others were.

The chapter will start with two underlying assumptions. First, the affirmation that the Secretary-General does have –even if contested–sufficient agency to enter the political realm and try to influence the outcome of a particular issue. This study will not discuss *whether* the Secretary-General has the constitutional authority to engage in politics; scholars have a baseline consensus (see Chapter 2). Second, the Secretariat was vital in implementing the political agreement by deploying the operations. While the superpowers had a direct and profound interest in the region and the conflict, they did not deploy assets to the area directly (they only sent a few dozen observers to UNTSO); they relied on the operation to be their eyes and ears. With these two assumptions out of the way, now we must turn to this chapter's central question: *To what extent did the Secretariat successfully act as a policy broker in the political negotiations in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War and Operation Litani River?*

These two flashpoints are the genesis of three of the four operations (UNEF II, UNDOF came due to the former and UNIFIL due to the latter). Understanding the degree to which the organisation positioned itself more than the arena where the negotiations occur will allow us to know whether the organisation had a long-term political strategy. The chapter will review the Secretariat's role in Security Council negotiations, participation in multilateral summits on the topic, bilateral conversations with the countries in the region and the superpowers and other fora where the Secretary-General himself or his duly appointed representatives used good offices to try to broker a peaceful settlement to the Israel-Arab question. While the main objective is to look *beyond* the operations, Siilasvuo's role remains an essential information source. It does fall within the scope of this chapter, given that he worked for the Secretariat.

The application of Complexity Theory remains central to this analysis, emphasizing the interconnectedness and multi-layered nature of the UN's approach to managing the Israel-Arab conflict. This theoretical lens underscores the significance of viewing the work done by the peacekeeping operations not in isolation but as part of a comprehensive and holistic UN strategy aimed at conflict management. The complexity of the conflict, with its evolving dynamics and multiple stakeholders, necessitates an approach that transcends purely military solutions, incorporating political negotiation and diplomacy as integral components of the UN's efforts.

By delving into the political negotiations and the Secretariat's role in these discussions, Chapter 4 addresses the second half of the security and diplomatic landscape. This shift from a focus on the operations' military and logistical work to the realm of political discussions represents a critical step back, allowing for a broader examination of how the UN's peacekeeping architecture contributed to the diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the conflict. This perspective is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the UN's multifaceted approach to peacekeeping, which intertwines military, logistical, and political efforts to create conditions conducive to a sustainable peace.

In essence, this chapter aims to illuminate the Secretariat's effectiveness as a policy broker in the aftermath of critical conflict milestones, assessing its contributions to the diplomatic

negotiations that sought to pave the way for peace. Through the prism of Complexity Theory, the analysis will explore the nuanced and often intricate political dynamics that the Secretariat navigated, highlighting its strategic role in facilitating dialogue, mediating between parties, and striving to harmonize international efforts towards conflict resolution. This exploration is pivotal for appreciating the full scope of the UN's engagement in the Israel-Arab conflict, revealing the depth of its commitment to both the security and diplomatic dimensions of peacekeeping.

The first section provides a brief yet foundational review of the prelude and aftermath Six Day War, emphasising the war's effect on UNTSO and the Secretary-General's agency. The second sections review the political activities of the Secretariat during the inter-war period (July 1967 – September 1973) to evaluate their record of accomplishment and understand exactly whether the Secretariat had political capital at the onset of the Yom Kippur War. The fourth section analyses the Secretariat's role in negotiating the Israel-Egypt and Israel-Syria disengagements.

The Six-Day War: When it all changed

While it is possible to argue that to understand the conflict's nuance, it is necessary to review all previous wars, none has changed the regional dynamics as much as the Six-Day War. In the spring of 1967, the Soviet embassy in Cairo sent a detailed cable to Egypt, Syria and Moscow, claiming that Israel put the IDF's Northern Command on high alert along the Syrian border, ready to strike. The intelligence report claimed that the IDF deployed between 10 and 12 brigades to the Golan Heights. The Ambassador delivered the information to a high-level official from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry. On the same day, in Moscow, the speaker of Egypt's parliament and future president, Anwar al-Sadat, received the same information (Parker, 1992).

There is an interesting discussion among scholars on this intelligence report; there is no agreement on whether the Soviet Union fabricated the intelligence or misunderstood the developments on the ground. Scholars who argue for the former theory (Gat, 2005; Goldstein, 2018) believe Israel did not need to prepare a massive visible deployment. Bickerton & Klausner (2017) take it a step further by suggesting that both "the Soviets and

probably Nasser knew […] the information was false" (p. 178). There are various reasons why. First, the IDF had enough assets already standing by to conduct a first strike; redeploying 'twelve brigades' at short notice was not something the IDF could easily do. This would have committed *half* of the IDF's armoured strength for no reason. Besides, with UNTSO observers on the ground, the news of a large-scale troop concentration would quickly reach the Security Council. The Secretary-General addressed the rumour directly in a Report (1967) he sent to the Security Council. "Reports from UNTSO Observers have confirmed the absence of troop concentrations and significant troop movements on both sides of the line." (Para. 9).

Popp (2006) , on the other hand, believes that while the Soviets "might have misinterpreted some minor troop movements in Northern Israel or misjudged a piece of information" (p. 287), the Israeli military activities coupled with Nasser's aggressive rhetoric warranted analysis in Moscow and preparations in Cairo and Damascus. Golan (2006) and Parker (1992) concur that the reports were believable, given how Israel responded to Syrian aggression in the demilitarized zone. Still, they also clearly state that the information was an exaggeration. Therefore, their contributions revolve around *why* the Soviets passed the information to their allies. Their work provides two essential elements. They agreed that Syria was no imminent danger; the report suggested the war was not days away. Their intent was political; the Soviets wanted to give the Syrian people a reason to rally behind their government and foster national unity. The political system in the country was fragile, and Moscow needed a strong ally. Of course, this was an evident miscalculation from Moscow. They did not expect Nasser to use this information as a much-needed reason to attack Israel and thereby ease off the pressure his government was facing domestically and regionally. In addition, the Soviet Union expected to have more control over the UAR and that the United States would have more control over Jerusalem. This was not the case.

Laron (2017) contributes a longer-term perspective by signalling that individual military leaders on both sides were preparing and perhaps even hoping for a confrontation. He goes as far as to claim that the war was a "crucible of weak civilian leadership, trigger-happy generals, and intrusive great powers" (p.4). The extent to which the arguments made by the authors are entirely objective remains up for debate. That said, it is clear that the tension

was palpable. Yet, before Egypt and Syria could ultimately embark on what would inevitably lead to war, Nasser needed to eliminate the last literal roadblock: the peacekeepers.

The withdrawal of UNEF I: An Unforced Error?

The United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) was aptly named because it was an emergency product. After the Suez Canal Crisis unfolded, Secretary-General Hammarskjöld, together with Canadian Foreign Minister Lester Pearson, designed the conceptual framework, negotiated with the host country and the TCCs and went as far as bypassing the Security Council to get a General Assembly resolution to authorise the operation's deployment, all in a matter of days (Heller, 2001). The rushed pace and the lack of operational support in New York meant that almost everything around UNEF resulted from high-level improvisation. Its framework prescribed the modus operandi for peacekeeping and invented it (Bligh, 2014). Because of UNEF's creative and innovative deployment, the UN (both as an inter-governmental body and as an organisation) adopted three critical principles of peacekeeping: impartiality, use of force only for defensive purposes and, most notably for our question, consent from the host countries (Goulding, 1993).

However, the issue required additional thinking. Israel did not agree to host UNEF because the possibility of foreign troops inside her borders was politically unacceptable (Garvey, 1970). Therefore, the operation operated only on Egyptian soil, so the farthest north they could deploy was the Gaza Strip. Besides, Secretary-General Hammarskjöld assured the Egyptians that the operation did not intend to upset the balance of power, enforce any actions, or permanently occupy the peninsula. On the other hand, he also got Cairo to agree on a fundamental issue.

> Were either side to act unilaterally in refusing continued presence or deciding on withdrawal, and were the other side to find that such action was contrary to a reasonable faith interpretation of the purpose of the operation, an exchange of views would be called for towards harmonizing the positions (United Nations General Assembly, 1958)

This is one of the many examples of his tactical brilliance (Higgins, 1970). This paragraph bound both sides to deal with the United Nations in good faith and, theoretically, restricted

their agency to unilaterally upset the balance of power. From a military viewpoint, UNEF was a buffer between the two parties deployed to ensure peace and the absence of war (White, 2015). On the other hand, the operation was insurance against further conflict from a political viewpoint. Hammarskjöld negotiated the deal and put the Secretariat at the centre stage because it framed the collaboration UNEF was working with between the UN (as an organisation) and the host country. While the terms were transparent and open for interpretation, this level of imagination allowed him to influence what happened politically (Tandon, 1968). He did not imagine how little resistance his successor would put when the system he carefully designed came under attack.

The UNEF architecture had two other noteworthy elements. First, the operation had an Advisory Committee comprising Brazil, Canada, Ceylon, Colombia, Norway and Pakistan. The General Assembly mandated the committee to help the Force Commander plan the operation and negotiate with the TCCs, among other duties. Second, UNTSO already had extensive contacts on the ground; its observers had first-hand knowledge of the area, which allowed UNEF to start working very quickly.

UNEF was indeed able to contain the emergency for which it was deployed; however, "it was less successful in containing the broader conflict in the region and assisting it in a peaceful resolution, although it was neither assigned nor equipped to perform those duties" (Diehl, 2015, p. 151). UNEF was not equipped to make peace. Many policymakers blame UNEF for failing to prevent an outbreak; this demonstrates that sometimes there is a vast gulf between the Councils expectations and the tools they give operation has to achieve them. That said, UNEF outlived its shelf life considerably. For 11 years, its presence stabilised the peninsula. The fact that UNEF stood between the two countries and that only after its troops were withdrawn war was able to take place shows that the idea behind peacekeeping worked; however, it also shows the concept's limitations. Unfortunately, all the operation achieved "was somewhat marred by the crisis touched off by its untimely withdrawal" (Lal, 1970, p. 322). The Secretary-General's subsequent actions, and the controversy around them, revolve around his interpretation of the concepts of consent and good faith.

In our quest to discuss the extent to which the UN Secretariat used agency vis-à-vis the Israel-Arab conflict, it is fundamental to spend a few words discussing why UNEF left and what impact it had on the UN's stance in the region and the Secretariat's agency. Coming back to May of 1967, President Nasser began preparations for war. His government embarked on several provocative actions vis-à-vis Israel. He coupled his aggressive rhetoric with deploying soldiers and assets into the Sinai Peninsula. While these actions were quite aggressive and a clear source of concern for Israel and UNEF, the UAR did not cross the threshold of declaring war. His intent was merely to provoke (Gat, 2005). However, by late May, he decided to take his policy to the next level by asking UNEF to leave, which caused a political and even legal storm in New York. This was the first of Nasser's two major decisions, which brought his country to war.

On 16 May 1967, the Chief of Staff of the United Arab Republic sent a letter to the UNEF's Force Commander demanding the operation's withdrawal. The letter stated that the UAR was preparing to act.

> Against Israel, at the moment, might carry out any aggressive action against any Arab country. Due to these instructions, our troops are already concentrated in Sinai on our eastern borders. For the sake of complete security of all UN troops who install OPs along our borders, I request that you issue your orders to withdraw all these troops immediately (United Nations General Assembly, 1967, p. 4)

The recipient of that letter was Major General Indar Jit Rikhye[51] of India, one of the most experienced peacekeepers in UN history. Before serving as UNEF's Force Commander, he worked as a military adviser to Dag Hammarskjöld and U Thant. He first wore a blue helmet as a Commander of the Indian battalion deployed to UNEF almost a decade before serving as the Force Commander. His extensive work in the UN proved very useful in this situation; he understood this letter's profound implications and reacted accordingly. Rikhye discusses this period in a seminal book titled *The Sinai Blunder* (1980), in which he narrates his

[51] After he retired from the military, he served as the President of the International Peace Academy, a think tank, and he became a prolific writer. He authored a number of papers and books reflecting on his experiences as a peacekeeper. This book is as important as the one authored by Siilasvuo because he provides an objective account of the events from the field's perspective.

experience dealing with this crisis. The book serves as an essential source of information throughout this section.

In addition, the Secretary-General presented two critical reports, which provided useful chronological information, important communication between New York and Cairo, and the Secretary-General's decision-making process that led him to agree to withdraw UNEF ultimately. The Secretariat drafted the first report (1967) almost in real-time. It focuses on the difficulties the operation faced on the ground, given the rapid movement of UAR forces into UNEF OPs and the various ultimatums the host country gave the different battalions in Gaza, Shram el-Sheikh and others. The second report (1967) builds on the previous by explaining his communication with the UAR, the TCCs and the Force Commander. It also serves as a post-mortem analysis. Given the extent to which his decisions were criticised across the board, it is likely that the Secretary-General used the report to defend himself against his many critics. Of course, while his defence revolved around the notion of consent (as we will see below), the fact that the region was transformed so stunningly and permanently after the fact goes to show that had he not acted so quickly, maybe the UN could have prevented the war to explode. While it would be rather unfair to claim that UNEF was the *only* thing preventing war in the Sinai, it was a critical instrument, valued across the board, even by Israel.

Back to the field. After receiving the letter, Rikhye quickly escalated the matter to the Secretary-General, noting to the UAR that the Force Commander has no authority to authorise the withdrawal. The following day, the different battalions deployed across multiple Observation Posts communicated to UNEF HQ that UAR units were moving into their positions. Across the entire AO, the UAR military gave UNEF's battalions ultimatums to vacate their positions in 24 or 48 hours; they brought sufficient people and equipment to use the observation posts after UNEF left. The level at which the troops were harassed and threatened is significant. The Troop Contributing Countries were very risk-averse. The increasingly dangerous situation made them less prone to continue exposing their troops.

The Secretary-General engaged in a diplomatic back and forth. He first sought to gain time by recalling the previous agreements and discussing the different interpretations of the

abovementioned documents. He also enquired whether the letter meant a complete and permanent withdrawal. That said, in a meeting with the UAR's Ambassador in New York, he signalled that if his country requests UNEF to move away from Gaza and the Sinai, he would then interpret this as a request to end the operation because those two areas are the most important ones to keep the peace (Elaraby, 1968).

Now, we should point out that U Thant was referring not only to the General Assembly resolutions, which authorised UNEF, but also to an *aide-memoire*, signed 11 years prior by Hammarskjöld. The document signalled that the UNEF would stay on the ground until it fully achieves its mandate. This agreement also expressed that Egypt would accept and work within UNGA Resolution 1000. Because UNEF's mandate came from the General Assembly, it lacked the legal tools that an operation mandate by the Security Council could have had. In addition, a courageous and entrepreneurial Secretary-General negotiated this deployment with no real legal or political backing; unfortunately, his successor proved he did not have similar character traits.

While this bilateral back and forth progressed between New York and Cairo, the Secretary-General convened several meetings with the Security Council members and the TCCs. They all expressed surprise and asked similar questions as he did to the UAR. Multiple countries and the Force Commander expressed the importance of keeping UNEF on the ground. However, India and Yugoslavia did express that if the UAR could not guarantee their peacekeepers' safety, they would bring their troops home. This is important because they were two of the largest TCCs, and UNEF could not function without them.

Israel, who had always been apprehensive of peacekeeping, rejected the notion that the UAR could unilaterally ask UNEF to leave and expressed the view that UNEF was source of stability. The United States and the United Kingdom supported UNEF, and neither wanted to see a full-scale war erupt. After U Thant authorised the operations' departure, they bitterly denounced this decision, which made the Secretariat lose a lot of agency and support for its dealings in the region, but more on that later.

In the field, the situation was becoming quite dire. Rikhye shuttled between the different OPs and Ismailia. He communicated with the various battalion commanders to ensure their

troops were safe and continued to do their duty. He noted that he was able to be in regular contact with his local counterparts amidst the crisis. Unfortunately, even so, he stressed that UNEF's "problems and difficulties would increase each day" (p.27). After brief consideration, the Secretary-General noted this, accepted the UAR's request, and ordered Rikhye to retreat.

The decision to withdraw UNEF was, for all involved, a mistake. It was a grotesque miscalculation for the UAR (and the neighbourhood in general). For the Secretariat, the speed and unilaterality with which he made this decision did not make him appear solid or decisive; it made him look weak. It is unrealistic to expect that UNEF could have stayed much longer; however, the Secretary-General could have managed its exit better to pressure Egypt (and the Security Council) to discuss the issue. Scholars and former UN staff members who became scholars continue to discuss U Thant's decisions. Two main points warrant discussion.

First, as Parker (1992) discusses, the Secretary-General did not exhaust all options; he could have bought time by prolonging the discussions, bringing the matter to the Security Council –which he was entitled to through Article 99 of the UN Charter. Moreover, his stance showed a lack of flexibility. While it is true that UNEF was experiencing almost insurmountable pressure, and it is unlikely they would have been able to carry on as they had been, as Cohen (1968) explains, not all hope was lost. The Secretary-General did not travel to Cairo immediately or use his charter-given power are two examples of the options left on the table. This does not imply that he would have been successful, but it would have signalled that he played all his cards.

In fairness, while he did not request an emergency meeting of the Council, the TCCs, the British, nor the Americans did not do it either. They could have supported the Secretary-General by bringing the matter up for discussion. Perhaps, he would have been emboldened by a strong, unified statement of support from all countries who expressed reservations behind closed doors. Elaraby (1968) & Firestone (2019) point out that by seeking advice from the advisory committee and informing the Security Council and the General Assembly through different reports, the Secretary-General followed many of his duties. Probably the matter was not brought to the Council's attention to avoid a protracted and, ultimately,

useless debate between Moscow and Washington because Israel would have never agreed to accept UNEF to observe the border from its side and, due to the UAR's increasingly confrontational tone, against Israel. While nobody questions Hammarskjöld's political acumen, it is essential to acknowledge that the UN changed between 1956 and 1967; the Secretary-General had considerably less room for manoeuvre and one of the reasons why was the Council's desire not to have another Secretary-General like Hammarskjöld who would challenge them as much (Urquhart, 1981 & Traub, 2007). The Secretary-General's actions show a significant and problematic absence: crisis management. Not a single constituent part of the peacekeeping architecture was ready to deal with this crisis. The Advisory Committee effectively hid behind U Thant. The Security Council, as ever, was paralysed by the two superpowers that were deeply entrenched. In other words, everybody failed. With the benefit of hindsight and first-hand experience, Urquhart (1987) bitterly denounces that this was U Thant's failure and demands that historians condemn everyone equally.

The Secretary-General should have challenged the UAR's understanding of its agreements with the UN. Instead, he immediately agreed with the UAR's interpretation of the agreements and undermined the position of strength built for him by Hammarskjöld. Malawer (1970) discusses that in his haste to agree with the UAR's understanding of the agreements, the Secretary-General spent all his political capital; his position was excessively one-sided. He only had the support of the UAR and the Soviet Union. Under the Aide-Memoire, the UAR had no right to expel UNEF without proper consultation with the Security Council. U Thant dismissed this framework too quickly, costing him much political capital.

On 23 May, U Thant travelled to Cairo to meet with Nasser. While he was en route, the UAR closed the strait of Tiran to Israeli traffic. Urquhart informed him of this while he had a layover in Paris, but he decided to go anyway. The Secretariat knew that Israel would treat this incident as casus belli. Still, at the same time, after winning a quick political victory in New York a few days ago, the UAR was certainly emboldened, so they would not back down. When Nasser met U Thant in Cairo, he admitted that his government quickly closed the strait because they wanted to do so *before* he arrived (Rikhye, 1980). Unfortunately, the Secretary-General's trip was too little, too late; he held very frank discussions with Nasser but did not

lower the tensions. He left Cairo after a two-day visit to brief the Council and continued to try to avert war (Urquhart, 1987).

The signs that another regional conflict was looming were, in hindsight, obvious. Nasser's assertive foreign policy, Syria's constant harassment of Israeli troops at their border, and the Arab world's pressure for the UAR to fight back were not new phenomena. U Thant failed to prepare the Secretariat for a crisis. The Secretariat should have seen this coming. It is telling that most of the Secretariat's crisis management ideas came *after* U Thant agreed to pull UNEF back. Urquhart writes, "After U Thant came back empty-handed […] we set about trying to devise ways of slowing down the onrush of events" (1987, p. 214). The two main ideas were the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to work as an envoy and negotiator and revive the Israel-Egypt Armistice networks. The Secretariat could have prepared a detailed playbook with achievable, immediate reactions that would have helped his quest. This is where the small bureaucracy showed its limits; very few people who worked on the matter had little time to take a step back and look at the bigger picture. This does not mean that he would have succeeded; he would have probably failed, but he would have been able to fend off his critics. In the end, the Secretary-General concluded that UNEF's prolonged lifespan allowed everyone to "ignore some of the hard realities of the underlying conflict […] and the UN is now confronted with a brutally realistic and dangerous situation" (1967, p. 4). How the Secretary-General withdrew the operation started a chain of events through which the dwindling of the Secretariat's agency in the Israel-Arab conflict began.

The consequences of UNEF's withdrawal were profound. It set a very difficult precedent in terms of consent. It demonstrated that if a country finds hosting a peacekeeping operation politically inconvenient, they expel them without repercussions. The Security Council knew Cairo expelled UNEF because it wanted to wage war, yet they let this happen (Tandon, 1968). In addition, it undermined the effectiveness of the operation because it gave the host country essentially a way out at any time for any reason (Malawer, 1970). Most likely, even if the Secretary-General had adopted a more assertive stance, the war would have broken out anyway. However, he would have avoided political criticism and protected the viability of peacekeeping as a concept. With hindsight, we know that the Security Council continued to

authorise deploying multiple peacekeeping operations. That said, its future was up in the air at that moment.

For the Arab-Israeli conflict, UNEF's withdrawal brought the parties closer to war than they had been since 1956. In Israel's eyes, the UN continued to lose credibility as a reliable, honest broker, which informed many of their decisions vis-à-vis peacekeeping in the coming decade. For the UAR, having the power to withdraw UNEF with almost no political pushback gave them even more confidence to continue their path to war.

By June 1967, all hope for a diplomatic solution to this question was gone.

Sitting Ducks: UNTSO and UNEF in the Six-Day War.

This section will provide a brief overview of the war and analyse the events through the lens of UNTSO and UNEF. Two weeks after U Thant returned from Cairo, the war started. While the UN and the entire architecture around saw this coming, it still presented a hazardous situation for the peacekeepers for two reasons. First, UNEF battalions were still on the field; simultaneously, they waited for their turn to depart; the different battalions were still at the various camps along the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza. Second, the operation was not prepared for this eventuality in any sense of the word. UNEF had strict orders to use force only in the most desperate situations, even more so after U Thant ordered them out of the Peninsula; by the time they started to withdraw, tensions between the peacekeepers ran high, and the Secretary-General wanted to avoid all risk of a confrontation. As seen in the previous section, UNEF's real strength was political because going to war had a political cost. That said, if Israel, the UAR or both decided, as they did, to risk that, there was nothing UNEF could do but protect itself and try to keep its troops alive.

Israel attacked Egypt quite quickly after UNEF left because it did not want to give time to the UAR-led coalition a chance to fortify its position, military and political. On the former, the UAR started to deploy a considerable size of its forces to the Sinai Peninsula, and it reconfirmed the closure of the Strait of Tiran. Nasser and King Hussein of Jordan signed a defence agreement on the political front, which brought the Hashemite Kingdom to the War coalition. Up north, the increasingly aggressive stance against Israel served to solidify Syria's

political regime –which was one of the main reasons why the Soviet Union started this whole situation in the first place (Goldstein, 2018).

The IDF leadership, headed by Lt Gen Yitzhak Rabin, firmly believed that Israel must first attack to establish superiority and end the war on their terms. The IDF had been preparing for a multi-front confrontation for quite some time. Up north, they identified that the northern tip of the Golan Heights was unprotected and designed a plan to take this vital strategic location with a swift battle (Laron, 2017). The Israeli Air Force prepared a bold plan to destroy the Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian and Iraqi Air Forces to protect the army as it advanced across all fronts (Pollack, 2005). Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, who served as Defence Minister until a few days before the war, did not share this view; he initially refused the generals' calls for war. The defence and political establishments kept clashing as the former wanted to go to war, and the latter kept stalling. In the end, as it became clear that Nasser was looking for war, the Prime Minister and his government agreed that war was the only option, and they proceeded with their plans (Bar-On, 2012).

The Six-Day War temporarily neutralised peacekeeping in the Middle East. Rikhye informed the Secretary-General that war broke out on multiple fronts. For UNEF, the situation was dire. Neither side tried to protect the operation, nor despite constant, urgent requests from the Force Commander to both sides, protect their headquarters. The Secretary-General asked UNEF to keep New York appraised of the information continuously and asked to ensure the safety of the troops. Unfortunately, Rikhye's appeals did not work. On the other side of the border, UNTSO was unequipped to deal with the situation. Neither its observers nor its regional political offices affected the conflict or the safety of their counterparts. The Secretary-General's appeals to a cease-fire at Headquarters did not resonate with anyone. After guns fell silent, real diplomatic work started in the field and in New York.

UNEF's departure and the post-war political climate made UNTSO's position even more complex and permanent. UNTSO quickly deployed observers to the Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula, to establish agreed-upon cease-fire lines. It is important to note that the parties never withdrew their consent to have UNTSO working in the Peninsula. Because the Security Council deploys the operations independently, UNEF's expulsion did not affect UNTSO's

relationship with the UAR. In addition, UNTSO continued to work on the Israel-Lebanon border and in East Jerusalem, where it facilitated contact between Israel and Jordan (Siilasvuo, 1992). UNTSO is a clear example that peacekeeping operations are valued even when they cannot promote peace. Their presence can help when its mandate is part of a larger, holistic strategy designed to tackle the conflict. Whether it was part of the Secretariat's long-term approach to the conflict and, more importantly, whether there was a proactive plan for the inter-war period, will be the focus of the next section,

The result of the war was as stunning as it was transformative. In less than 150 *hours*, Israel took over the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank. To top it all, Israel unified Jerusalem. The effect this had on the morale of the IDF and the Israeli population cannot be understated. The victory signalled their superiority over their neighbours. It also gave the defence establishment an undue amount of arrogance, which cost them dearly a few years later (Machairas, 2017). For the Arab world, the war was nothing short of catastrophic. All three principal belligerents lost significant and strategic pieces of territory. In addition, their militaries suffered decimating losses in less than a week. While the Soviet Union swiftly provided its clients with aircraft and other equipment, it took them over half a decade to have the necessary strength to re-challenge Israel.

Now we must turn our attention to New York. The Security Council and the General Assembly gathered over the summer of 1967 for emergency sessions to discuss the aftermath of the war, and the Secretariat started to outline its role in this new Middle East.

The Inter-War Years: A Jarring Period

The inter-war period (June 6 1967 – October 5 1973) saw plenty of diplomatic efforts. This section will review the diplomatic engagements through the lens of the Secretariat and the actions it took throughout this time. This period covers two Secretaries-General: U Thant and Kurt Waldheim. This is important because their approach and views on the Israel-Arab conflict and peacekeeping differed. Moreover, their relationships with the Security Council[52]

[52] It is also important to note that in the autumn of 1971 the People's Republic of China joined the Security Council as a permanent member. The People's Republic of China and Israel have a relationship, which preceded the former's membership at the UN. Israel was one of the first non-communist countries to recognise it. That said, neither side was able to escape the Cold War nor the roles they played in it therefore, the Sino-Israeli relationship and the PRC's stance on the Israel-Arab conflict shifted (Sobin, 1991).

were quite different (Jackson, 1978). This period contributes to the study's overarching research question because it allows evaluation of how the Secretariat changes strategy when a new Secretary-General takes office.

The first diplomatic round revolved around establishing post-war agreements. The parties agreed with the proposed cease-fire lines a few days after the war ended. Unfortunately, as soon as that happened, the complaints started. The Security Council met more than a dozen times (formally and informally) to discuss various accusations of Israel, Syria and Egypt regarding violations of the lines and even clashes. The tension on the ground continued to rise during the entire summer, and both sides tried to capitalise on that by blaming it on each other.

In New York, the discussions over the Israel-Arab conflict took a bicameral flavour because the Security Council and the General Assembly simultaneously had the issue on their respective agendas. At the request of the Soviet Union, the General Assembly gathered for an emergency session to discuss the issue. Moscow's objective was to ensure Israel's condemnation as the aggressor. This view was not widely shared. While multiple countries supported the notion that Israel was occupying territory illegally, the Assembly seemed to want to discuss the conflict more broadly than blame Israel (Feldman & Barromi, 1974; Shapira, 1971). In the end, the emergency session yielded no results, once again confirming that the General Assembly is not an ideal forum to manage post-conflict situations pragmatically. Notably, this was one of the last times the General Assembly would adopt a relatively moderate stance in the conflict. In the coming decades, until this day, the Assembly has a very anti-Israeli voting record.

At the Security Council, the thing did not get much better. The Soviet Union tried to introduce language explicitly naming Israel as the sole responsible for the war. Moscow made multiple attempts to get the other P4 on board. In the end, nothing major passed in the summer because there was a misalignment on the level of pragmatism the situation warranted. On the one hand, The Soviet Union was not pragmatic; it wanted to prove a political point.

On the other hand, the rest of the P5 wanted to tackle the conflict holistically instead of reducing the discussions to assigning blame. While the Council agreed that Israel must

withdraw to the 5 June 1967 borders, they did not entertain the notion of a punitive resolution (Quigley, 2013). In the end, the summer was not very productive, politically speaking. While things in New York stayed frozen, UNTSO provided invaluable service to the Council and the belligerents by way of providing accurate and neutral information, staffing the different observation posts and regularly briefing the Security Council of developments. In the autumn, the Council and the Secretariat would revisit the Israel-Arab question and ignite the political engines once again.

Resolution 242: Ambiguously determined

This diplomatic round robin started in September. The Council knew it had to pronounce itself vis-à-vis this conflict. Therefore, all P5 embarked on diplomatic campaigns to get their views across to the other members. While the Soviet Union and the United States actively engaged both sides and prepared and sponsored draft resolutions, neither side showed sufficient impartiality to earn universal trust. The United Kingdom took over the role of what we can anachronistically call 'penholder[53]'. Under the leadership of their permanent representative, Lord Carandon, the UK worked to bridge the gap between the different proposals and the belligerent parties' different objectives (Ashton, 2016).

Unlike a modern penholder, the UK was not the first or only country to present a resolution. The result was not really "a British text but the result of close and prolonged consultation with both sides and all Council members (Schaeftler, 1974, p. 57). Indeed the non-aligned movement led by India, Nigeria and Mali; the Group of Latin American and the Caribbean; and the United States presented draft resolutions[54] to the Council. The challenge for the UK was to find an agreement the parties would accept and work with. While the Council had hoped to use this resolution as a basecamp to negotiate a comprehensive solution to the Israel-Arab conflict, their views on how they wanted to address the issue were starkly

[53] The penholder system is a tool created by the Security Council to streamline its work. One of the P5 spearheads the management of an issue at the Council and is responsible for writing the initial draft resolution, discuss it with the other P5 and then circulate and discuss it with the entire Council. For more see Loiselle (2019).

[54] The draft resolutions are S/8227 (India et al); S/8229 (United States); S/8235 (Latin America).

different. The stalemate was so profound that there was a serious concern that they would not be able to adopt a resolution at all (McDowall, 2014).

After multiple negotiations, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 242 (1967). Without question, this is the most critical UN document within the Israel-Arab conflict. Scholarly articles discuss this document from legal, political and even linguistic standpoints. The document's language is so important (and controversial) that it is worth quoting it for clarity. The main two operative clauses read

1) Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
2) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats or acts of force

The resolution's ambiguous language allowed multiple conflicting interpretations. On the one hand, the solution made it clear Israel was not under strict obligation to withdraw from the territories it claimed; however, it left the door open for territorial exchanges when lasting peace agreements would be signed (Rostow, 1993). Besides, the language does not imply that Israel should withdraw from *all* the territories it gained throughout its existence but briefly references the gains made in 1967. This begs the question, why did the Arab States accept it. Essentially, they "concluded that the language of Resolution 242 was the best they could hope to obtain at the time" (Goldberg, 1988, p. 43). Having made several unsuccessful efforts at the General Assembly and the Council itself, they made a pragmatic decision to accept this ambiguous document while they regrouped politically and militarily. After the dust settled, they felt the resolution betrayed their objective of forcing Israel to give up all the territory it conquered in the war (Louis, 2012).

Scholars and even the parties continue to debate whether the resolution helped advance the quest for peace. Dajani (2007), Lynk (2007), and Falk (2007) critically reviewed the resolution on its 40th Anniversary. Their conclusions indicate that the text's ambiguity led to multiple interpretations. The belligerents did not know what the other side meant when they

accepted the document's terms. While some scholars argue that this is the best they could have gotten and that diplomacy is the art of compromise, the degree to which the language is watered-down puts the document's long-term validity in question. In other words, this level of confusion did not help matters.

On the other side of the argument, Lapidoth (1992), and Goldberg (1973; 1988) highlight a few critical positive sides of the resolution. First, even though the parties interpreted quite differently and, at various times, threatened to withdraw their approval, the resolution managed to stand the test of time. In addition, the resolution served as a framework for future negotiations, particularly the peace treaties Israel signed with Egypt in 1978 and Jordan in 1994.

For our question's purposes, the resolution allowed the Secretariat to spearhead the quest for peace. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to "designate a Special Representative [...] to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement" (1967). This clause was the only vessel through which negotiations could resume; therefore, it was a significant decision (Bickerton & Klausner, 2017). The Secretary-General moved swiftly and appointed Ambassador Gunnar Jarring of Sweden as his Special Representative; Jarring led a very active three-year period where the Secretariat had an opportunity to bring the parties to the table and find peace.

Jarring was a skilled and experienced diplomat. He worked worldwide, most notably as Sweden's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Ambassador to both the United States and the Soviet Union –he was serving in Moscow by the time of his appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Middle East. His experience and Sweden's foreign policy of neutrality served as a political guarantee to everyone involved that he would only represent the interests of the United Nations in his duties.

It goes beyond the scope of this section to produce a detailed recount of the Jarring mission. This section accounts for the degree to which the mission responded to the Secretariat's strategic thinking. Also, the section discusses whether resolution 242 provided an opportunity for the Secretariat or whether its mission was doomed to fail.

The Jarring mission is considerably understudied. While it appears in many scholarly contributions, few articles dedicate themselves entirely to it. Mørk (2007) and Waage & Mørk (2015) produced extraordinary research that reflects on Jarring's journey and the effectiveness of his mission. Through an extensive review of archival material and interviews with Jarring's inner circle, these papers are an excellent platform to review the mission's interactions with the Secretariat in New York and UNTSO in Jerusalem. The Secretary-General's (1971 & 1973) Reports to the Security Council further complemented these scholarly contributions. U Thant drafted the first, and Kurt Waldheim, the second. That said, here we must insert a vital caveat.

> Very few conversations between Jarring and the few UN officials with whom he discussed the mission were recorded. The meetings held between Secretary-General U Thant and Jarring were often held privately and without transcripts because of the risk of leaks of sensitive information (Mørk, 2007, p. 10)

Therefore, based on the limited information available, this section will draw preliminary conclusions about the degree to which a coordinated strategy was designed by the Secretariat and implemented by Jarring. The mission had two distinctive stages. The first stage started right after his appointment and lasted until April 1970. Jarring set up an office in Cyprus and began a marathon of visits to Israel, Egypt, Jordan, New York and various European capitals. The bilateral talks were protracted, and neither side was willing to engage constructively. Jarring was immensely discouraged, so he decided to return to Moscow until the political climate improved.

While Jarring worked to engage the parties politically, the situation on the ground got worse on two fronts: the Sinai Peninsula and Jordan. These two crises proved to be formidable challenges for UNTSO. Once again, the small operation of observers worked under dire circumstances to remain the eyes and ears of the United Nations.

In early 1969, Egypt started the war of attrition until August 1970. Egypt's strategy consisted of constant attacks against Israeli positions to reclaim the Sinai and use the Suez Canal eventually. This strategy proved to be successful against Israel for two reasons. First, the IDF and the Israeli public were (and continue to be) accustomed to brief wars. The protracted

nature of the war of attrition had a negative psychological and political effect on the country. The media openly questioned if their peace was achievable and whether the status quo was worth maintaining vis-à-vis the Sinai Peninsula. Second, the IDF suffered casualties and loss of equipment. Egypt showed Israel they were still a threat (Khalidi, 1973).

In September 1970, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, attacked the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to depose King Hussein. With the support of the Syrian Army, the PLO attacked various military installations in Jordan. This attack threatened the Jordanian monarchy's survival and opened a new front in the Israel-Arab conflict. The crisis' aftermath brings two essential points for the UN Peacekeeping and the UN's work in the Israel-Arab conflict. First, the PLO mainly relocated to Southern Lebanon, ending up in de facto control. This is the genesis of the situation, which later on required the deployment of UNIFIL. Second, the United Nations (both as an organisation and as an inter-governmental forum) recognised the importance of dealing with Palestinian nationalism (Quandt, 1971).

Siilasvuo provides a very insightful account of both crises from UNTSO's perspective. In the south, UNTSO observers, once again, found themselves trapped between two warring armies and, at times, attacked by them. The General protested that throughout the war, UNTSO was "shot 284 times from the Egyptian side and 61 times from the Israeli side" (Siilasvuo, 1992, p. 86). The operation lost two officers and had multiple wounded. He states that during this confrontation, the General even discussed possibly closing all its OPs deployed in the Peninsula; however, the Secretariat rejected this proposition on two grounds. First, it would have sent a message to the Council and the parties themselves that UNTSO was incapable of fulfilling its mandate, and they would have certainly demanded its closure. The operation was far too valuable, and the Secretariat did not want to risk its future.

Second, the Secretariat reasoned accurately that if UNTSO closed the OPs, it would have been difficult, politically speaking, to re-open them. In other words, UNTSO had to weather the storm as best it could. In Jordan, UNTSO was far less active than in the Sinai. Its small liaison office had less than five staff members. The operation had freedom of movement and a secure

communication line with Jerusalem and New York, so UNTSO allowed the Secretary-General to stay updated (Siilasvuo, 1992) .

One unexpected casualty of this turbulent time was President Gamal Abdel Nasser. On 28 September 1970, he died of a heart attack in Cairo. Nasser's health deteriorated significantly because of stress. Vice-president Anwar Sadat replaced Nasser and began a political revolution in Egypt.

Against this backdrop, the Secretary-General asked Jarring to resume his role and engage the parties. In the second phase, Jarring took two crucial steps. First, he shifted from merely moderating the discussions to proposing his ideas. He "abandoned his studied carefulness […] and at last actively intervened in the negotiating process by proposing his peace plan dealing with fundamental problems in the conflict between Israel and Egypt" (Mørk, 2007, p. 89). Second, he decided to focus his attention on Egypt. The Civil War left Jordan excessively preoccupied with its domestic problems. Amman had little energy or political will to pursue long-lasting peace with the Israelis.

The Secretariat had been pushing Jarring to take at least the first of these two decisions, so they welcomed his proactivity. In 1971 Jarring sent a proposal to Egypt and Israel in which he asked the former to enter into direct negotiations and the latter to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula. Unfortunately, Israel's response to the plan was so negative that they stated their wish to no longer deal with Jarring (Korn, 1992). Ironically, he was condemned when he was passive and when he was active. The Swedish diplomat felt utterly defeated and withdrew from the process. Before analysing the impact of the Secretariat's political activities' results, it is essential to discuss why it came to this.

Jarring used a myriad of techniques, such as shuttle diplomacy. He would meet foreign ministers and other high-level officials and held discussions in New York with the permanent representatives, believing that his mission could get further traction. Also, he proposed to the Secretary-General to host a multilateral conference in Cyprus to find an agreement; the meeting never took place. Throughout the first phase of his mission, the other would step away whenever he got close to getting agreement from one side.

The Secretary-General, a quiet diplomacy practitioner, built a solid relationship with Jarring. They met regularly to strategize, and whenever Jarring encountered a severe roadblock, he would confer with him. That said, the way he worked in the field was very insular and, at times, isolated him from the Secretariat. Jarring was reserved, and his fear of press leaks was borderline paranoid. This working way is not conducive to success because it prevents other parties from entirely buying in, even inside the Secretariat. Urquhart reflects that he was "reticent and discrete to an exceptional degree" (1987, p. 218). While his efforts were herculean and his commitment to neutrality was admirable, his solitary diplomacy failed.

There were three interdependent issues that made the Jarring mission even more challenging: Jarring himself; the support he received throughout the two phases but particularly the firs; and the multi-polarity of diplomatic efforts around the same time. The Jarring mission was one of the many other diplomatic efforts to deal with the issue.

The Secretary-General decided to appoint a diplomat who already had a full-time position and tenure at the Foreign Ministry. Jarring never resigned but instead took leave. This does not question his neutrality or commitment to the United Nations or the mission however, he was an outsider who did not understand the politics and dynamics within the Secretariat or in the relationship, the Secretariat had with the Council. This begs the question, why did the Secretary-General appoint someone outside the Secretariat. Probably, U Thant felt he needed an experienced diplomat with solid credentials from a country whose foreign policy revolved around neutrality. However, perhaps the mission would have succeeded more if the Secretary-General had sent an experienced member of the Secretariat –either a current or an even former senior staffer– with experience in multilateral discussions. For example in 1949, Secretary-General Trygve Lie appointed Bunche to represent him at the Rhodes Conference that facilitated the Israel-Egypt Armistice and provided a precedent for the rest (Waage, 2011).

However, in fairness to Jarring, the Rhodes conference had complete support from the United States, as well as the Secretary-General's direct and prolonged personal engagement. Most importantly, there was a willingness to negotiate. If we compare the personalities and negotiation styles, Bunche was better suited to lead such a process. He was a skilled diplomat

devoted to multilateralism and assertive enough to ensure the UN would not be a silent convener but a force for peace (Moghalu, 1997).

The Middle East and the international system dramatically changed between these two efforts. Jarring did not have the support he needed from the superpowers; he had no advantage in working with them. Of course, he did not make his work more manageable by being reluctant to collaborate and engage them.

The third element was that, unlike the Rhodes conference, the inter-war period saw multiple parties sometimes engaging at cross-purposes. The negotiations in Rhodes were the only ones taking place. The Security Council and the Secretariat governed themselves according to the progress made on the island. In contrast, when the Jarring mission occurred, the different P5 engaged in bilateral discussions with the belligerents and did not coordinate their efforts. Of course, it is not likely that the Soviet Union would work together with the United States. Even the parties, which, to an extent, agreed with each other, failed to funnel their efforts via Jarring.

In conclusion, no matter how good a strategy the Secretariat designs and implements, it has a low ceiling unless it has strong backing from the Security Council. During the two phases, the mission employed multiple tactics and met different officials in different places. Unfortunately, nothing worked. The Secretariat took on a task nobody else wanted to do. It constantly had to adapt its strategy to cope with the superpowers arming their respective sides, which essentially paralleled the Council.

After the cease-fire, the situation on the ground improved, so UNTSO had more bandwidth to engage in political affairs. General Siilasvuo dedicated much of his time to solidifying its relationships with government officials, UN colleagues and diplomats stationed in the region and this 'quiet' period allowed the incoming Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim of Austria, to settle into his new position. Unfortunately, true to form, the Israel-Arab conflict re-ignited in October 1973 in a war that shook the region yet again.

The Yom Kippur War: An October Surprise

The Six-Day War altered the region's map, changed, tipped the geopolitical balance of power and solidified Israel's position as a regional power. It also exasperated the tension and

convinced the Arab world that war was the only way to deal with the Jewish State. Syria and Egypt embarked on a decisive re-armament campaign. With the help of the Soviet Union, they replenished all the assets they lost in 1967, trained a new generation of military officers and started planning an aggressive offensive. Israel had military superiority after the war. However, the more time passed, the better armed and trained her adversaries became. The IDF had various challenges; they had to cover multiple borders with vastly different topographies. As seen in the War of Attrition, the Israeli economy struggles with prolonged conflicts (Safran, 1977).

Military planners in Cairo and Damascus also acknowledged the need to coordinate their attacks, commit equal proportions of their forces, and, if possible, catch Israel by surprise. Just as stunning as Israel's victory in the Six-Day War was, was Israel's inability to predict the Arab invasion of 1973. Indeed, Israel underestimated the capacities of its neighbours and overestimated the IDF's ability to hold the line in case of an attack (Handel, 1977). In addition, the IDF and UNTSO saw first-hand that both Syria and Egypt were preparing for war –both Lt Gen David Elazar, the IDF's Chief of Staff and Siilasvuo received continuous intelligence reports and misinterpreted them. Israel failed to process and prepare the information and its military and civilian leadership remained overconfident (Shlaim, 1976; Kahana, 2002).

The war began in the early morning of Yom Kippur, one of the holiest days in the Jewish calendar, where a large portion of the population fasts and the country comes to a standstill (Handel, 1977). The Syrian Army invaded the Golan Heights and Egypt crossed the Suez Canal. During the first ten days of the war, Egypt and Syria won many battles, bringing the IDF to the brink of defeat (Rabinovich, 2004). The IDF managed to reclaim the high ground at a significant cost and through the help of the United States. By 20 October, the IDF took the Suez Canal, Mt Hermon, and positioned forces less than 50 km from Damascus. The Americans wanted to ensure Israel's military victory whilst avoiding another humiliating defeat for Egypt and Syria; therefore, they delayed their weapons shipment and encouraged them to agree to a cease-fire. The Soviet Union provided significant military assistance to Cairo and Damascus and threatened to intervene directly when the tide started to turn against them. The United States put its armed forces on high alert to join the fight. Luckily,

cooler heads prevailed, and instead, the two superpowers and their clients agreed on a cease-fire, which took place on 24 October (Bickerton & Klausner, 2017).

The Secretariat: A Case of Successful Rapid Response

Before discussing the Secretariat's response and strategy after the cease-fire, it is crucial to establish a methodological caveat and spend a few lines shedding light on the status quo**.** First, this chapter critically assesses the political process of the Israel-Arab conflict from the Secretariat's perspective.

As this section will show, the United Nations played a limited role in the subsequent negotiations whenever the United States –and to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union and the parties– allowed them to. Therefore, the focus will be on the km 101 negotiations, the Geneva Peace Conference 1973, the implementation of both the Israel-Egypt and the Israel-Syria disengagement agreements and the attempts to convene a second conference in 1977. Of course, each section will underline the processes that excluded the Secretariat and their impact on its work.

By October 1973, Kurt Waldheim had been in the job for almost two years. The Secretariat had a hard time adjusting to the new UN Chief. Urquhart shared that his new boss was challenging, especially at the beginning. "Waldheim had not yet understood the peculiar nature of his new job and routinely blamed his early mistakes on his subordinates, particularly those who had tried to prevent them" (n.d). As he settled into the job, Waldheim's relationship with his position and the people around things improved. While today the thought of the Secretary-General having a difficult time with one of his Under-Secretaries-General would hardly make the news –there are so many of them– back then, the number of UN Senior Staff was small. Waldheim needed people like Urquhart for all sorts of things, such as political affairs, managing multiple peace operations, and the overall coordination and management of the organisation.

Waldheim's views on his predecessor's record are also essential because they informed his behaviour after the Yom Kippur War. He saw the Jarring mission as a complete failure and was unwilling to invest the political capital a Jarring-like mission required unless it had the blessing and active support of the Security Council. Waldheim believed the Council

‘abandoned’ Jarring, which made his work impossible. At the same time, the Secretary-General also knew that to maintain personal and institutional relevance, he needed to do two essential things: build a solid relationship with the power brokers and react quickly to their requests. In these two things, he did rather well.

Several factors allowed the United States and Kissinger to become the chief architect of the Middle East peace after the October War. First, the Soviet Union's influence in the region was in decline. The Arab world saw Moscow's rush to promote a cease-fire as a betrayal of their alliance. Egypt decided to build a closer relationship with the United States, and Syria sought a broader foreign policy that looked beyond Moscow (Golan, 1999). The Soviet Union calculated that it was more important to its national interest to keep *détente* and work with the Americans instead of risking what could have been a nuclear war. After spending a lot of time and money re-arming Syria and Egypt and encouraging them to attack Israel, it is understandable that the Arab world bitterly protested this course of action and, more importantly, looked elsewhere for alliances. Second, Israel and Egypt saw an opportunity to capitalise on the American enthusiasm by setting a price for their participation in the subsequent peace talks. Kissinger understood and gladly pledged economic and military support (Scherer, 1978).

From a political standpoint, the war had one clear winner: The United States. Not only because its side won the war militarily but also because it solidified its role as the primary sponsor of peace (Sheehan, 1976; Scherer, 1978). The Security Council adopted Resolution 338 (1973) which decided that cease-fire negotiations would start under 'appropriate auspices'. Essentially this meant that Kissinger was taking the lead. The resolution shows that the United States (and the rest of the Council) wanted a State to lead this instead of UN Staff Members.

The Jarring mission's failure eroded the Council's confidence in the Secretariat –even though Jarring mainly failed because of the Council's unwillingness to back it. Kissinger managed to appoint himself as Jarring's successor. The difference between the two was that the former, in his duty, represented the most powerful country in the world and had enormous resources

to incentivise dialogue. In addition, he was an assertive diplomat who designed a grand strategy, which he would then execute.

The Secretary-General made a conscientious decision to provide the Americans with all the support it could and, by doing so, built a solid personal working relationship with the US Secretary of State. The following section will discuss how the Secretariat influenced the Middle East peace process through a critical review of the communication. *Folder S-0899-0012-01* of the UN Archives provides a fascinating insight into the relationship; it contains letters, minutes of meetings, cables and press telegrams, which discuss the meetings' outcome. The folder is complemented by "*Crisis: The Anatomy of Two Major Foreign Policy Crises* (Kissinger, 1982a), a book with transcripts of meetings and phone calls Kissinger had during the war. Through a careful review of these documents, this thesis makes an original contribution to the literature.

On 24 September, the Secretary-General met with Kissinger in New York ahead of the General Assembly. They discussed various issues in the meeting, including the Middle East. The minutes of this meeting are particularly illuminating for various reasons. First, the meeting happened a few days before the war and after Kissinger returned from the region. Second, both discussed their interpretation of the threat level, and both sides were horrendously wrong. The war was less than two weeks away, and they did not discuss crisis management. They spoke about long-term issues as if the situation on the ground was quiet. Third, the Secretary-General clarified that the Secretariat had no interest in competing with what he saw as American jurisdiction[55]. From that point onwards, it was clear that the Secretary-General cast himself in a supporting role. Kissinger, in turn, reiterated that any long-term solution to the Israel-Arab conflict needs active UN involvement. He even hinted, "There might be a significant role in negotiating where the Jarring or a similar mission could be very valuable" (1973, p. 2). This statement, it turns out, was incredibly misleading because the Secretariat did not have the opportunity to take the lead on anything political. In the Kissinger mission, the Secretariat played only a supporting role. The American diplomat

[55] In the meeting, Kissinger "humorously observed that he promised that there would be no jurisdictional dispute if the Secretary-General wanted to make an exclusive claim on the problem" (p.1). The comment was, to say the least, ironic. At that stage, the Secretary of State was already working on a grand strategy for the Middle East in which Waldheim would have almost no political jurisdiction.

clarified that the Middle East was at the top of his priorities. It turns out that Yom Kippur was two weeks away from not only taking all of Kissinger's time but also bringing the international system to the brink of nuclear war. The meeting was very positive. From that point onward, the two men established a *modus operandi;* Kissinger would take the lead in dealing with the Israel-Arab conflict, and the Secretariat would support his initiatives. Kissinger's assurances that the UN would be in his plans as he moved forward provided Waldheim with the necessary guarantees to cooperate.

The war caught Kissinger in New York, which proved a helpful coincidence because he could have in-person meetings and phone calls with colleagues and other key people. A few hours after he got confirmation that hostilities started, Kissinger contacted the Secretary-General to discuss the way forward. They agreed to avoid getting the General Assembly involved in order to avoid excessive (and useless) political posturing. The Security Council, Kissinger said, was the best place to hold discussions. A significant detail of the transcript reveals the level of trust they had. Indeed, Kissinger tells Waldheim, "for your information only, and do not share this with others, we are talking with the Soviets to see if we can develop a common approach" (1982a, p. 40). While Washington and Moscow had an entire month of disagreement and proxy war to fight, Kissinger already thought of the aftermath. Sharing these details with Waldheim was, on the one hand, a gesture of trust and, on the other hand, a strategy aimed at controlling the political agenda to the fullest extent possible when meetings at both the Security Council and the General Assembly happened; Waldheim had sway in these matters.

For the Israel-Arab conflict standards, the Yom Kippur War was rather long. During the conflict itself, the Secretariat had little to do. However, they knew they needed to prepare a post-conflict management framework. As the battle started to wind down, both superpowers began to prepare for the cease-fire's political terrain, and the Secretariat had to be ready. Chapter 3 discusses all the relevant logistical preparations, including a plan to redeploy observers, appoint Siilasvuo as interim Force Commander, etc. However, logistics was not the Secretariat's only or most challenging problem. Waldheim needed to create political terms of reference for the operation. The Secretariat is required to balance the need to

protect the neutrality and integrity of the Secretariat with the Security Council's position of authority.

After a few hours of planning and debate, the Secretariat came up with proposed terms of reference, which Waldheim presented to the Security Council on 26 October (1973). This document turned out to be a seminal evolution of peacekeeping as a concept. There are three main guidelines, which warrant a discussion. First, the operation must always have the complete confidence and backing of the Security Council and the parties' cooperation. Second, a Force Commander, who will report to the Secretary-General, would lead the operation. Third, the peacekeepers will carry weapons of defensive characteristics. The Security Council adopted Resolution 341 (1973) which certified its approval of the terms mentioned above of reference. This was an important political win for the Secretariat; its proactivity and planning allowed it to influence the Security Council and solve some of the constitutional deficiencies of peacekeeping. With this political hurdle cleared, the Secretariat needed to prepare for the next one: The negotiations at the km 101 tent.

Km 101: The Rise of Military Diplomacy in UN Peacekeeping

From a political standpoint, the Arab countries could not appear willing to negotiate with Israel because this would amount to their *de facto* recognition as sovereign state. Therefore, as we will see, the parties dispatched Generals to hold bilateral and multilateral discussions. Military diplomacy within this context is essential for a few reasons. First, separating the military from political affairs in the Israel-Arab conflict is impossible. The generals negotiated far more than troop positions. They talked about disengagement plans and the deployment of peacekeeping operations. Second, the negotiations took place both in the field and in Geneva under the Secretary-General's political auspices and the United States watchful eye. Kissinger used the military discussions to inform his diplomatic talks with the parties and elevate the military proposals to the political level and vice versa. Third, at multiple stages throughout the negotiations, the Secretariat had more influence on military diplomacy than the political level. Siilasvuo played an understated but crucial role in facilitating the implementation of Kissinger’s plans.

The military diplomacy effort took place within the framework of the Military Working Group. Israel, Syria and Egypt dispatched some of their senior military officers to represent them. A team led by Siilasvuo, who also chaired every meeting, represented the United Nations.

The first high-level military-diplomatic effort between Israel and Egypt at the km 101 negotiations was in November 1973. A month after, the only prominent outcome of the Geneva peace conference was the creation of the Military Working Group, which met every time the parties signed a disengagement agreement: January 1974 (Egypt – Israel), June 1974 (Syria –Israel) and September 1975 (Egypt – Israel, 2nd disengagement agreement).

Before delving into the role of the UN in the km 101 discussions, it is crucial to provide a brief overview of the political context, a summary of the discussions and a critical analysis of why and how the talks ended. After the guns fell silent, communications channels opened between Egypt and Israel via the US State Department. The idea of holding these discussions came from Egypt, for whom one of the war results produced a political challenge. The IDF encircled and trapped the 200,000 Egyptian Third Army near the Suez Canal. Israel decided to keep them as prisoners of war, and as such, they became a critical bargaining chip in future negotiations (Winokur, 2009). The situation was quite cumbersome to Egypt because a large portion of what was left of her armed forces was captive and because Sadat needed to show, that Egypt was the clear winner publicly. Therefore, Sadat pleaded his case to Kissinger, who, in turn, convinced Israeli leadership to agree to hold bilateral discussions.

Israel also saw the potential value of holding direct talks with the Egyptians to get back its prisoners of war and ensure Egypt would lift its naval blockade on Israeli vessels (Stein, 1999). Kissinger agreed and convinced Israel to sit down with them. However, he had a significant caveat in mind. As he viewed them, the talks should only discuss practical military matters such as prisoner exchange. He wanted to "save" the upcoming Geneva Peace Conference (Levitt, 1997). His support of the discussions rested on the political calculation that Israel and Egypt had no appetite for discussing anything else. This reasoning explains why no American diplomats were present and, instead, Washington quasi-delegated to the UN as the third party and organiser of the talks.

Egypt selected Major General Al-Gamassi to lead his delegation; Israel selected Brigadier General Aharon Yariv. Both Generals were highly respected within their political establishments, and had direct lines to their respective Heads of Government.

The prospect of making real progress in these talks was daunting. After all, a few days prior, the generals were fighting each other on the battlefield. In addition, Egypt and Israel had a quarter of a century of grievance and mistrust. Shlomo (2017) , Stein (1999) & Jonah (1990), provide very eloquent recaps of the discussions. At the onset, the main issues were the exchange of prisoners, the fate of Egypt's Third Army, and the return of civilian life in Suez. Underneath this plan, of course, laid the need to implement a cease-fire. The first few meetings were only to break the ice; both sides aired their grievances and outlined their objectives. Because the discussions at the tent were close to stalling irreparably, Kissinger stepped back in and hosted discussions in Washington with Israeli Prime Minister Meir and Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi. Notably, Yariv joined the discussions in Washington, which informed his behaviour during the remainder of the talks at the tent; he could hear the two countries directly negotiate at the highest levels in front of the United States.

The blend of the meetings at the tent and the Washington meetings allowed the parties to develop a six-point agreement. Waldheim announced the agreement from New York, and the generals signed the agreement on 11 November at a ceremony in the tent, witnessed by Siilasvuo.

The six-points:

1. The implementation of the cease-fire;
2. A broad disengagement to return to 22 October positions;
3. Humanitarian convoys to supply the City of Suez;
4. The free flow of non-military goods to Egypt's Third Army ;
5. The establishment of UNEF checkpoints along the Suez-Cairo road to replace the existing IDF ones;
6. The broad exchange of prisoners of war.

This was an important milestone for both short and long-term reasons. In the short term, the agreement gave the tent a framework to start having practical discussions; the agreement's

implementation was challenging. In the long term, the agreement sent a strong signal to the Middle East, and beyond that, the prospect of peace between Israel and one of the most powerful and influential neighbours was no longer a dream.

After the 11th, both sides started to study how best to implement each point. At this point, Siilasvuo began to play an active role in mediating and ensuring that UNEF would be at the centre of the discussions, particularly related to point five. Things started to move quickly; three days after the agreement, the Generals agreed on a "package-deal that included all outstanding POW issues, evacuation of the wounded, supplies for the Third Army and Suez, and Israeli abandonment of its checkpoints on the road" (Shlomo, 2017, p. 456). The execution of the package deal was challenging, and the Generals had to revert to their capitals constantly for instructions. They could continue the discussions and take advantage of their momentum. It is imperative to stress that the degree of trust and the speed at which the talks moved surprised Jerusalem, Cairo and, especially, Washington.

The last eight meetings held at the tent started to address the most challenging point of the six-point agreement: disengagement. Any discussion on this issue inevitably led to the question of Israel's occupation of the Sinai Peninsula since 1967. At the same time, the initial point at the tent was to ensure Israel's withdrawal to the 22 October line as per UN Security Council 338.

Unlike the other points of the agreement, this one touched on the 25-year-old history of mistrust, grievances and war. Both sides made proposals, but neither side was willing to negotiate them. The generals had strict instructions that their demands were existential; there was little room for manoeuvre. At the latter stages of the month, it became clear that the issues were too big for the tent, and because both sides were unwilling to compromise, the tent diplomacy came to a grinding halt.

The talks were quite productive due to three main factors: personalities, relationship with senior leadership, location and format. First, the personalities of the negotiators played a decisive role. Stein (1999) highlights that the selection of the chief negotiators was brilliant because while they both were proud patriots, they were also consummate professionals who treated each other respectfully. There were no significant cosmetic disagreements or any

diplomatic incidents. By the end of the discussions, they were friendly. Second, they both had a direct line of communication with their President and Prime Minister, respectively; numerous times during the negotiations, they had to consult with their capitals and get instructions in real time. It is illustrative that Yariv went with Prime Minister Meir to Washington to meet Kissinger during the negotiations. This level of access allowed him to translate the political mood of both sets of superiors plus the guarantor of the negotiations into the implementation of the six-point agreement.

Third, the venue and format of the discussion were instrumental. The parties agreed to meet at km 101 between Suez and Cairo. Instead of using the superb facilities in regular diplomatic meetings, they met inside a military tent. The small delegations allowed them to get to know one another personally. Moreover, the venue and format "insulated from the drawbacks of public diplomacy such as negotiating in front of the media, and, above all, constituted direct negotiations between the parties" (Levitt, 1997, p. 157). The talks were straightforward, and unlike lofty diplomatic negotiations, the two military men delivered brief statements and favoured pragmatism over political showmanship.

It is important to note that they did not deliver an agreement on the most contentious issue: disengagement. To answer the question, it is essential to look at the whole players' board. Shlomo (2017) conducted a thorough review of the Israeli State Archives. He concluded that Kissinger's negotiations were only allowed to occur because they served as a stepping-stone towards the Geneva Conference and, ultimately, the Peace Treaty of 1979.

Kissinger only wanted the parties to start talking to cool the waters internationally and buy goodwill and, equally important, time. "As long as that less-pressured condition prevailed, a long-term strategy could be devised" (p. 461). In other words, the km 101 was successful because they it was part of Kissinger's grand strategy vis-à-vis the region. He empowered the countries to meet on their own. By doing so, he gave himself sufficient time to solidify his relationship with the Israelis and Egyptians and get all players to the Geneva Peace Conference (Mandell, 1990).

Kissinger understood that the cessation of hostilities, even temporarily, was a necessary pre-condition for structural peace negotiations. The km 101 discussions allowed both sides to

satisfy immediate needs such as prisoner exchange. Sadat was able to save face by regaining control of the Suez Canal. Israel could solidify its defensive position, bring back its soldiers – an issue of paramount importance to Israeli society– and claim a diplomatic victory. This was the first time the Jewish State signed a formal agreement with an Arab neighbour since 1949 (Cohn, 1974).

Indeed, the American diplomat "manoeuvred Egypt and Israel into negotiating an agreement they both needed while solidifying the centrality of the American mediation role" (Stein, 1999, p. 146). When the conversation turned to political matters, he pulled the plug. His primary interest, of course, was to ensure the American objective of neutralising as far as possible the Soviet influence with both countries and crystallising the role of the United States as the sole guarantor of Israel's security and political stability in the region.

In addition, while he gave his initial blessing for the discussions in this format, he was pretty unhappy with the process. In his own words

> The whole process tested our patience. We never knew exactly what was happening. We got different reports […] Frequently we had three versions of a deadlock to choose from. The only common thing was being at least forty-eight hours behind. On the other hand, we were not, frankly, too eager for a breakthrough at the km 101 before the Geneva Conference (1982b, p. 751)

The Km 101 negotiations proved to be an invaluable first-step in the Israel-Egypt relationship. However, while the Americans saw the importance of the talks at the tent, the speed at which the parties moved exasperated them as well.

Now, we must turn to our overarching research question. Did the UN have a regional strategy similar to Kissinger's? What role did they play in the tent diplomatic encounter? The following section will analyse the political role played by the Secretariat with a particular emphasis on the Secretary-General himself and Siilasvuo.

Role of the UN: A Landmark of Dwindling Agency?

Before analysing the UN's role in the negotiations, it is essential to set all the pieces on the board. In the field, the start of the talks coincided with UNEF II's initial deployment.

Therefore, Siilasvuo, who took the role of Force Commander a few *days* before the negotiations, had to split his time between coordinating the safe, orderly and efficient deployment of his troops and ensuring smooth coordination of the negotiations. In addition, documents from the Archives reveal that the Secretary-General dispatched Under-Secretary-General Guyer between 14 and 22 November to Jerusalem, Cairo and Damascus for a round of discussions (more on that below). Guyer and Siilasvuo sent daily coded cables back to New York (keeping each other in CC) with meeting updates.

In New York, the Secretary-General did not play a significant role. Kissinger relocated the trilateral high-level political discussions to Washington, where he was not invited. While he kept Waldheim moderately well informed, it was clear that it would be field driven if the UN had a role in the Km 101 negotiations.

As we have done in this and previous chapters, we must go back to the accounts of James O.C Jonah, an Assistant-Secretary-General and member of Siilasvuo's team. In a paper he published on the UN's role in the entire process, he discusses the challenging role the UN had to play in the talks (1990). In addition, Siilasvuo's book and the communication between Jerusalem and New York from the Archives serve as decisive sources of information.

The UN Team comprised Siilasvuo, Jonah, Dr Remy George, a senior political advisor and Irish Captain Joseph Fallon. For the first few meetings, the UN Team rotated. After signing the six-point agreement, Siilasvuo and Jonah actively participated in the discussions.

Israel has always been apprehensive of the United Nations as a forum and as an organisation, which is why Yariv saw the role of Siilasvuo with grave apprehension. An illustrative example came when Siilasvuo approached Yariv to discuss the prisoner exchange. The General responded, "El-Gamasy and I get along just fine. Do not try to be a mediator. Your patronage and auspices, yes. But please, sir, don't be a mediator." (Stein, 1999, p. 109). Jonah (1990) also recalls the incident and concludes that Israel believed the UN wanted to prevent face-to-face negotiations between the countries, an intrinsic Israeli foreign policy objective.

Israel's objections notwithstanding, the negotiations needed an intermediary entity to help them find a consensus. The negotiations took place under the "auspices" of the United Nations; this did not give Siilasvuo an automatic role as the chairperson. On a de facto basis,

the need for an honest broker ended up giving him this role. The General routinely adjourned discussions when they were at an impasse and had bilateral conversations with both sides; this allowed parties to vent and, more importantly, to pass ideas for the UN Team to present as their own, "which was usually accepted because they came from the UN" (Siilasvuo, 1992, p. 199). Implementing the six-point agreement required the UN's active participation, a continuous challenge.

This put UNEF and the Secretariat in unchartered waters. In his own words, he reflected: "the new job as Chairman worried me a bit. For the first time in the history of UN Peacekeeping, the Force Commander had been given this extremely responsible and time-consuming assignment in addition to his many other duties" (1992, p. 199). Jonah (1990; 1992) reflects that the role of the UN Team, much like the organisation's role as a whole, depends on the extent to which the Security Council gives it room for manoeuvre. The UN's role as a third-party mediator, he stresses, played a vital albeit quiet role in moving things, despite the fact that Israel did not see the UN Team as anything more than a glorified host.

That said, when the discussion moved beyond prisoner exchanges onto disengagement, the UN Team had less influence, and its role started to dwindle. Because of the issues related to the Third Army, the humanitarian assistance needed by Suez, and the IDF checkpoints with UNEF required the active involvement of the UN, the issue of disengagement did not. In their papers and books, both Jonah and Siilasvuo state that as soon as the discussion progressed to this stage, it needed to be elevated to the highest level, politically speaking, because as laudable as the work done at the tent was, two Generals could not bring peace between the countries.

The UN Team performed an essential part in the km 101 discussions. From a political perspective, the role played by Siilasvuo was unprecedented in the history of UN Peacekeeping. This was not a routine discussion between the Force Commander and his counterparts within the AO; this was a high-level discussion with an ill-defined mandate and a broad scope. When the two countries started floating long-term disengagement plans, they delved into the political realm.

It would be easy to conclude that the km 101 negotiations were another instance of undermining its agency. After all, the process started and finished whenever Kissinger said so. However, after a more nuanced analysis, we can see that the Secretariat played its cards rather well; the UN Team influenced the negotiations and allowed the negotiators to communicate indirectly about issues they could not speak openly. The six-point agreement considerably lowered the temperature between two powerful countries with 25-year-old grievances, provided a framework for humanitarian assistance and set the stage for more discussions.

The Geneva Peace Conference: A Stillborn Process

This section will discuss the Geneva Peace Conference. This study differentiates between the Geneva Peace *Conferences* and the Geneva Peace *Process.* The former were concrete meetings, which took place at the *Palais Des Nations* in 1973 and 1977. The first iteration of the conference provided an overarching framework under which Kissinger facilitated the disengagement plans between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Syria (Atherton, 1992) . While the conference did not produce a tangible outcome, it did serve a purpose. Like the km 101 discussions, Kissinger saw the first Geneva Conference as a stepping-stone towards more strategic conversations.

Round 1: A Conference of Empty Chairs

Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy sought to get the parties together in a conference at the end of the year. Kissinger travelled to different capitals from 26 October until 15 December 1973 to convince them to go to Geneva.

While the km 101 negotiations served their purpose and got Egypt and Israel politically ready to embark on a broader political process, the conference would be more challenging for two reasons. First, the superpowers were the conveners and, more importantly, conference co-chairs. They would not let the parties negotiate independently as they did in the tent. Washington and Moscow had the objective of securing their influence in the region. Second, the chairs invited Syria and Jordan to participate; this presented a vital challenge because there was no rapport between them and Israel; they did not have a good record of accomplishments Egypt and Israel built in the tent.

The first conference was marked not by its accomplishments but by the absent actors, Syria who chose not to attend and the PLO who never received an invitation. It is necessary to discuss the reasons and effects of these two absences and, in Syria's case, discuss the Secretariat's political role.

The PLO did not attend the first conference because Israel blocked[56] their involvement. The issue of Palestinian participation in the overarching process was an ongoing challenge for the superpowers. On the one hand, Israel's objections to their participation were vehement that the conference would have collapsed before it began if the superpowers had insisted. Israel was eager to sit down with Arab countries because, in their eyes, this meant *de facto* recognition. Still, at the same time, they did not want to give the PLO *de facto* recognition of being the legitimate voice of the Palestinian people or a proto-state (Touval, 1987).

On the other hand, the Arab countries were adamant about recognising the PLO as a political actor. After the war, the Arab League adopted a resolution[57] that declared that the PLO was the sole representative of the Palestinian people (Odeh, 1977). This political endorsement is important because it indicates that the Palestinian question should be at the forefront of their dealings with Israel in the League's view. Kissinger found a middle ground through the invitation letter. Instead, the text did not mention the Palestinians and stated that 'the question of additional participants' would be on the agenda right after the conference started (Stocker, 2017). The conference never did, and the PLO's absence was one of the hallmark features of the event. As we will see in a later section, both superpowers and the Secretariat concurred that the following stages of the process must include the PLO.

[56] It is important to stress that Israel was going through a very difficult political period. First, Prime Minister Meir was facing a tough political challenge in an upcoming election in December. Allowing the PLO to attend the conference would probably tipped the scales against her. Second, right after the war, the Israeli cabinet set up the 'Agranat Commission' to do a deep post-mortem study into the government's actions before and during the war. While the Commission published its findings in April 1974, by December it was clear that public opinion blamed the political and military establishment for the outcome. In the end, the Commission did not find the Prime Minister at fault personally. Rather the report focused on the IDF's General Staff. For more on the Agranat Commission and the political ramification of the War on the Meir Premiership see: Bar-Joseph (2008) ; Simpson (1976).

[57] Jordan initially opposed the Arab League decision. However, less than year later, the King changed his country's position at the Rabat Summit of October 1974.

Attending the conference was an important issue for the PLO because they had fundamental apprehension with Jordan and Egypt discussing Palestinian matters independently. With Jordan, the case revolved around representation. The PLO wanted to ensure the title 'sole representative of the Palestinian people'. The organisation wanted to block Jordan's intentions to establish herself as such. Their competition was not due to differences in policy since they broadly saw the conflict similarly. "Rather, they were contesting who should have the authority" (Pearlman, 2008, p. 89). Losing their agency to Jordan would be a political catastrophe for the PLO because if they lose their voice, their *raison d'état* would be in danger. About Egypt, the PLO saw with concern the km 101 negotiations and the slow build-up of trust between Cairo and Jerusalem. The organisation was fearful that Sadat was ready to continue the peace process, even if this meant abandoning the Palestinians (Macintyre, 1975).

The PLO's absence at the first conference had a lasting impact on the entire process. An overwhelming majority of the Arab League and the UN General Assembly believed that excluding the Palestinians from the conference undermined any result it might obtain. The General Assembly started to take a much more active role in the conflict, and this decision coloured multiple subsequent resolutions they adopted. The message sent by the Arab League and the General Assembly was that no matter how much Kissinger shuttled between the countries or hosted a conference, the Israel-Arab conflict could not be solved until the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was settled. Of course, the Geneva Process challenged this assertion when Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty a few years later.

After Egypt and Jordan agreed to participate, Kissinger turned to Syria, which proved very complex. The Yom Kippur War finished much like on the Southern front, but a few critical issues were outstanding. First, both sides captured many prisoners and were unwilling to share the most basic information regarding them, let alone exchange them. Second, Israel captured even more territory of the Golan Heights. The IDF was less than 50 km away from Damascus and controlled the top of Mt Hermon and a total of 400 square km (Bickerton & Klausner, 2017). The Syrian political establishment was far less inclined to sit down with Israel. At the same time, Kissinger had considerably less political capital to spend in Syria; this changed gradually as Kissinger spent considerable time building a relationship with

Assad in Damascus. That said, the UN saw an opportunity for action at that moment, and the Secretary-General took it.

The Secretariat believed it could facilitate disengagement and prisoner exchange and get Syria to attend the conference. The Secretary-General dispatched Guyer to Damascus and Jerusalem. This effort is quite illustrative of our question of whether the Secretariat had political agency vis-à-vis the conflict.

Guyer sent daily coded cables to New York, where he reported on his meetings and provided analysis based on his interactions. In one of his first meetings with both, Guyer offered, "a solution could be sought inspired in the Egypt/Israel precedent utilising UNTSO as a meeting point" (1973, p. 3). The proposal showed that the Secretariat wanted to replicate its centrality and presence in a bilateral negotiation between Israel and Syria; however, the parties had too many preconditions to meet.

On 14 November, the Syrian Foreign Minister, Abdul Halim Khaddam, told Guyer that they were unwilling to disentangle the issues of territory and prisoner exchange. Guyer sent a cable to New York which explains the two main reasons why Syria was not interested in meeting the Israelis. First, Syria did not have a "pressing problem of Egypt's encircled Third Army and Suez City" (UNA, 1973, p. 2). Second, the Syrian Foreign Minister expressed to Guyer that his country was not interested in anything other than an overarching solution. In his analysis, Guyer stressed that Syria believed that time was on their side and that most of the Arab League supported their position.

Guyer met with President Assad the next day, who mostly reiterated his country's position. He also stressed that his government did not believe the Israeli proposals seriously. Moreover, he emphasised that he would be willing to discuss a broader solution with Israel if would agree to return to October 5 lines and let the villagers return. Guyer pressed him on the issue and enquired whether Syria wanted an actual return to the October 6 lines or a declaration of intent. Assad answered that the latter would suffice at this stage (UNA, 1973).

In Israel, Guyer met with Prime Minister Meir and Ambassador Mordechai Kidron. For the Israelis, the issue of prisoner exchange was paramount. However, in the same cable, Guyer noted that the Prime Minister "at no moment did favour Assad's positions on a return to the

5 October line, even if linked with an exchange of POW" (p.1). Jerusalem sent a few draft proposals to the Americans, including a prisoner exchange, allowing the people to return to the villages and handing the IDF's observation posts around Mt Hermon to UNTSO. Syria outright rejected them.

While Guyer was shuttling between Damascus and Jerusalem, Siilasvuo was chairing meetings at the tent, and he sent similarly detailed coded cables to New York, to which Guyer was privy. This triangulation of information between the Secretary-General, Guyer and Siilasvuo was very useful. Guyer, for example, was able to distil that Syria was not getting as much information on the km 101 negotiations as one would expect her closest war ally would share. Moreover, the Syrians did not believe Egypt would move as fast as to seek peace. Guyer used all the information he obtained from the tent to propose that both sides replicate the model, albeit unsuccessful for the above reasons.

In the end, Guyer's mission did not bring concrete solutions. In an interview published by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York, Guyer (1990) explains that while his mission ended with no tangible outcome, he was able to distil from his conversations with Assad a potential framework for disengagement, which would include a peacekeeping operation. The interviewer asked two interesting questions: 1) whether Kissinger was aware of his mission and 2) to what extent was the Secretary-General in touch with Kissinger. After returning to New York, he briefed them and even went to DC for a bilateral meeting with Kissinger. On the contact issue between Kissinger and Waldheim, he stated, "There were some meetings that took place. It was fluid, I wouldn't say regularly, but it did take place" (p. 4). The mission proved to be a helpful stepping-stone towards the disengagement.

Guyer's mini mission to the Middle East warrants analysis. The fact that the Secretary-General dispatched an Under-Secretary-General to meet Israel and Syria shows that the UN was willing and, more importantly, able to play an active role in the political process. However, its agency was limited. In the coded cables, Guyer highlights, even if obliquely, that parties were also discussing things with Kissinger directly, and he had much more political capital to hammer out an agreement. Guyer met with both heads of government. However, whether they met with him to discuss the situation substantively or out of deference to his

title, the Secretary-General, and out of fear of the international condemnation they would have endured had they chosen to refuse Guyer an audience. A careful review of the communication and the literature demonstrates that his mission was not entirely cosmetic; he could obtain information regarding what it would take sides to agree on a disengagement. However, it was clear the UN would not be in the driver's seat of a future negation.

The fact that an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations went as far as to deliver political reports to the US Secretary of State shows that the Secretariat was subordinate to the United States' foreign policy. This was not a routine bilateral discussion between the Secretariat and the foreign ministry of a P5 country; after all, he did not visit Moscow to brief the Soviet Foreign Minister, who, at least on paper, had the right to a briefing given that the USSR was the co-chair of the upcoming Geneva Peace Conference.

Guyer's trip to the Middle East was an ad-hoc opportunity the Secretariat embraced. The Secretariat did not have the political capital to propose to the Security Council to appoint another Envoy. The legacy of the Jarring Mission's failure haunted the Secretariat throughout the Geneva Peace Process.

In parallel to Guyer's talks with Syria, Kissinger personally discussed their participation in the upcoming first conference with Damascus. Because the issues addressed by Guyer were too entrenched, the parties made them pre-conditions to attend the conference. Israel stated that if Syria would attend, it would not unless Damascus presented a list of the IDF soldiers held captive. Syria demanded Israeli withdrawal to October 5 in exchange for its attendance. Ultimately, Kissinger decided to hold the conference without Syria and engage with them afterwards (Shlomo, 2015; Bakke & Waag, 2017).

Secretary-General or Conference Manager? The Geneva Peace Conference

Against the background of an interim agreement between Israel and Egypt, the moratorium of the PLO's participation and Syria's empty chair out of the way, the management and agenda of the conference became a priority. To keep the UN relevant in the process, the Secretary-General sought to ensure the active involvement of his office in the political dialogue. He did this by building a relatively close relationship with Kissinger himself. In Waldheim's boxes at the UN Archives, an entire folder of documents provides a fascinating

insight into the UN's role in Kissinger's grand strategy. The folder contains minutes of in-person meetings and letters they exchanged in October (during the war), during the Geneva Peace Conference, and subsequent negotiations.

In the letters between Kissinger and Waldheim, the main issue was the preparation for the Geneva Conference. The Secretary-General sent a letter on 14 November (1973) where he urged the Secretary of State to keep the UN involved in the next steps of the process.

> I have no wish to interfere in any way in the essential negotiations […]. I do feel however, that it is important for several reasons that the United Nations should play a role in the future steps towards a settlement. […] My sole interest as Secretary-General is to ensure the United Nations contributes as much as it possible can to the solution of the problem of the Middle East (1973, pp. 1-2)

The Secretary-General's arguments for a broad UN political engagement are pretty sound. He believes the organisation can provide a political umbrella for bilateral and multilateral discussions. He also stressed that the Secretariat's recent experiences in political negotiations could be an essential asset in the quest for peace. In addition, he reminded Kissinger that the Security Council and the General Assembly had a stake in the conflict, and they were expecting the Secretariat to be a key player. Moving away from the politics, his letter also offered to provide conference management support required for a conference of this complexity. This document is quite illustrative because it shows the Secretary-General *did* want to be in the room. He used the interest the General Assembly started to have in the conflict as political leverage. The letter also shows he was self-aware of his position and the Secretariat, so he began by promising he would not interfere.

On 23 November, Kissinger and Waldheim met in Washington. The minutes of that meeting highlight two critical issues. First, Kissinger expressed his discontent that the negotiations at the tent started to focus on politics. He told the Secretary-General, "he felt these discussions might be better handled at the peace conference and not in meetings like the ones at km 101" (UNA, 1973, p. 1). In addition, he asked the Secretary-General to get clarification from *all* P5 whether they wanted him to attend. The parties agreed that this was a necessary step to avoid any roadblocks. While the Secretary-General might appear to be

coordinating his work with the P5, this goes beyond that. This shows that Kissinger did not see Waldheim as a critical player in the conference –otherwise, he would have personally fought to have Waldheim there. Kissinger made it clear that while the UN Chief would have a seat at the table, he would not have the mandate of chairing both setting the agenda and managing the speakers list. The Secretary-General was, in essence, a glorified observer.

In the end, the co-chairs decided that the conference should take place under the "auspices" of the UN at the *Palais des Nations.* The Secretary-General sent the invitation to Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Syria. He dispatched Urquhart, Guyer and others[58] to Geneva a few days before to prepare the venue and coordinate with the Americans and Soviets.

After so much preparation, negotiations and shuttle diplomacy, the conference was disappointing because most of the attention went to cosmetic problems instead of discussing actual issues. An illustrative example is a seating chart[59]; all three guests were acutely aware of how the negotiations would play out in their domestic constituencies. Therefore, they had different reservations about who to sit next to and why.

The conference met at the foreign minister level a few times in the last ten days of December. The verbatim record of the meetings provides an illustrative insight into the different opening positions (UNA, 1973). In the first meeting, the Secretary-General made a wholehearted call for peace and reminded the delegates that the world had its eyes on their work. However, the Soviet Foreign Minister echoed the call for peace; he also bitterly denounced Israel's "intolerable" policy and reminded the delegates that a large portion of the UN Member States –including the entire Arab world– shares this view.

Kissinger, who had been working for months to reach this point, delivered a more subtle statement. Of course, he reiterated the overarching need for peaceful coexistence in the

[58] The Secretariat delegation: Roberto Guyer, Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, Brian Urquhart, Assistant-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, James Jonah, Senior Political Affairs Officer, Vittorio Winspeare-Giucciardi, Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva among others.

[59] In the end, the co-chairs agreed on the sitting a few minutes before the conference was due to start. The Secretary-General sat at the head of the table. Based on a suggestion Urquhart, the co-chairs sat in the middle as "buffers". On one side: Egypt, United States and Jordan. On the other side: Israel, Soviet Union and Syria (who was absent but asked to have an empty chair signalling that it may or may not join the conference at a later stage).

region. He emphasised adopting confidence-building measures and setting achievable objectives to achieve this goal. The first among them was military disengagement.

> Serious discussions have already occurred between Egypt and Israel's military representatives at km 101. It is essential to build promptly on the progress achieved there. And on the Jordanian and Syrian fronts, a comparable base for lessening the tensions and negotiating further steps towards peace must be found. Progress towards peace should include all parties involved (UNA, 1973, p. 12)

This passage summarises his view on the conference and the overarching process. Kissinger knew the first conference was not the time to aim for peace; his goal was to ensure the absence of war. In addition, he used the success as an example for further discussions between Israel and Syria. The last sentence is a nod towards Syria and even the PLO, the two absent actors on the table.

The rest of the first and second meetings revolved around airing grievances. All three countries made politically charged speeches aimed at the table and their domestic audiences equally. In the third meeting, the conference agreed to establish a Military Working Group (MWG) to advance the disengagement of military forces. This was the fundamental objective of the conference.

From the Secretariat's perspective, Urquhart (1987) provided a poignant, somewhat disappointed analysis of the event. His words frame the first conference not as a standalone effort but yet another stepping-stone towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The event, he reflects, did not produce a political outcome. However, it provided political cover for the participants to engage in substantive discussions at the MWG and gave Kissinger a framework to continue his shuttle diplomacy for a few more months. The MWG was pivotal in outlining the mandate AO for UNEF II and UNDOF.

On the other hand, he noted the small political role Kissinger allowed Waldheim to play. Indeed, he laments that Kissinger reduced the Secretary-General to an “adjunct to his brilliant bilateral diplomacy” (p. 246). The trend of the Secretariat’s dwindling political agency continued.

In the field, Siilasvuo went to Cairo to meet the Egyptian Foreign Minister before going to Geneva. The Minister humorously invited the General to join him, as his presence would be required. Siilasvuo remarked that he would only travel at the request of the Secretary-General. Siilasvuo boarded a plane to Geneva to lead the MWG discussions three days later.

The Military Working Group: Exchanging a Tent for a Palace

The UN team who hosted the km 101 negotiations reunited in Geneva, under the supervision of Guyer –whom the Secretary-General appointed as his representative in Geneva after he left on 23 Dec. Siilasvuo (aided by Cap Fallon and Jonah) started their work as the UN Team at the MWG.

The first two issues on the UN team's agenda dealt with the direct Soviet and American participation and the issue of the leadership. The day before the group held its first official meeting, Siilasvuo had bilateral meetings with every country to get a sense of the political mood of the participants. Israel said it would not participate in the group unless the Soviet Union did not. The general proposed a compromise whereby he would brief the Americans and the Soviets after every meeting. The Egyptians enthusiastically suggested Siilasvuo to serve as the chair.

At the onset, Siilasvuo expressed concern that the grandiose diplomatic rooms of the *Palais des Nations* would harm the friendly environment created in the close and simple quarters of the tent. However, his concern proved to be unfounded. The negotiators quickly built a similar friendly rapport, and while the negotiations were tough and the parties rejected each other's proposals routinely, the talks were diplomatic.

In theory, the conference mandated the working group to focus exclusively on military matters. After all, the negotiators (and the UN Chair) were all generals. However, a long-term military disengagement needed to include political considerations. Siilasvuo expressed that "when one party conceded in a certain matter, the other should give a similar concession in some other matter. […] A military concession could be matched by a political one" (1992, p. 225). In a meeting with the Soviet Ambassador, the general stressed that the MWG could not separate political and military matters.

Kissinger continued to shuttle between Cairo and Jerusalem whilst the MWG met in Geneva. This multi-level framework was uncoordinated at best and worked as independent siloes at worst. A key example came when the Israeli delegation showed the MWG an early version of Dayan's disengagement plan. Kissinger protested because he wanted to show the same plan to Sadat but frame it as a joint Israeli-United States initiative. There were cracks in the communication channels; sometimes, things moved faster at the military than at the political level. The generals' approach was more pragmatic and did not take all the political considerations their superiors did.

Not everything at the MWG worked smoothly; there was still distrust. Regarding the Dayan Plan, Siilasvuo expressed that the UN team "were probably the only ones who did not know anything about this plan" (p. 226). Ultimately, the political discussion did not include anybody from the Secretariat. Headquarters briefed Siilasvuo on the negotiation's outcome and instructed him to arrange for the signing ceremony, which was due to take place at km 101.

Since 1957, Israel has agreed to withdraw from territory obtained through war for the first time. Moreover, it did so while technically at war (Bar-Siman Tov, 1998). The terms of the agreement saw Israel withdraw from areas it conquered in both the Six-Day War *and* the Yom Kippur War (United Nations Security Council , 1973). The agreement placed UNEF II as a buffer between the countries (Akehurst, 1981). This document is praiseworthy. The disengagement was the first time Israel and one of her neighbours took a decisive move towards peace. An important detail that adds to the document's political cunning is that this was not a non-belligerence declaration; the political price of such a statement was too high for Sadat, who had to keep the hardliners in his country in check. Kissinger packaged the document to be purely military. However, it was another stepping-stone on the road towards peace (Gat, 2016).

As we see in Chapter 3, Siilasvuo chaired several meetings at the tent through which the countries and UNEF II agreed on the implementation. The process was much smoother and more effective because this was the first time the generals only had to discuss military affairs. The politics were, for the time being, out of the way. Given how tense the situation in the

Sinai had been ever since the war ended, all parties concerned had a genuine interest in lowering the tensions. UNEF II and UNTSO proved fundamental in ensuring the absence of war in the Sinai Peninsula.

Israel – Syria Disengagement: A Herculean Task

The following section will provide a brief overview of the three stages of the process. The first is the substantive talks led by Kissinger through shuttle diplomacy between January and May 1974. The second stage occurred over five days between 31 May and 5 June at Geneva's Military Working Group level. The third stage is the implementation of the MWG's decisions by way of establishing and deploying UNDOF. Like the Sinai disengagement process, the Secretariat –via Guyer and Siilasvuo– had a much more impactful role after Kissinger convinced the parties to sign the disengagement plan.

Everything up until this point was difficult. The cease-fire negotiations, the conference preparations, the negotiation between Israel and Egypt and UNEF's deployment took much painstaking diplomacy. Why was this disengagement so difficult? There are two crucial reasons: geography and politics.

The Sinai Peninsula is an invaluable geopolitical and economic asset to Egypt due to the Suez Canal, the vast mineral wealth, and the buffer between mainland Egypt and Israel. Cairo understood that it was unable to reclaim the peninsula by force, which is why it was willing to engage in a step-by-step negotiation to ensure its return. Sadat understood Kissinger's approach and decided to follow his lead. Chapter 5 highlights Egypt's evolution in its approach to Israel and how Cairo 'sacrificed' the Palestinian question in order to get the peninsula back.

On the other hand, the Golan Heights are a geopolitical critical piece of land, and both sides saw controlling it as an existential foreign policy goal. They provide Israel with "invaluable defensive advantages because of its topography in terms of observation and fire control while simultaneously protecting Israeli land from possible Syrian attacks" (Walter, 2019, p. 21)**.** In addition, Israel obtains the most valuable commodity from the Heights: water. Indeed, 30% of Israel's water supply comes from Lake Kinneret in southern Heights (Kumaraswamy, 1999). For Syria, losing the Golan Heights put them in a dire situation. Apart from the

Heights, Syria does not have any natural borders with Israel. The IDF is less than 50 km away from Damascus and, because of Israel's military might, the two factors leave Syria entirely exposed (Muslih, 1993).

Israel certainly enjoyed the economic and political benefits of occupying the Sinai Peninsula; however, it never made it an existential issue for its survival. In contrast, from the onset, Jerusalem built a political narrative that stressed that the Heights play a vital role in ensuring the country's survival. On the other hand, Syria packaged the loss of the Golan as the result of a foreign invasion that robbed them. The government always highlighted that to restore national pride. The country would only make peace with Israel if it withdrew to 5 June 1967 borders (Ben-Meir, 1997).

As stated earlier, to top of this already difficult situation, the Yom Kippur war left several outstanding issues between the countries. While the Geneva peace conference proved to be an essential stepping-stone from managing the Sinai sector, the conditions were not ripe to discuss the Golan Heights in Geneva. For Kissinger to start tackling the situation in the Heights, he needed the political momentum gained for successfully lowering the temperatures in the south. In addition, as we will see in the next section, Kissinger was required to reduce the temperatures in the Golan to move forward with the second Sinai disengagement plan and, a few years later, the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. All of these talks fit within Kissinger's grand plan (Shlomo, 2015).

The disengagement negotiations required Kissinger's direct involvement in every single issue. Indeed, he "has devoted more of his time and craft to the consequences of that conflict than to any other issue of foreign policy" (Sheehan, 1976, p. 4). Throughout the process, they micromanaged every single detail. Chief among them, the prisoner exchange, the demarcation of the disengagement zone (about the Syrian city of Quneitra[60] and in general)

[60] The two parties fought over control of the city between 1967 and 1973. Israel captured the city on the last day of the Six-Day War and occupied it. The war destroyed a large portion of the city. The Syrian military routinely shelled IDF's positions in the city, which contributed to the city's further destruction. At the onset of the Yom Kippur War, the Syrians recaptured briefly, before it fell again to the IDF when Israel launched a counter-offensive. The city remained under Israeli control until the disengagement plan placed in inside UNDOF's Area of Operation. Before the IDF left the city, it systematically destroyed its infrastructure in order to leave it in ruins. The Syrian government left it as is and built memorials to display Israel's destruction. For more see Zisser (2017) & Kapusňak (2014).

and the mandate and composition of UNDOF (Safran, 1974). Kissinger visited the region a dozen times, hosted meetings in Washington with diplomats from both sides and dealt with their heads of government directly.

Through his direct involvement with Assad, Kissinger built a solid bilateral relationship and moved Syria away from the Soviet influence as much as possible. Bakke & Waag (2017) argue that while this growing relationship improved Assad's stance in the West, Kissinger took advantage of Syria's weak political and military position and managed to get them to agree to disengage despite not getting what they needed. While Assad resisted the terms and put plenty of roadblocks to the process, Kissinger struggled more with Israel. The Meir premiership was, politically, over. Her party already elected Yitzhak Rabin to replace her. However, he delayed taking office until the agreement with Syria was finalised. With this in mind and staring at the end of her political career, Prime Minister Meir felt her government had to be extremely tough to "compensate for the debacle of the war" (Bar-Siman Tov, 1998, p. 10). Even though the United States was a crucial supporter of the Israeli war effort, the government was not ready to placate Kissinger's demands without putting up a fight.

Kissinger moved back and forth between Jerusalem and Damascus and discussed multiple proposals. In the end, the agreement stipulated that Syria regained a portion of the Heights occupied by Israel after the last two wars, including the city of Quneitra. Both parties wanted to keep control of the town, albeit for very different reasons. Israel did not want to set a precedent of "land for peace", and for Syria, regaining control of the city was an issue of national pride. In the end, Israel agreed to withdraw as long as the city fell into the demilitarized zone between them. Another critical issue in the negotiations was Israel's requirement that Syria gives public assurances that it would prevent any Palestinian activities in the demilitarized zone. The issue proved to be highly complicated because this type of declaration had enormous political costs for Assad both internally and in the Arab World. In the end, Syria sent Kissinger (and therefore, Israel) a letter stating, "There will be no firing across the lines by anyone. There [will be] no possibility for organized armed bands to cross into Israel" (Shlomo, 2015, p. 646). At Kissinger's behest, Israel agreed to this arrangement.

UNDOF: Taking a Leaf of Dag's Book

The negotiations proved challenging, and they took months; however, the parties wanted to see the plan implemented in *days*. Therefore, as soon as the political discussion was finished, the Secretariat embarked on a two-level approach to ensure UNDOF's smooth and efficient deployment. This sub-section drew information from Siilasvuo's memoirs, the reports he sent to the Secretary-General (UNA, 1975) and a Working Paper[61] drafted by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations in 1977 which provides an in-depth report on the establishment of all operations up until that point (UNA, 1977).

The first level was the reconvening of the MWG. On 31 May, Siilasvuo chaired a signing ceremony and immediately chaired meetings where the parties discussed the technical details. Siilasvuo, once again, played a pivotal role in the discussions, which proved considerably more difficult. The negotiations required much more diplomacy and, at the same time, pragmatism for a few reasons. First, Syria did not want to give the public impression they were negotiating with the Israelis directly. Instead, they "joined" the Egyptian delegation, who publicly was the party dealing with Israel. Of course, in reality, Syria sent a delegation who had their mandate and their voice. The items the MWG met included inter alia: the disengagement schedule and the supervision of its continuous enforcement thereafter. The discussions moved at a very brisk pace, and while there were a few disagreements, the days were productive.

Even with such a narrow mandate, the conference was profoundly political. This created an issue for the Syrians, who agreed on the importance of these issues; however, they did not want them to be inside the disengagement protocol. To solve this, Siilasvuo proposed a separate paper titled *Statement of the Chairman*. The document served as an outlet because it contains the details of the disengagement plan and serves as the military framework for the political disengagement plan. The parties agreed that both the disengagement agreement and the statement of the chair are equally binding to the parties

The General highlights that his job was easier because, by the time the MWG met, the parties had already signed the political agreement (Siilasvuo, 1992). This sequential approach was

[61] This paper is also cited in Chapter 1

far more efficient than the one employed in the Sinai when the km 101 negotiations took place simultaneously as Kissinger negotiated the preparations of the peace conference.

The MWG agreed that the disengagement would start 24 hours after their meeting adjourned. Therefore, Siilasvuo had to change his diplomat hat for UNEF's Force Commander and rush back to the field where a daunting task awaited him. Urquhart and the Secretariat in New York now took up the political functions of UNDOF's deployment.

The Secretariat now had to move quickly. While implementing an already signed political and military document might seem that all left to do is administrative work, setting up a peacekeeping operation is a delicate political affair. The Secretariat had the following tasks: discuss with Israel and Syria UNDOF's composition; approach the TCCs who already have troops in the region; appoint a Force Commander; and coordinate the interim arrangements with UNEF and UNTSO (Urquhart, 1987).

The next day, the Secretary-General and Urquhart travelled to Washington to meet with Kissinger and discuss UNDOF. The meeting minutes reflect that Kissinger gave them a few valuable suggestions regarding the operation (UNA, 1974). First, Kissinger emphasized that the Secretariat must ensure that UNDOF has the necessary liberty to do its job. He urged them to be very strict "and avoid as far as possible being pushed around" (UNA, 1974, p. 2). It was imperative to prevent Syria to establish military positions in the demilitarized zone. Kissinger felt that Syria would exploit any loophole it could and that the UN had to resist this at all costs. Second, Kissinger remarked that while the Secretariat is free to redeploy troops from UNTSO and UNEF (as we see in Chapter 3), they must fall under UNDOF's banner when working in Syria. This means that UNTSO must no longer work in Syria and that the operation needs to have a Force Commander of its own. Fourth, he declared that the United States would "receive favourably any request for assistance" (p. 3). Fifth, he reminded the Secretary-General that Assad personally and the Syrian government, in general, were "extremely sensitive" over the AO and the mandate's duration; he urged them to be firm but treat carefully.

With these recommendations in mind, they moved quickly. The Secretariat requested Austria, Peru, Canada and Poland[62] (the latter two would be providing logistical support) permission to redeploy some of their contingents to UNDOF. The Secretary-General appointed Brig Gen Gonzalo Briceno of Peru as interim Force Commander. The Secretariat had swift and productive discussions with all these countries who stood ready to collaborate (Houghton & Trinka, 1984).

The Secretary-General and Urquhart visited the region to visit the three operations and meet with their hosts. Overall, both Jerusalem and Damascus were relieved UNDOF was on the ground because it reduced their pressure. Of course, the operation encountered many issues. The parties continued to argue over maps. The Syrians bitterly protested when UNDOF destroyed new military posts within its area of operation. That said, UNDOF performed its duties admirably and kept the Israel-Syria sector quiet for many years.

The Second Sinai Disengagement Plan 1975

Kissinger moved quickly to solidify the Israel-Egypt disengagement and started trilateral negotiations to that effect. The political establishment in Egypt was ripe for this change. Sadat wanted to cement Egypt's alliance with the United States and was willing to continue reducing and then wholly eradicate the chance for war with Israel (Brooks, 2008). In addition, the political climate domestically shifted, and the population was far less inclined to endure a protracted stalemate. In 1973 going to war solidified the government's position domestically, whereas, in 1975, it did the opposite (Karawan, 2005). Therefore, negotiating the second disengagement had both internal and external components.

Getting Israel to agree to the second disengagement was a tough challenge. Newly minted Prime Minister Rabin and his government thoroughly used the geopolitical situation they found themselves in due to the war. While they still relied on American military support, they did not face an immediate threat from any of her neighbours; not even Egypt had the economic or military assets to declare war again. Therefore, the prime minister rejected Kissinger's initial efforts in early 1975 and, more structurally, expressed no interest in

[62] At the time, Israel and Poland did not have diplomatic relations. Israel had a firm policy of refusing entry to peacekeepers from countries with whom she had no ties. Kissinger requested Israel to make an exception for the Polish contingent to move from the Sinai through Israel on their way to Syria.

attending a second peace conference in Geneva. Adopting an extraordinarily blunt approach with its greatest ally, Israel used Kissinger's efforts to leverage a large-scale military aid from the Americans to guarantee long-term security needs (Wheelock, 1978).

Rabin's hard stance in the negotiations created significant tension between Israel and the United States. Kissinger nearly reached his breaking point in dealings with Rabin and his cabinet. The White House was extremely angry at Israel's refusal to sit down with the Egyptians, leading Kissinger to threaten Rabin with less political and military aid. On March 22, Kissinger met with Prime Minister Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and others and pleaded his case. However, the Israelis did not give an inch, and the negotiations temporarily collapsed (Sheehan, 1976). President Ford announced that the United States declared it would "reassess" its Israel policy. The decision paved the way for a genuine political confrontation between the allies. The American government began exploring options such as reconvening the Geneva peace conference and publishing a comprehensive plan calling Israel to withdraw to 1967 borders.

However, two significant factors prevented this from happening. First, the US Presidential election was looming. This limited President Ford's room for manoeuvre. Second, there was considerable pushback from the US Senate. On 21 May 1975, 76 members of the Senate sent the White House a letter urging them to stop the reassessment and normalise the relationship. Jackson (2015) concludes that the reassessment did not go through partially because of domestic constraints. However, the author remarks that Ford and Kissinger could have overcome this if they wanted to torpedo the bilateral relations. The White House could have mobilised public support domestically for their position and built a narrative where peace failed because of Israel. In the end, they did not go as far as they could have, which saved the disengagement plan and the bilateral relationship.

Prime Minister Rabin's gamble paid off. His political position improved considerably inside the country. Moreover, because the Americans blinked, they motivated Israel to negotiate through inducements. In June, the prime minister visited Washington and expressed his willingness to finalise an agreement to lower the tensions.

Once the Israelis started to act constructively, they negotiated in good faith for issues they wanted to see enshrined in the agreement. The second disengagement agreement stipulated the Israeli withdrawal of two passes and the oil fields. In addition, "the front line of the new buffer zone was twice as long as the first, and its area was four times as large" (Stjernfelt, 1992, p. 103). Similarly, to the Israel-Syria disengagement, the countries agreed to 'cushion' UNEF with areas where they would have limited armament. The document reaffirmed UNEF's position and endorsed the importance of its work. The most important aspect of this document was the declaration of their intent to solve this conflict by peaceful means (Podeh, 2015). Even if Israel and Egypt were not ready to sign a comprehensive peace treaty, the two disengagement agreements paved the way to the goal. For the first time, Israel was close to signing a peace treaty with one of its neighbours.

The Fourth Meeting of the Military Working Group

As usual, once the parties finalised their work, they dispatched their generals to Geneva to reconvene the MWG. Siilasvuo, now the Chief-Coordinator of UN Peacekeeping in the Middle East with the rank of Under-Secretary-General travelled to Geneva for the group's last meeting. On Thursday, 4 September 1975, the parties signed the agreement, which gave the MWG two weeks to finalise their work.

Siilasvuo took a more proactive role in the discussions. Together with Jonah and Cap Fallon, they met the Israeli and Egyptian delegations separately. The talks dealt with the agenda, the schedule and the sequence they proposed to address the various issues. The UN Team then wrote a road map for the coming two weeks and submitted it to the parties on Saturday evening. Siilasvuo knew this round of discussions was going to be difficult. "Kissinger had left many more open questions than in previous disengagement agreements. Our competence and negotiation skills would be put to a hard test" (Siilasvuo, 1992, p. 310). That said, the UN was not the only third party in Geneva. For the first time, the United States sent a representative, Harold Saunders, a senior official of the National Security Council and aide to Kissinger. Saunders did not sit in the discussions, but he had an office next door. He met with the parties to whom he gave suggestions throughout the process. Moreover, he had an excellent working relationship with the UN Team, and Siilasvuo claims his role in the process was "invaluable".

The MWG met 21 times over 15 days. Siilasvuo's report to the Secretary-General shows that the first seven cordial and constructive meetings were very slow (UNA, 1975). The parties discussed UNEF's core functions in the new buffer zone. The operation will establish multiple checkpoints, including sea approaches, staff multiple OPs and regularly patrol the area. On 12 September, Siilasvuo reported a "complete agreement reached on UNEF" (UNA, 1975, p. 2). The outstanding issues are the deployment of forces, transfer of oil fields, number of civilians living in the north, and the Joint Commission's setup.

Despite the UNEF's functions being out of the way, all parties expressed concern and exasperation on the discussions' pace. To meet the deadline, Siilasvuo decided to speed things up and make the meetings last longer than initially planned. At the second to last meeting, the parties agreed that Egypt would have 700 police officers in the Peninsula.

Concerning the population, the agreement proved to be more complicated. Israel saw the return of the civilian population to the Peninsula as a security threat. Egypt saw the issue of civilian movement within national borders purely as a domestic concern, and they did not want to appear to negotiate this matter with foreign powers. Siilasvuo came up with a creative proposal through which the Egyptian Liaison Officer to UNEF –who happened to be Egypt's chief negotiator in Geneva– would write a letter to the Chief Coordinator stating that to facilitate UNEF's smooth operations, Egypt was going to give the mission information on the people living in its area of operation. The government gave the civilians identity cards that UNEF certified. This mechanism gave Israel sufficient information, so they agreed.

The third issue revolved around the Joint Commission. Israel proposed a permanent commission to serve as the dispute settlement mechanism. This forum would help build trust and a working relationship between the militaries. The General explains that while everyone agreed this was a helpful idea, Egypt was reluctant to agree to anything 'permanent' because Cairo was not politically ready to signal its intent to reach a peace agreement. Once again, Siilasvuo came up with a compromise. However, the Joint Commission would not have a permanent headquarters; they would meet whenever the Chief Coordinator or the parties requested it (Siilasvuo, 1992).

With the agreement signed, the responsibilities moved from Geneva back to the Sinai. UNEF, with the cooperation of UNTSO, began to assist the parties in the withdrawal of forces, facilitated the return of the oil fields to Egypt, and provided buffers between the parties as they withdrew. UNEF's role as an interlocutor between the parties was a fundamental part of the disengagement's success.

From a political standpoint, this was as far as Kissinger's 'step-by-step' diplomacy could take the Israel-Arab conflict. By the time spring of 1976, when the disengagement was completed, US President Ford was in the middle of a heated election, which he ended up losing to Jimmy Carter. The newly elected President decided to dismiss Kissinger from government. Therefore, peace between Israel and Egypt had to wait until the new administration settled into the role.

The Soviet Union and the Arab world in particular did not feel the bilateral approach, which bypassed the Palestinian question, was productive. This sentiment was prophetic to their eventual reaction to the Camp David Accords and UNIFIL's deployment. They found a place to express these grievances in the UN General Assembly

Winds of Change: The General Assembly v The West

The latter half of the 1970s was full of political change and turmoil for the United Nations and the international system, which had a direct impact into the Secretariat's role in the conflict. In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, the General Assembly started to take a more active and partisan approach vis-à-vis the conflict. On 22 November 1974, the General Assembly adopted resolution 3236. The document stressed the importance of placing the Palestinian question at the centre of the Israel-Arab conflict is paramount to achieving a full solution. Furthermore, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish contact with the PLO to discuss any matters related to the Palestinian people. The resolution came as close as possible to granting observer status to PLO without actually doing so. The resolution gave the PLO enormous political agency and a ringing endorsement to their activities (Irfan, 2020).

Therefore, the study of the subsequent bilateral agreements between Israel and Egypt and the Secretariat's role (and agency) as a policy broker require us to look beyond the actual negotiations between the countries to include the mood in New York and across the region.

The General Assembly gradually became a forum whereby the Global South expressed its discontent with the West. Indeed, because they are the overwhelming majority and the Assembly's resolutions are non-binding, the Global South used the body to signal their views. The Assembly, at the behest of the Soviet Union, started to take notice of the Israel-Arab conflict and discussions on Zionism as racism began (Fishman, 2011).

Ever since the Yom Kippur War, the PLO successfully lobbied the General Assembly and started to build momentum towards a condemnation of Zionism (Lewis, 1976). Arafat skilfully took advantage of the Soviet-Arab antagonism towards Israel and the Global South's antagonism against the United States. After all, in their view, attacking one was attacking the other (Troy, 2013).

They succeeded. On 10 November 1975, the General Assembly adopted resolution 3379 declared, "Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination" (1975). Urquhart saw the resolution as a "mindless and counterproductive provocation which was a turning point in United Nations affairs, especially in the United States, without in any way helping the Palestinians" (1987, p. 264). His assessment was purely pragmatic. The resolution was bitterly condemned in Jerusalem, arguing that anti-Zionism is a thinly veiled form of anti-Semitism. Moreover, it crystalized the Israeli notion that the United Nations cannot be trusted to be impartial.

In Washington, the Administration bitterly rejected the resolution and, more importantly, so did Congress. The Ford Administration denounced the resolution and vehemently declared its opposition. Kissinger labelled it as "extremely unhelpful and highly irresponsible". At Capitol Hill, the resolution proved to be very useful for the anti-UN wings of both parties and by some long-term UN supporters as well. The UN System ended up paying for the General Assembly's resolution because the American government became less prone to contribute to the organisation. In the next ten years after the resolution, the US cut its contributions to the UN by approx. 40%, which put the UN System in a severe financial crisis (Luck, 1987).

Policymakers in Jerusalem and Washington understood that the Secretariat has no power over the General Assembly and that the latter does not necessarily represent the opinions of the former. However, their constituencies and even members of Congress and the Knesset were unwilling to distinguish between the UN as an organization and the UN as a forum for inter-governmental debate. Therefore, the resolution made it even more difficult for the Secretariat to play a leading role in future political discussion on the Israel-Arab conflict.

The Secretariat started the second half of the 1970s facing a difficult political climate vis-à-vis the conflict. As time passed from the second disengagement agreement, the Secretary-General pushed for a second meeting of the Geneva Peace Conference, which did not materialise. Instead, the Israelis and Egyptians decided to, once again, meet bilaterally – under US auspices– to sign the Camp David Accords. Because this agreement signals an important milestone for the Secretariat's role in the conflict (due to UNEF's withdrawal), this issue is discussed in Chapter 5 as one of the two ending points of this dissertation.

In 1978, the situation in Southern Lebanon reached a boiling point and the Secretariat had to design and manage a peacekeeping operation in an inhospitable environment with no rule of law.

Lebanon

Throughout its existence, Lebanon faced enormous socio-political challenges. The country was one of the most diverse in the region, and it did not have a clear ethnoreligious majority as every other Middle Eastern state had (Sroby, 2000). This multi-ethnicity led to constant power struggles and violent conflict. In 1958, Lebanon fought a civil war, culminating in a delicate power-sharing agreement between Christian and Muslim factions. Over the next two decades, both sides constantly stressed this fragile social contract; the different factions did not seek to build a State but consolidate their power (Azar & Haddad, 1986). To make matters even more complicated, Lebanon also had to deal with the consequences of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

From a political and military point of view, Lebanon played a minor role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. After the 1949 Armistice Agreement between Israel and Lebanon, the sector was relatively quiet. However, the situation started to change when approximately 300,000

Palestinian refugees moved to Southern Lebanon in the 1970s. "The Palestinians are not voluntary refugees in Lebanon. Nor did the Lebanese actively seek to deal with them, either initially as refugees, (or) a few years later as enemies (at the time of the PLO guerrillas)" (El Khazen, 1997, p. 276). Their presence played a destabilising role for two main reasons. First, the PLO became an active player in Lebanese politics by forming alliances with left-wing Muslim factions. Second, their constant guerrilla attacks on Israel, who then retaliated, put Lebanese people in harm's way and, more critical, turned Southern Lebanon into an active war front. The Lebanese government did not have the economic or military capacity to control the area. The PLO created a state within a state in Southern Lebanon (Waage & Huse, 2019).

In 1975, another civil war broke out in the country, and this time, Syria decided to intervene in the conflict with boots on the ground. In June 1976, Syria deployed naval and land forces to engage the PLO coalition. As a result, the Christian faction controlled East Beirut and Northern Lebanon; the PLO controlled West Beirut and Southern Lebanon (Hinnebusch, 1998). Syrian forces did not enter Southern Lebanon to avoid risking another direct conflict with Israel.

When Israel deployed Operation Litani (see Chapter 3), the Security Council met immediately to discuss the matter. For the Lebanese government, Israel's invasion presented an opportunity. They could renew their request to the Security Council to deploy a peacekeeping operation. An international force could help them start reclaiming their territory and fend off both the PLO and its allies. However, unlike in 1973, the Soviet Union was initially opposed to the idea. Moreover, within the Secretariat, many senior staffers, including Urquhart and Siilasvuo, were adamantly against the proposal of sending peacekeepers to Southern Lebanon (Gööksel, 2007; Urquhart, 1987). They argued that peacekeeping was not suited to keep the peace amidst a civil war, especially in an area with no absolute authority; Southern Lebanon was a state within a state, primarily controlled by the PLO.

A controversial, rushed deployment

While Chapter 5 reviews the Camp David Accords, it is important to stress that they played a decisive role in establishing UNIFIL. Operation Litani created a political problem that went beyond the Israel-PLO conflict. A few months prior, Egyptian President Sadat visited Jerusalem and spoke at the Knesset of peace between the countries. From the onset, the rest of the Arab World was as adamant about rejecting this prospect, as Sadat was to achieve it; the Arab League denounced the possibility. Therefore, from a political perspective, "it was imperative for Israel to not antagonise its neighbours […] to do so would make Sadat's peace initiative extremely difficult" (Erskine, 1989, p. 11). Israel's invasion of Southern Lebanon did precisely this and jeopardised the prospects for peace.

The United States embraced Lebanon's request to host a peacekeeping operation and started to lobby partners in the Council to agree. The Carter Administration's main objective was to keep the Israel-Egypt peace process alive. Proposing to deploy UNIFIL gave Israel a dignified way to pull back the IDF; it sent a signal to the Arab World that the United States would not give Israel *carte blanche* to invade its neighbours. Washington strongly condemned the terrorist attack *and* Israel's response (Yorke, 1978). This balance helped keep the impression that President Carter was an honest broker.

As laudable as Carter's quest for peace was, the American decision-making process concerning Lebanon was, at best, flawed and, at worst, negligent. They sponsored the idea of a peacekeeping operation with no intent to tackle the systemic issues facing Southern Lebanon (Makdisi, 2014). Therefore, they gave UNIFIL a rather bland and vague mandate to deal with the conflict. UNIFIL did not have the necessary tools to keep the peace because there was no peace or interest in achieving it. The PLO and Israel wanted to neutralise each other as much as possible; the Lebanese government wanted to use its proxy to attack the PLO. The Security Council deployed UNIFIL to ensure Israel's withdrawal of Southern Lebanon and assist the Lebanese authorities in restoring peace and security. However, its area of operation was "contested not just by these two states but also by several Lebanese and non-Lebanese forces. These included the PLO and an Israeli-supported Christian Lebanese militia led by Major Saad Haddad" (Findlay, 2002, p. 103). UNIFIL was not prepared to tackle this challenge.

The Secretary-General submitted a report to the Security Council outlining UNIFIL's terms of reference (1978). The Secretariat designed UNIFIL in UNEF's image; the force had the same conditions related to force, freedom of movement, and the Secretary-General's authority over the Force Commander. However, two crucial elements warrant discussion.

First, the Secretary-General stresses that UNIFIL, much like any other peacekeeping operation, "cannot and must not take on responsibilities which fall under the government […] it is assumed that the Lebanese government will take the necessary measures to cooperate with UNIFIL in this regard (United Nations Security Council, 1978, p. 2). The Secretariat knew this was not possible. They added this clause as political insurance. They knew that it was a matter of time before UNIFIL started to face systemic challenges. While their operations had the necessary mandate and equipment to facilitate Israel's withdrawal, they did not have any chance to assist the Lebanese government to restore control over the area. When UNIFIL started to receive complaints, one of the Secretariat's main arguments to defend its record was that the expectations did not match the resources or political capital it had to deal with the issue.

The United States did not give the Secretariat much room to weigh in; the Security Council adopted the resolution a few days after the Americans introduced it. Probably the Americans knew the Secretariat did not want to manage a peacekeeping operation in Southern Lebanon. Urquhart summarises the Secretariat's views on the matter succinctly

> I explained my concerns that once the Security Council, under American pressure, had decided to send a force to Southern Lebanon, the United States and others would rapidly lose interest, ignore the problems, which our soldiers would inevitably face, and leave us and the troop-contributing countries without the necessary political support to do the job. Subsequent events amply justified this pessimistic evaluation (1987, p. 288).

Second, the Secretary-General informs the Council that he instructed Siilasvuo to engage with the governments of Israel and Lebanon to discuss the IDF's withdrawal from the area. The report does not mention potential meetings with the PLO. As Chapter 3 showed, the UNIFIL Force Commander, Erskine, and Siilasvuo himself regularly met with the PLO. Of

course, the report does not mention this, mentioning the PLO in a report of the Secretary-General in the same way Lebanon and Israel itself would have elevated the PLO to *de facto* UN Member State, something Israel was aggressively fighting. The following sub-section discusses the political role the Chief-Coordinator, the Force Commander, and their staff played at the political level, engaging with Israel, Lebanon, the PLO, and the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

Every Force Commander had to deal with politics. As we saw throughout chapters three and four, it is impossible to have a strict separation of military and political affairs. The Secretary-General designed the role of Chief Coordinator to support the Force Commanders in their political dealings with officials from their host countries. Until UNIFIL started its mission, Siilasvuo and his Force Commanders from the other operations interacted with military and civilian officers from UN Member States. The conflict cease-fire and disengagement agreement they monitored came from a conventional war between states. UNIFIL deviated from the mould; the operations had to build political relationships with non-state actors to perform its mandated duties and, at times, even guarantee the safety of its officials.

While UNIFIL began to receive its first contingent, redeployed from UNEF and UNTSO, the Force Commander and the Chief Coordinator started their meetings. Siilasvuo led the discussions with the Israeli government. In these meetings, Siilasvuo gauged their views on UNIFIL's AO; both countries wanted UNIFIL to have a broader presence to stop further PLO attacks. Therefore, the Secretariat's, and therefore UNIFIL's, relationship with Israel was complicated. Lebanon's position was the most straightforward of the conflict. The government gave UNIFIL green light to move anywhere within their country; however, they controlled roughly half of it, which meant the operation needed to talk to the people who controlled the other half.

The first challenge facing UNIFIL was the dire need to establish an AO. In 1973-4, the Military Working Group met in Geneva to agree on UNEF and UNDOF's areas of operation. Under Siilasvuo's watchful eye, the two parties negotiated over every single detail. Once they agreed, the Secretariat consolidated the operations. In UNIFIL's case, the operation itself had to negotiate the AO *after* they arrived. The United States was in such a rush to find a dignified

way out for Israel that they did not direct the parties to discuss this before the deployment (Erskine, 1989).

Together with Jonah, Erskine met with Arafat to secure the PLO's respect for UNIFIL. Arafat assured them the PLO would comply with resolution 425 and welcome the operation. In exchange, he requested UNIFIL to exclude the city of Tyre from its AO claiming the PLO would not use them to attack Israel. Arafat lied. The PLO continued to attack Israel because the real price for not attacking Israel from the Tyre area was still to come: Arafat wanted the UN to acknowledge the PLO as one of the key parties to the conflict (Makdisi, 2014). The Secretary-General met with Arafat in April 1978, which paved the way for the PLO's acceptance of UNIFIL's AO. However, he never intended to keep his political promises.

The Secretariat's negotiations with the three parties led to an agreement UNIFIL's AO "should consist of all areas the IDF physically used or held: this meant the whole area south of the Litani" (Erskine, 1989, p. 37). UNIFIL began the first phase, ensuring Israel's withdrawal from Southern Lebanon shortly thereafter. In June 1978, the IDF vacated its positions from the area; however, instead of handing over control to the UNIFIL, as per the agreement, Israel decided to deliver control to the South Lebanon Army (SLA), a Christian militia, led by Major Saad Haddad (Makdisi, Goksel, Hauck, & Reigeluth, 2009). The SLA was an Israeli proxy; it relied exclusively on Israeli support to operate. Haddad believed his militia had the mandate to protect the people of Southern Lebanon; however; the real interest was to establish a 'security area' between Northern Israel and the PLO-controlled Southern Lebanon; Haddad, in a quest to enlarge the SLA's domain, repeatedly attacked UNIFIL positions, harassed its soldiers and the SLA shelled the operation's headquarters (Weinberger, 1983).

Furthermore, the Council invited the Lebanese government to co-create a programme to increase governmental control over the area with the Secretariat. In his third political report, Holger stressed that the Lebanese military was in no condition to deploy a substantial contingent to the south because it could not guarantee their safety (UNA, 1979).

However, a month later, the Lebanese military deployed a battalion to UNIFIL's area of operation. The Secretary-General got personally involved in this initiative. He exchanged

letters and held meetings with the Israeli Prime Minister and Israel's permanent representative in New York, respectively, to request Israel's support in this endeavour. The objective was to get Israel to convince Haddad to refrain from attacking UNIFIL. Haddad reacted very badly to the initial deployment. 18 April proved to be a tragic day. Early in the morning, the SLA shelled an advance UNIFIL team. Things got even worse when a helicopter suffered a shot trying to land in Naqoura. The *coup de grace* came when UNIFIL's headquarters came under attack. The peacekeepers fought back and killed one SLA militant. Despite Haddad's best efforts to spoil the redeployment, UNIFIL and the Lebanese military stood firm. Unfortunately, this was one of the few tangible successes of UNIFIL's task to restore government presence in the area (Novosseloff, 2015a).

In addition to Haddad's dealings, UNIFIL also had another adversary: the PLO. UNIFIL had two fundamental problems in its dealings with PLO. First, Arafat did not keep any of the promises he made to the Secretary-General himself. Second, guerrilla movements do not always follow orders. The PLO also had serious encounters with UNIFIL. On 1 May, Palestinian militants attacked an observation post staffed by French soldiers; they defended themselves and killed two of the attackers. The PLO exacted revenge a few days later, killing three UNIFIL soldiers (Erskine, 1989).

Siilasvuo saw other issues with the PLO. After Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, around 300-armed Palestinian militants remained inside UNIFIL's AO. Both Siilasvuo and Erskine adamantly proposed to remove them. The Secretary-General disagreed. Instead, he dispatched a negotiator. Arafat offered to avoid attacking Israel from UNIFIL's position in exchange for the fighters to remain in place. The generals believed this decision cost UNIFIL "its neutral status and credibility" (Siilasvuo, 1992, p. 347). The Secretary-General's decision to allow Arafat was purely political and completely disregarded UNIFIL's operational requirements. Waldheim's decision to appease Arafat's demands revolved around his desire to lead a second iteration of the Geneva Peace Conference. Since his re-election in 1976, he pushed to revitalise the process; however, he never got anything off the ground. Israel and Egypt (and the United States) moved quickly and signed the Camp David Accords.

As a result of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty, the PLO adopted a dual strategy. On the one hand they embarked on an effective diplomatic campaign to gain wider recognition; Arafat met with senior officials from several European countries. On the other hand, they increased their military efforts against Israel. The PLO needed to show strength on the ground to solidify its claim that it was fighting a legitimate war, which deserved international support. This made things even more complicated for UNIFIL (UNA, 1979).

The Chief Coordinator and UNIFIL worked very hard to make the operation work. Security Council resolutions 425 and 426 are vague; the United States pushed them through without thinking of what would happen after the operation raised the UN flag in Naqoura. The Generals in the field had an enormous responsibility. However, they struggled to assert themselves. Almost every single actor on the ground distrusted UNIFIL and worked to undermine it. The operation suffered repeated attacks, casualties, damages to equipment and constant harassment. Despite the fact the two generals regularly engaged with the PLO, the SLA, Lebanon and Israel, they failed to move the political needle. As chapter 5 shows, UNIFIL was undermined even more when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982. Overall, UNIFIL worked as best it could to implement its mandate. However, this experience clearly showed that if the Security Council does not provide robust political support to the operation, the operation could not succeed.

Conclusion

This chapter critically assesses how the Secretariat played a proactive role in the Israel-Arab conflict. Because this chapter looked at the *Secretariat* rather than just the Secretary-General, the answer to our research question must be as holistic as the question. Therefore, the following sub-sections will cover the Secretary-General and the Office for Special Political Affairs. The Chief Coordinator of Peacekeeping in the Middle East reported to Urquhart and Guyer; however, his contributions are analysed separately because of his unique role.

The findings reveal that the Secretariat's endeavours were deeply embedded within a broader, interdependent architecture of peacekeeping operations, which collectively aimed to address the conflict's evolving dynamics. This approach, characterized by a strategic

balance between autonomy and collaboration among the operations, was critical in facilitating the UN's political and diplomatic interventions.

The utilization of Complexity Theory to analyse the Secretariat's role in the Israel-Arab conflict between 1973 and 1982 has provided significant insights into the multifaceted nature of UN peacekeeping operations and their political engagements. This theoretical perspective underscores the interconnectedness and dynamism inherent in the UN's efforts to navigate and influence the political landscape of the conflict, highlighting the holistic approach required to manage such complex international situations effectively.

The Secretary-General

On the one hand, the UN Chief failed or made mistakes when it could influence the conflict. First, U Thant's rushed decision to agree to withdraw UNEF showed that the Secretariat was not ready to stand up to a Member State the way Hammarskjöld did ten years before. This does not mean UNEF would have been able to stay; however, Thant knew the operation would leave; therefore, he could have managed the timing of its exit and engaged in a direct diplomatic push to force the Security Council to make a decision formally. The Secretary-General was not ready to deal with the crisis.

Second, the Secretariat never recovered from the Jarring Mission. This was an instance where Thant had the chance to make significant progress. While, of course, it would be unfair to put the blame entirely on Thant or Jarring, they are not blameless either. Jarring's approach was excessively timid. He failed to be more than a moderator and did not fully use the Secretary-General's mandate to engage in good offices. After the next war, the Secretariat did not get the opportunity to lead the post-war negotiations and, more importantly, it did not seek it either.

Kurt Waldheim explicitly told Henry Kissinger he "did not want to interfere"; he just wanted to ensure the UN had a seat at the table. This was a surprisingly self-aware statement. Waldheim knew Kissinger had the power and the strategy to deal with the conflict. In addition, he was willing to spend countless hours tackling the issue. When the world's most powerful country takes over a problem, there is very little the Secretary-General could do

except find ways to remain as visible and relevant as possible. Kissinger was the absolute protagonist of the post-Yom Kippur negotiations.

When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1978, Kissinger was gone. However, once again, the Americans pushed forward with UNIFIL to save the Camp David Accords. The Secretary-General himself did not influence the Security Council decision and simply instructed his team to prepare to deploy UNIFIL.

Waldheim remained engaged in the conflict. Throughout his second term, he tried to kick-start the Geneva Peace Conference; however, he could not solve the issue of Palestinian representation. The Secretary-General did not have Kissinger's resources to influence Israel and Egypt to abandon the bilateral discussions favour a regional solution. The Secretary-General has limited political agency. He works for the Security Council –who decide to (re) elect him. Therefore, it would be unfair to say that their secondary role in the Israel-Arab conflict was entirely their fault. This paper showed there is more nuance to it. Whenever the Secretariat saw an opening to play a role, they did their best. However, they could not resist whenever the United States pushed them around.

The Secretary-General did not work alone. Throughout their time in office, both Thant and Waldheim had gifted civil servants working alongside him to implement whatever the Security Council dictated as efficiently as possible.

The Office of Special Political Affairs

It is worthwhile to remember that the Secretariat split the work of this office into multiple *departments*. A dozen or so UN staffers ran the Secretariat's political affairs, which, at that time, included *all* peacekeeping operations. Under the leadership of Urquhart and Guyer, the office played a vital role. All three Security Council resolutions, which adopted UNEF, UNDOF and UNIFIL, are vague. The Council relied entirely on the reports of the Secretary-General, which outlined the operation's terms of reference. The Office of Special Political Affairs negotiated with the TCCs, and the host countries designed the mandate to arrange logistics and personnel.

The principle of inter-operation collaboration came from their conclusion that the most efficient way to fill in the post-conflict vacuum was to pool and share resources. While the

office did not do as much planning as Siilasvuo would have liked (see chapter 3), they did have vital institutional memory, which facilitated the deployments of all three operations. After the initial deployment, the Under-Secretaries-General remained deeply committed to the conflict. While they had other issues to worry about, the Middle East dominated their agenda.

Before discussing the role of the Office of Chief Coordinator, it is essential to insert a caveat. The Chief Coordinator and the Office of Special Political Affairs worked extremely close together. The UN team at the tent and in Geneva comprised people from both.

The Chief Coordinator

Siilasvuo played a decisive role in the region. His leadership of the km 101 negotiations and the Military Working Group deserve praise. He was there to moderate (not lead) the discussions on paper. Evidence from the Archives and the literature demonstrates he was a much-needed interlocutor.

Siilasvuo was involved in the disengagement processes at the military level (the Secretariat as a whole was missing from Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy); however, any military decision they made had political ramifications for either side. The km 101 and the Israel-Egypt meeting of the Military Working Group were a fundamental political and military stepping-stone for the eventual peace. The talks allowed the two parties to air their grievances, sort out immediate needs and get used to the idea of discussing structural issues face-to-face.

Regarding the Israel-Syria disengagement, Siilasvuo also played a positive role because implementing the agreement in the Golan Heights was far more complex than in the Sinai Peninsula. The general had to find compromises in terms of the composition and size of the force's AO and agree on a framework for inspections. All of this required political acumen and creative leadership.

The General's political role in Lebanon was entirely field-based. Unlike previous operations, he did not have the time or space to influence the initial report of the Secretary-General. One of the few concrete requests was that Siilasvuo serves as the primary liaison between the Secretariat and the governments of Israel and Lebanon to implement the resolution. Of course, the resolution did not mention that the Secretariat had to negotiate with non-state

actors, who would attack UNIFIL constantly. UNIFIL was so poorly conceived that Siilasvuo's achievement could not be compared to his role in UNEF and UNDOF. The fact he (together with Erskine) managed to get all parties to agree to the terms of reference in the first place was challenging.

By shifting the focus from the military and operational activities detailed in the previous chapter to the political discussions and negotiations facilitated by the Secretariat, this chapter covers the second half of the security and diplomatic landscape, providing a comprehensive view of the UN's multifaceted approach to peacekeeping.

Through the analysis of the Secretariat's actions and strategies, this chapter has highlighted both the limitations and opportunities that defined the UN's role in the conflict. The nuanced understanding gained from this exploration not only contributes to the academic discourse on peacekeeping and international diplomacy but also offers valuable theoretical and policy insights into the effectiveness of the UN's peacekeeping architecture in complex conflict environments. This foundation sets the stage for a deeper investigation into how these collective efforts have influenced the broader diplomatic and security dimensions of the Israel-Arab conflict, moving the discourse forward toward a holistic understanding of the UN's impact on peace and security in the region.

The Secretariat's role in the conflict drastically changed in two moments. First, the Camp David Accords and UNEF's subsequent departure transformed peacekeeping in the Middle East. Second, Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 rendered UNIFIL redundant. These two landmarks are the subject of this dissertation's fifth chapter