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

Salama, D.

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## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

The United Nations' engagement with the Israel-Arab conflict from 1967 to 1982 represents a significant period of concerted effort, spanning political mediation to peacekeeping initiatives. This dissertation has navigated through the complex roles played by the Office of Special Political Affairs in New York, the Office of the Chief Coordinator in Jerusalem, and the deployment of four pivotal peacekeeping operations across the conflict's landscape. Employing an archival research methodology, this study has meticulously analysed primary source materials to unearth the nuanced contributions and challenges of these UN entities within the broader Israel-Arab conflict framework. This concluding chapter seeks to integrate the research findings, highlight the dissertation's contributions, and outline avenues for future investigation.

The selected timeframe marks a tumultuous chapter in UN history, underscored by the Six-Day War's dramatic reshaping of the geopolitical and social terrain. Israel's territorial acquisitions intensified its discord with the Arab world and provoked widespread condemnation from the international community. The Yom Kippur War further tested the region's fragile equilibrium, challenging the perceived invincibility of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and leaving the spectre of renewed conflict ever-present. In response, the UN's deployment of peacekeeping forces aimed to stabilize the volatile situation, culminating in the establishment of UNIFIL amidst escalating tensions in Lebanon.

A central thesis of this dissertation is the holistic treatment of the UN's architectural framework within the Israel-Arab conflict, a perspective that affords a deeper understanding of the UN's multifaceted involvement. By examining the collective operations and strategies of these entities, this study provides critical insights into the UN's historical role and the complex dynamics at play.

This chapter is structured into four sections, starting with theoretical reflections that position this research within the broader academic discourse on UN peacekeeping in the

Israel-Arab conflict. Subsequent sections address the supplementary research questions outlined in chapters 3-5, each dedicated to exploring specific aspects of the UN's peacekeeping efforts and their impact on the diplomatic and security landscape of the conflict.

By synthesizing the key findings and theoretical contributions of this research, this concluding chapter aims to offer a comprehensive assessment of the UN's endeavors to navigate and mitigate one of the most enduring conflicts of the twentieth century. In doing so, it sheds light on the successes and limitations of the UN's approach, providing a foundation for future scholarship on international peacekeeping and the ongoing pursuit of stability and peace in the Middle East.

### **Theoretical Reflections and Insights: Embracing Complexity in the UN's Peacekeeping Efforts**

Reflecting on the theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation, it becomes evident that Complexity Theory provides a profound and innovative lens through which to analyse the Architecture in the Middle East. This dissertation advances the discourse by conceptualizing the myriad actors involved in the UN's peacekeeping endeavours not as isolated units but as integral components of a cohesive, interconnected architecture. This holistic approach, inspired by the principles of Complexity Theory, reveals the nuanced and often obscured dynamics of interdependence and emergent behaviour within the UN's operational framework.

At its essence, Complexity Theory elucidates the intricate interactions and dependencies among components within a system, uncovering the subtle yet pivotal relationships that influence collective outcomes. When applied to the UN's peacekeeping operations, Complexity Theory unveils a rich tapestry of interconnected actions and reactions, where the distinct mandates and operations of UN entities converge to shape the overall response to conflict situations. This paradigm shift from viewing entities in isolation to recognizing them as parts of a larger, dynamic system offers a fresh perspective on the operational complexities of peacekeeping efforts

Central to Complexity Theory are the concepts of interconnectedness and emergent behaviour—principles that are vividly demonstrated in the UN's approach to managing the Israel-Arab conflict. Traditional analyses might compartmentalize entities such as the Office of Special Political Affairs, the Office of the Chief Coordinator, and the various peacekeeping operations. However, such a segmented view overlooks the depth of collaborative and sometimes unexpected interactions that characterize the UN's strategy. This dissertation challenges conventional narratives by depicting these entities as facets of an elaborate "architecture" of peacekeeping, thereby embracing the operational intricacies inherent in the UN's engagements in conflict zones.

Viewing the UN's peacekeeping operations through the lens of a complex system reveals the dynamic collaboration and coordination that underpin the UN's efforts. Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation, for example, highlight the encouraged and emergent cooperation among operations, as well as the seamless integration of political and military work by key figures like Siilasvuo and Urquhart. This systemic approach underscores how the actions of one entity can significantly impact, and be impacted by, the actions of others within the architecture, demonstrating the vital dependencies and synergies that exist. The dissertation further illuminates how the UN peacekeeping architecture exhibits the hallmarks of complex adaptive systems, especially in response to acute crises. The inventive solutions and strategic adaptations that emerged in the aftermath of major conflicts throughout the studied period are testament to the UN system's capacity for resilience and innovation. Such adaptability is crucial for navigating the unpredictable and evolving landscape of international peacekeeping.

Reflecting on the theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation, it becomes evident that Complexity Theory provides a profound and innovative lens through which to analyse the United Nations' peacekeeping efforts in the Middle East. This dissertation advances the discourse by conceptualizing the myriad actors involved in the UN's peacekeeping endeavours not as isolated units but as integral components of a cohesive, interconnected architecture. This holistic approach, inspired by the principles of Complexity Theory, reveals the nuanced and often obscured dynamics of interdependence and emergent behaviour within the UN's operational framework. At its essence, Complexity Theory elucidates the

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In conclusion, Complexity Theory not only enriches our understanding of the UN's peacekeeping operations in the Middle East but also offers valuable theoretical contributions to the study of international relations and conflict resolution. By framing the UN's peacekeeping efforts within a complex systems paradigm, this dissertation provides deep insights into the multifaceted dynamics of cooperation, adaptation, and emergent strategy that define effective conflict management and peacebuilding endeavours.

### **Implications and Future Directions for Research**

The application of complexity to UN peacekeeping in the Israel-Arab conflict offers profound insights and explains the dynamics of the conflict and the history of the UN's work. Furthermore, the holistic, architectural approach introduced by the study can serve as a prototype for analysing other multifaceted international operations, whether they be a peace operation or a special political mission. Complexity theory might shed light onto the relationship between a peace operation and special political mission with the rest of the UN system deployed on the ground. By transcending the limitations of segmented analysis and embracing the interconnectedness and dynamism inherent in global operations, future research can glean deeper insights, leading to more informed and effective interventions.

This study offers a new perspective on UN peacekeeping operations during a specific period. However, it also suggests a paradigm shift in the theoretical underpinnings of the study of peacekeeping and the study of cooperation between UN entities. By introducing and aptly applying the concept of complexity, it illuminates the rich tapestry of interactions, collaborations, and emergent behaviours that characterize global peacekeeping efforts. This innovative journey through the maze of UN operations, guided by the torch of complexity, has undoubtedly enriched the annals of peacekeeping literature and paved the way for future explorations.

### **Inter-Operation Collaboration: The Key to Success**

Chapter 3 presents a groundbreaking exploration into the dynamics of collaboration among the United Nations' peacekeeping operations in the Middle East, spanning from 1973 to 1982. This inquiry transcends the conventional academic approach by integrating UNTSO, UNEF II, UNDOF, and UNIFIL into a cohesive analysis, moving beyond the perception of these

operations as isolated units. This section of the dissertation critically illuminates the interconnectedness of these operations within the broader UN peacekeeping architecture, emphasizing their collective impact on the security landscape of the Israel-Arab conflict.

Understanding Inter-Operation Collaboration (IOC) emerges as a critical lens through which to examine the security dimensions of the research question. By delineating how the UN's peacekeeping architecture maneuvered within military affairs, this chapter enriches our comprehension of the UN's role in influencing the conflict's security dynamics. This perspective reveals that while each operation was established with distinct mandates and operational frameworks, their de facto collaboration significantly enhanced their collective effectiveness.

The dissertation pioneers in advancing the discourse on IOC by treating these operations as integral components of a single, interconnected network. This approach is substantiated by historical instances where UNTSO's resources and expertise were leveraged to support the successive operations of UNEF II, UNDOF, and eventually UNIFIL. Such strategic collaboration, enduring to this day with UNTSO's continued support to UNDOF and UNIFIL, underscores the evolving nature of IOC within UN peacekeeping efforts. This nuanced understanding of IOC, largely overlooked in existing literature focused on peacekeeping outside the Middle East, positions this dissertation as both a historical account and a conceptual framework for future studies.

Furthermore, the dissertation reveals that IOC served as a critical instrument for crisis management within the Secretariat's toolkit. The archival findings highlight how Siilasvuo's critiques of bureaucratic inefficiencies led to the pragmatic adoption of IOC as a solution to operational challenges. This pragmatic collaboration, born out of necessity during times of crisis, eventually transitioned into standardized operational procedures, thereby institutionalizing coordination among the operations.

In conclusion, the genesis and evolution of IOC, as detailed in this dissertation, reflect the broader narrative of UN peacekeeping's development. The innate cooperation among peacekeeping operations, catalysed by urgent mandates and constrained timelines, became a cornerstone of operational success. Through a comprehensive examination of these

collaborative dynamics, this chapter not only provides a detailed account of IOC's critical role but also offers a usable framework for understanding the complexities of managing international peace and security. As such, the dissertation underscores the importance of viewing the UN's peacekeeping efforts in the Israel-Arab conflict through a lens of complexity, highlighting the interconnectedness and adaptability that are essential for navigating the multifaceted challenges of maintaining peace in volatile regions. While all parts of the architecture contributed to the success of the whole, it is critical to discuss the most important actor: UNTSO

### **UNTSO: The Pillar of the Architecture**

The longevity and regional mandate undoubtedly render UNTSO a unique operation in the global history of UN peacekeeping. Its vastness, encompassing the entire Middle Eastern region, is not just a geographical footprint but also a strategic advantage. By establishing offices in all pivotal capitals, UNTSO strategically positions itself to build rapport and trust with key regional stakeholders. This privileged access does not just foster relationships; it enables UNTSO to step in as a mediator, diffusing tensions across its sectors, often even before they escalate into full-blown crises.

UNTSO's reputation in fostering elite UNMOs is unparalleled across the peacekeeping landscape. This prowess was distinctly evident during the 1967–1973 period when UNTSO's footprint spanned the entire Middle East, shouldering immense responsibilities. UNTSO's crucial role did not wane with the advent of new operations; in 1973, it played a pivotal role in bolstering UNEF during the start-up phase. Come 1978, UNTSO emerged, in the words of Erskine, as “UNIFIL’s rear HQ,” expediting its deployment with precision and efficiency.

More than its strategic roles, UNTSO became the leadership academy for future leaders. The complexities, nuances, and political intricacies embedded within the operation's mandate provide its staff with experience in one of the most sensitive conflicts in the world. UNTSO became a stepping-stone for many to ascend to prominent roles in other regional operations. Erskine and Siilasvuo stand out in this regard, with UNTSO's experiences being instrumental



in shaping their leadership approaches, ensuring that they were well prepared for the multifaceted challenges that awaited them.

Beyond its day-to-day activities, UNTSO's real strength lies in its quasi-permanent presence within the UN Architecture. By serving as a constant reservoir of adept officers, familiar with the intricacies of the entire region, UNTSO ensures that UN peacekeeping in the Middle East is never rudderless. This enduring presence not only provides continuity amidst the ever-evolving geopolitical landscape but also offers the reassurance of a deep-rooted understanding of the region's past, present and potential futures (Howard, 2019).

UNTSO is more than just a peacekeeping operation; it is the keystone upon which the Secretariat built the entire architecture. Through mediation, training officers, nurturing future leaders, or ensuring a sustained presence, UNTSO continues to prove its indispensable value in the intricate web of peacekeeping. UNTSO is not vested with the mandate to broker peace, evaluating UNTSO's efficacy against this criterion is unjust.

### **The Jarring Mission & Geneva Peace Conference: A Tale Changing Political Agency**

Chapter 4 takes a step back from the operations' day-to-day work and reviews the Secretariat's political role. The chapter studies to what extent the Secretariat successfully acted as a policy broker in the political negotiations in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War and Operation Litani River. The role of the UN Secretariat as a policy broker in the aftermath of the Six-Day War (1967), the Yom Kippur War (1973) and Operation Litani River (1978) varied in its effectiveness, as the political context and the interests of the key parties involved in the conflict determined its influence. This section has two parts: The first covers the high-level diplomatic engagements – led by the Secretary-General and the Office of Special Political Affairs – while the second covers the work of the Chief Coordinator.

The Jarring Mission, led by Swedish diplomat Gunnar Jarring, was a political initiative through which the Secretariat hoped to broker a peace process in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. As the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Jarring's mandate stemmed from Security Council Resolution 242. The Jarring Mission faced numerous obstacles. First, Israel and its neighbours had vastly different interpretations of Resolution 242 (Goldberg, 1973 &

1988; McDowall, 2014; Schaeftler, 1974) and Jarring did not have the political influence to foster a similar interpretation of such a controversial document. Second, Jarring had to shuttle between Israel and all her neighbours because the sides were unwilling to meet. Travelling and passing messages from one side to the other was time-consuming and inefficient. Moreover, unlike Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy, Jarring did not have strong government backing. Instead, all he had was the backing of the Secretary-General. Second, Jarring was unable to set the groundwork for potential negotiations. The parties' positions were too different. The Arab world bitterly denounced and rejected Israel's territorial gains and demanded a complete withdrawal. On the other hand, Israel claimed it would not negotiate with countries that did not recognise its right to exist. Moreover, Israel was unwilling to return any of the territory gained. Third, the superpowers influenced the mission because they cared more about Cold War politics than achieving long-lasting peace. Despite its enormous efforts, the Jarring Mission could not secure a comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbours. The region went back to war. Jarring's failure had a profound impact on the Secretariat's political agency. The Security Council did not give the Secretariat another chance to spearhead a peace process.

The Geneva Peace Conference stands as a testament to the tumultuous era of Cold War politics and divergent national interests. With the backdrop of the Six-Day War, the Secretariat, with Waldheim at the helm, endeavoured to curate a balanced approach toward peace. However, the Geneva Peace Conference, despite its significant build-up, fell short of expectations. Nevertheless, it set the foundation for the Military Working Group, suggesting that even in perceived failures; there lay the seeds of future diplomacy.

After the Yom Kippur War, the U.S. took the lead in the peace process. Kissinger built and implemented an incremental approach through which the parties adopted confidence-building measures aimed at lowering the tensions. However, communication between Kissinger and Waldheim showed that the UN Chief was on the back foot. While the U.S. wanted the conference to take place under the auspices of the UN, they were unwilling to relinquish their position as the primary convener and guarantor of peace in the Middle East.

Waldheim expressed to Kissinger that he “did not wish to interfere” (UNA, 1973) with his strategy; however, he believed that the UN should have a substantive role to ensure the outcome has legitimacy. Moreover, Waldheim reminded Kissinger that the Secretariat had over a quarter of a century working in the region. Waldheim’s argument worked only partially. Kissinger agreed to let Waldheim participate, however, with minimal agency. In the end, the Geneva Peace Conference did not meet the expectations. However, it created a framework for further incremental negotiations in the Military Working Group.

### **The Triumphs of “Middle-Management” Diplomacy**

In contrast to high-level diplomatic endeavours, the Secretariat's mid-level engagement displayed commendable successes. The period under scrutiny undeniably marks the zenith of the UN staff's accomplishments, often referred to as the 'golden age'. During the UN's first three decades, both the Member States and the Secretariat were navigating and shaping the intricate balance between the independence of the UN and the oversight of the Member States. They built that dynamic in real time, with the Member States granting the UN remarkable leeway to execute their decisions. The era was graced by the likes of Bunche, Urquhart, Guyer, and Siilasvuo. These distinguished individuals not only built and governed the Secretariat but also managed multiple crises at the same time. Their roles were administrative and diplomatic in equal measure.

At this stage it is, once again, critical to discuss the importance of Siilasvuo’s role. His appointment was a confluence of several factors aligning perfectly. The Secretariat was in dire need of a military intermediary who could seamlessly bridge the chasm between divergent parties. Siilasvuo, with his vast experience at the helm of UNTSO and UNEF, and the respect he garnered from both sides, emerged as the ideal candidate. Furthermore, the geopolitical landscape post the Yom Kippur War was ripe for negotiations. The parties needed a framework for disengagement and recognized the instrumental role the Secretariat could play in facilitating this process. His personal adeptness in chairing the Km 101 negotiations after the Yom Kippur War exemplifies this. Acting as a neutral mediator, he bridged trust deficits, enabling Israel and Egypt to forge the Six-Point Agreement, which lowered the tensions and gave both parties sufficient political capital to keep the conversation going and attend the Geneva Peace Conference. While it is true that Israel

protested that Siilasvuo overreached and tried to steer the negotiations, it is clear that both sides appreciated Siilasvuo's style, patience and skills. Even more impressive, the General chaired the negotiations whilst his team deployed UNEF II. During those days Siilasvuo had to split his time and focus.

Furthermore, when the MWG began to work, the General already had sufficient political rapport to assist the parties to negotiate the disengagement agreements. In addition, during this time, Siilasvuo was instrumental in the Secretariat's preparations for UNDOF's arrival. Chapter 3 highlights that the operation's terms of reference, composition, and even the name of the first Force Commander that came from Siilasvuo and his team.

It is critical to stress, however, that while Siilasvuo was far more successful in political terms than his supervisors, this was not entirely due to his skills. The Security Council "delegated" the operational part of the negotiations to the UN; Kissinger understood that the parties needed to meet at Km 101 without any other country. However, in order to keep things moving, a UN mediator was also necessary. Furthermore, at the Geneva Peace Conference, one of the only things on which all participants agreed was that the UN had an important role to play in the implementation of subsequent disengagement agreements through chairing the MWG and managing the peacekeeping operations. In other words, Siilasvuo had significantly more latitude than Waldheim, who had to plead the case of UN involvement to Kissinger at every turn.

The Secretariat's political role in the Israel-Arab conflict from 1967 to 1973 serves as a lesson in diplomacy's ebbs and flows. U Thant had significant latitude, which, unfortunately, resulted in failure. Waldheim, on the contrary, was supporting cast in Kissinger's grand-strategy. However, it is notable that the Secretariat had palpable and positive contributions in mid-level engagements. The politics of the Cold War and the evolving dynamics of the Middle East shaped the Secretariat's political role. Yet, amidst these oscillations of influence, figures like Siilasvuo stand out, exemplifying the potential of middle-management diplomacy in navigating complex geopolitical terrains. The peacekeeping architecture in the Middle East suffered two severe shocks, which transformed it. The next section discusses the ramification of each shock and its aftermath.

## **The Shocks to the Architecture**

Chapter 5 reviews the two developments that significantly undermined the UN peacekeeping architecture and, at the same time, transformed the conflict once again. The Chapter analyses the following question: To what extent did the Camp David Accords and the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon affect the ability of the UN Peacekeeping Architecture to perform its duties?

### **The Camp David Accords: An Attack against Multilateralism**

The Camp David Accords achieved what seemed impossible five years prior: peace between Israel and Egypt. However, for the purposes of multilateralism and the objectives of the UN, how the parties came together proved to be a past success, which all but guaranteed Israel would not sign another peace treaty for years to come.

The Secretary-General wanted the Israel-Arab conflict to be the crowning achievement of his second term. He made a very public and ambitious diplomatic offensive to reconvene the Geneva Peace Process to tackle the conflict holistically. To that end, he gained the wholehearted endorsement of the General Assembly, which mandated that he reconvene the conference. He simultaneously reiterated its wish that the PLO participate as a delegation in its own right. The Soviet Union and the U.S. fully supported Waldheim's view, and they even released a joint statement calling for the parties to meet in Geneva. However, neither Waldheim nor the Soviets convinced the Israelis to attend the conference with the Palestinians. The issue was a poison pill for Israel. Moreover, the Israelis and Egyptians wanted to engage in peace talks *without* the Soviet Union. Therefore, they negotiated secretly in Morocco without telling the U.S. In the end, President Sadat decided to do the unthinkable and visited Jerusalem to announce that the two countries were embarking on an unstoppable march towards peace.

The Israel-Egypt rapprochement bypassed all multilateral initiatives. It quickly became apparent that Sadat was only interested in securing the return of the Sinai Peninsula and was willing to sacrifice the Palestinian quest for statehood in the process. Israel, which knew it had to return the Peninsula sooner rather than later, decided to negotiate the issue without discussing the control over the West Bank and Gaza. Israel returned something never theirs

in exchange for what they believed was theirs by right. While the process was bilateral and became trilateral when the Carter Administration joined, they did envision a role for the UN. Israel and Egypt explicitly mention in the Peace Treaty that they wished to have UN 'personnel and observers' on the ground to verify the treaty's implementation. Moreover, they also mention their wish to have the Chief Coordinator participate in the dispute settlement mechanism. While the parties knew neither of the operations had the mandate to support the implementation, they hoped the Security Council would adopt UNEF II and UNTSO's mandates and the terms of reference of the Chief Coordinator. However, they also anticipated a potential Soviet veto, so they requested assurances that the U.S. would assist in case the UN was unable or unwilling to do so. They turned out to be correct.

The Soviet Union and the Arab world bitterly denounced how the parties came together and ignored the Palestinian question. Therefore, they decided to prevent the UN from playing an active role in the Israel-Egypt border. This decision neutralised two critical players in the architecture. First, the Soviet Union intended to veto a proposal to extend UNEF II's mandate. The U.S. decided to avoid a political showdown and did not table a draft resolution to that effect. Therefore, the Secretary-General announced his plans to arrange an orderly withdrawal of the operation.

UNEF II was a successful peacekeeping operation on several accounts. First, it achieved its mandate of creating a full buffer between Israel and Egypt. Second, its presence assured that tensions would remain calm while the parties negotiated the disengagement agreements at the tent and in Geneva. Third, Siilasvuo's dual negotiator and Force Commander Role allowed the UN to be proactive. Moreover, UNEF II's success also meant that UNDOF had a smooth start.

Of course, UNEF II's success was also due to external factors. The operation was as successful as its host countries wanted it to be. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss why Israel and Egypt decided to put down their weapons and make peace. If they wanted to fight another war, there was little UNEF II could have done to stop them. The overall framework created through the painstaking process from the tent at Km 101 to the second disengagement agreement paved the way for a one-way trip to peace. UNEF II was a critical facilitator of the implementation;

however, UNEF II highlights that second-generation peacekeeping can work if and only if the parties support it. In the end, a non-UN peace operation substituted UNEF II; however, the operation is an example of success.

However, the UN did not cease *all* its operations in the Sinai Peninsula. The Secretary-General stated that he would continue to rely on UNTSO to provide UNMOs to monitor the Peninsula and the Israeli withdrawal. UNTSO had the mandate and expertise to cover the vacuum UNEF II left immediately. Moreover, the Council never put into question either amending UNTSO's mandate to prevent it from working in the Peninsula or withdrawing from the operation altogether. UNTSO is impervious to the political dynamics at the Council because they continue to rely on its work.

### **The Chief Coordinator: The Demise of a Very Good Idea**

Unfortunately, the Soviet Union's objection to the UN's involvement in the Israel-Egypt Peace talks did not end at UNEF II. Indeed, the operation's architect suffered the same fate. The Soviet Union also barred the Chief Coordinator from playing the role the parties envisioned for this office. In late 1978, Siilasvuo announced his intentions to retire from active duty and return to Finland. The Secretary-General let the post elapse without hiring a replacement; therefore, Siilasvuo became the first and last Chief Coordinator of Peacekeeping in the Middle East.

Siilasvuo served the UN exemplarily well. When he took over the UNTSO Chief of Staff role, the operation worked in a very hostile environment with extremely high tensions. Siilasvuo understood the importance of building relationships on both sides. He gained the reputation of a fair and seasoned officer the parties could trust. He had a very fruitful relationship with Headquarters because he was always frank and direct with them. As Chapter 3 highlights, Siilasvuo was fearless in challenging the Secretariat and complaining about its shortcomings in terms of planning. However, Siilasvuo consistently implemented his mandate to the best of his abilities. When he became UNEF II Force Commander, he had to step away from his traditional military role and become a quasi-diplomat. Siilasvuo's involvement at the operational level lowered the tensions and paved the way for high-level negotiations. While Kissinger usually gets all the credit for the Sinai and Syria disengagement plans, his strategy

of incremental progress was only achievable because the UN Team worked well on the ground.

Siilasvuo understood that the high degree of operational concentration required coordination. Therefore, he took the initiative to create a new job and stated that the Secretary-General should appoint him. Enhancing cooperation among the operations was critical for the achievement of their mandates. The Chief Coordinator's accomplishments revolved around two main issues. First, he streamlined the management of the operations. Siilasvuo arranged the operations to engage in systematic dialogue in programme management, logistics and military affairs. He chaired multiple meetings where the operations sent people with the same job function to Jerusalem to standardise their practices and support each other. Moreover, Siilasvuo travelled to each operation often to meet with the teams and support their work. While the Force Commanders remained accountable to the Secretary-General (through the Office of Special Political Affairs), Siilasvuo was the focal point for New York. He liaised with Urquhart and Guyer on strategic matters and ensured that all operations had the same information simultaneously. While it would appear self-evident, it is critical to highlight how groundbreaking this position and his duties were for the UN. The Secretariat created a middle-management role as a conduit between the operations and headquarters.

Second, this office supported the Force Commanders when dealing with sensitive issues in their respective AOs. Because Siilasvuo was Under-Secretary-General, his natural counterparts were Foreign Ministers and Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces. He was able to bring sensitive issues to the highest levels of government. The Chief Coordinator engaged in high-level diplomacy, unprecedented in the history of UN peacekeeping. Throughout his tenure, Siilasvuo built up the credibility of the UN across the board, even in Israel. Siilasvuo established respectful and efficient relationships with vital Israeli stakeholders, such as General Yaariv at the Km 101 tent and later with people such as Yitzhak Rabin and Moshe Dayan. Siilasvuo's tenure as Chief Coordinator was, by all accounts, successful. This begs the question: Why did the UN abandon the post?



The Camp David Accords changed the region, and UNEF II's withdrawal dwindled the active engagement of the UN. The reaction to the trilateral agreement was so bitter that it torpedoed any chance of Israel having peace talks with anybody in the region. The fact that the Palestinian question was not central to the discussions meant its plight remained unresolved. Israel took advantage of Egypt's desire to reclaim the Sinai Peninsula and used the "land for peace" formula with land that never belonged to them. The reaction was so drastic that the Secretariat could not justify their active participation in any part of this process to the General Assembly.

Moreover, there was much less need for a Coordinator for two main reasons. First, the *modus operandi* whereby the operations pool and share resources with each other was fully functional and became routine. Second, there was no real chance of making any type of progress. Therefore, the operations could only observe and try to prevent further escalation of violence. For UNDOF, while the Golan Heights remained contested, the chance of an Israel-Syria war was virtually non-existent. UNDOF had a very traditional peacekeeping role whereby their observers and soldiers patrolled its AO and reported any violations. The status quo from the Israel-Syria disengagement agreement of 1974 stayed in place, and there was almost no chance of moving the needle. Therefore, UNDOF did not need to rely on the Chief Coordinator for political support because the operation had no political tasks. UNTSO continued to carry out its duties across the region, served as an effective yet underrated liaison mechanism between the parties, and supplied UNMOs to UNDOF and UNIFIL. The Chief of Staff took over most of the high-level liaison duties from the Chief Coordinator however, unlike Siilasvuo, UNTSO did not have to embark on many high-level sensitive negotiations.

The case of UNIFIL was, as always, different. The operation faced enormous challenges; the operation did not have the means to prevent further violence; and the Chief Coordinator could not help them very much. Chapter 3 highlights that while Siilasvuo was instrumental at the onset, his ability to assist UNIFIL dwindled after its deployment.

The Camp David Accords transformed the dynamics of the Israel-Arab conflict, and the UN peacekeeping architecture was no exception. While the parties hoped to have UNEF II and

the Chief Coordinator as a partner in the treaty's implementation, they ended up leaving the region. The moment Israel, Egypt and the U.S. decided to embark on a trilateral process without the Soviet Union with an agenda that did not include the Palestinian question, they sabotaged the opportunity to have the UN support them. The Secretary-General could not go against a Soviet veto. In the end, the parties went outside the UN and deployed the MFO. As the Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula situation remained quiet, Southern Lebanon was a powder keg that exploded in 1982.

### **The Israel Invasion of Lebanon**

As Chapter 5 illustrates, UNIFIL never had the necessary backing from the Council or legitimacy from the actors on the ground. Everyone in Southern Lebanon, at one time or another, conspired and attacked UNIFIL positions. While the Chief Coordinator helped set up the operation, the UN did not have the mandate or resources to bring peace to Southern Lebanon. Therefore, the Chief Coordinator could only do a little to support the operation. While the early 1970s saw significant involvement of the UN in the conflict, the progress towards peace stagnated by the end of the decade, and the Secretariat did not have the necessary agency to fix it.

The invasion displayed that UNIFIL was unable to prevent Israel from deploying a large-scale military action. While UNIFIL tried to slow down the Israeli invasion, its efforts were futile. Regardless of its size, an operation with a weak mandate cannot keep the peace. The Security Council never gave UNIFIL the right tools to achieve its mandate; however, the Council kept them in the ground.

The invasion led to the deployment of a U.S.-led non-UN operation. The MNF deployed to Beirut at the request of the Lebanese government to monitor and facilitate the PLO's withdrawal from Lebanon. The MNF did not replace UNIFIL; however, it showed that the UN operation was unable to adapt its work in a time of acute crisis. The Security Council could have amended UNIFIL's mandate to extend its AO to Beirut and create a strong buffer between the IDF and the PLO as the Palestinians left the country. However, the Lebanese government requested Washington to get directly involved, bypassing the Security Council and ignoring UNIFIL. The Lebanese believed that due to the heightened tensions and risk to

the soldiers on the ground that the U.S. military had much more resilience and tolerance for potential casualties than UNIFIL's TCCs had. Lebanon was right, the TCCs would not agree to expose their soldiers and had they experienced casualties, their resilience would drop. In the end, the MNF left for that specific reason. After multiple attacks against their positions and suffering heavy casualties, the MNF withdrew in 1984. While the MNF did facilitate the PLO's withdrawal from Lebanon, it did not foster peace; it did not even manage to have an absence of war.

### **A Legacy of Persistence and Mixed Record: The UN's Contributions and Trials in the Israel-Arab Conflict**

As this dissertation draws to a close, it is imperative to reflect on the emblematic nature of the UN's engagement with the Israel-Arab conflict, a saga that mirrors the broader history, challenges, and triumphs of the United Nations as an intergovernmental body and as an organisation. This conflict, as old as the UN itself, stands as a testament to the organization's enduring commitment to international peace, security, and sustainable development. The period under review reveals the UN's nuanced role in a conflict it never had the political leverage to resolve independently but where it proved indispensable in moderating tensions and preventing regional escalations.

The UN's efforts through UNEF, UNDOF, and UNTSO were instrumental in maintaining a relative peace, demonstrating the organization's capacity to act as a critical buffer in times of heightened geopolitical stakes. These operations underscore the UN's value not when it seeks to unilaterally 'solve' conflicts but as a tool for peace when the international community, particularly the superpowers, commits to such an end. Despite criticisms and perceived failures, the tangible achievements of these missions in preventing further wars cannot be overlooked.

The Secretariat's role during this period highlighted its potential for strategic agency and execution, albeit with mixed outcomes. The Jarring mission's shortcomings and Waldheim's constrained political stance underscore the limitations faced by the Secretary-General in the shadow of dominant superpowers. Yet, these challenges also illustrate the potential for the

Secretariat to serve as a mediator and a strategic partner, even in the face of overwhelming geopolitical dynamics.

Conversely, figures like Siilasvuo, Urquhart, and Guyer exemplify the positive impact of strong leadership and effective planning in peacekeeping efforts. Siilasvuo's adeptness as an honest broker and the strategic foresight of Urquhart and Guyer in deploying UNEF and UNDOF, as well as managing the crisis that necessitated UNIFIL's immediate deployment, highlight the importance of nuanced, informed approaches to peacekeeping and conflict resolution.

The UN's history within the Israel-Arab conflict underscores the double-edged sword of multilateralism. It showcases the organization's capacity for significant contributions to peacekeeping and conflict management, while also revealing the limitations imposed by the political will of its member states and the geopolitical interests of superpowers. This nuanced understanding is crucial, not only for appreciating the UN's past roles but also for informing its future strategies. As the conflict continues to evolve, the UN must reassess and redesign its approach to address today's challenges, drawing on lessons from its historical engagements to navigate the complex landscape of modern peacekeeping and diplomacy.

In conclusion, the UN's involvement in the Israel-Arab conflict offers valuable insights into the broader efficacy and challenges of international peacekeeping efforts. By acknowledging both the successes and shortcomings of the UN's role in this protracted conflict, we gain a deeper appreciation for the organization's potential to contribute to global peace and security. Moving forward, it is imperative that the UN leverages its historical experiences to adapt and innovate, ensuring it remains a vital force for peace in an ever-changing world.