

Panel II:

Israeli Diplomacy on the Eve of War

Jun 4, 2007



Brief Analysis

On June 4, 2007, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy held a symposium marking the fortieth anniversary of the June 1967 war between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The purpose of the symposium was to grapple with the failure of U.S.-led diplomacy on the eve of the war, exploring the period from a variety of perspectives. The following is a summary of the symposium's second panel discussion.

[View a summary \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=340\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=340) of the symposium, including video and audio of each session. [Read the prepared text \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=341\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=341) of Moshe Raviv's remarks.

In its second session, the symposium explored the events leading to war from the Israeli perspective. Michael Bar-Zohar, who served as Israeli defense minister Moshe Dayan's spokesman during part of the war, explained Dayan's rise to his key post on the eve of war. Dayan attracted Israeli public support as he recognized from the start of the crisis that diplomacy would not be able to halt the march to war. Moreover, Bar-Zohar described the course of events that shifted elite opinion within parts of Israel's governing coalition away from hope that David Ben-Gurion would emerge from retirement to lead the country in battle. Ben-Gurion insisted that Israel must win explicit support from Washington for the war; this led some of his supporters to turn instead to Dayan for leadership in the crisis.

Moshe Raviv, who served as an aide to Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban in 1967, moved the discussion from the military side of Israeli policy in the crisis to the diplomatic perspective. Raviv outlined his and Eban's frustrating visit to Paris, London, and Washington on the eve of the war. Raviv said that Eban finished the mission with a "heavy heart," because it was clear that neither French president Charles de Gaulle nor Johnson was willing to stand foursquare behind each country's 1957 commitment to keep the Straits of Tiran open to international shipping. For Israel, the Straits were a lifeline for oil supplies. Raviv said the failure of the United States and France to stand behind their pledges in 1967 was a seminal, traumatic moment for Israel, casting enduring doubt on the value of exchanging tangible Israeli concessions for international guarantees. ❖

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