Part II

Multimethod Verification in the Sinai: Prerequisites and Lessons

Having described the Sinai experience in historical terms, the next step is to generalize from this description by identifying the prerequisites for the Sinai operation's success and drawing some appropriate lessons.

1. Key Characteristics of the Sinai Verification Experience

A number of factors, integrated in a unique manner, were responsible for the success of the Sinai operation. A review of these will be critical in determining their applicability to other cases. For analytical purposes, these factors can be divided into three general sets: political-military, geographic-physical environment, and technical-operational. It is important to emphasize that these categories overlap considerably.

1(a) *Political-Military Factors*

i)   In the aftermath of the 1973 October War, military victory at tolerable costs was no longer perceived by either side as a viable military option; each party recognized that it could not advance its national security objectives unilaterally by prolonging the conflict.

ii) Both parties wanted to avoid war and demonstrated a commitment to peace-building even in the absence of a prior history of restraint.

iii) The parties recognized that the future of domestic political elites could be jeopardized by the economic burdens imposed by continuing the conflict.

iv) A third-party-assisted verification system, operated by trusted and credible third parties, was seen by the parties as a useful mechanism for reducing fears of surprise attack and war by miscalculation. In short, the verification system contributed to risk management.

v)   An active third-party role was essential to negotiate and implement the disengagement and verification process. The United States, together with the UN, was willing to bear much of the financial burden for implementing the verification system.

vi) Direct parties to the conflict viewed these third parties as motivated to provide (and capable of providing) substantial incentives and disincentives for restraint on cross-border incursions and military preparations.

vii) Military commanders and political leaders believed that intrusive third-party verification measures would not necessarily undermine national security objectives. Military leaders believed the information and reporting procedures associated with a verification regime — that is, the high degree of transparency associated with such systems — would not create an intelligence imbalance in favour of regional adversaries and their external supporters. Nor did they fear the verification system would impose a loss of national independence or restrict the policy latitude that might otherwise be available.

viii) The presence of only two adversaries simplified the task of developing a verification system tailored to meet their particular security requirements.

ix) Both sides possessed sufficient technical sophistication and discipline to undertake the process of disengagement in an orderly fashion.

x)   Breaking down the overall process into reciprocal step-by-step stages allowed the parties to learn from the experience provided by precedent agreements. The incremental nature of this approach was a key factor in allowing the parties to develop confidence in the risk management measures adopted to reduce this habitual military conflict. With the signing of the Sinai I Agreement, the parties accepted the utility of demilitarized zones, buffer zones and a thinning out of military forces at intervals the closer they are to the border, as a useful way to manage a changing security relationship. With each new agreement, Egypt and Israel were able to build on preceding measures.