

retirement career opportunities that accrue almost automatically to the Army's senior officer corps...". And I quoted Amnon Rubinstein, the Dean of Tel-Aviv University's Law School and a frequent contributor to the *New York Times Magazine*, who wrote after the Six-Day War: "All the deficiencies to be found in the veteran political leadership — historical rights, political dogmatism, lack of contact with the people, language and style dating from the past — do not exist in Israel Army leadership."

### Changed attitude

That was post-1967. Since 1973 the situation and the attitudes have changed. Israelis are grateful to the Army General Staff and the senior commanders for absorbing the totally unexpected first blows of the Yom Kippur War, mobilizing the reserves while the much smaller regular army was under a fierce two-front attack, assessing the new realities of enemy tactics, strategy, weaponry and manpower in lightning time and fashion, adjusting Israel's counter-attack to these new realities, and then capturing huge new chunks of both Syrian and Egyptian territory — only to be denied, as in the past, the political fruits of their military victories.

But, at the same time, Israelis are stunned at the enormous human and material losses. In mid-March 1974, the Army distributed a booklet listing the 2,552 officers and men killed between Yom Kippur Day 1973 and February 12, 1974. Thirty-four billion Israeli pounds, or about an entire year's gross national product, was shot up in three weeks, and the percentage of the GNP devoted to defence has risen from about 17 per cent before the war to about 33 per cent. Only now are they beginning to recover from what has come to be known as the *mechdal* (Hebrew for "neglect" or "blunder"). Included under the heading of *mechdal* are: (1) the intelligence failure, which did not detect and therefore did not warn of the attack; (2) the logistics failure, which did not deploy even the standing army in sufficient numbers, strength and depth to meet the attack with but minimal losses; (3) the planning failure, which made no allowances for a surprise attack on the standing army unreinforced by the reserves; and (4) the psychological failure — the most important failure — which allowed the Military Intelligence Branch, the Chief of Staff, the General Staff, the Government, the Parliament, and ultimately the public itself, to be lulled into making a number of very false, interconnected assumptions.

One assumption was that Egypt would not launch an attack without using its air force and attempting to strike deep into Israel, especially at main Israeli airfields. Another was that Syria would never enter the fray except as part of a simultaneous operation with Egypt. And still another was that Military Intelligence would *always* (on the basis of a promise made by its Chief, Major-General Eliahu Ze'ira) be able to warn the Government of an attack in plenty of time to allow full mobilization. (General Ze'ira and his principal aides steadfastly refused to believe contrary evaluations of Egyptian intentions submitted by a junior officer.)

In short, between 1967 and 1973 Israeli over-confidence, selective perception, and endemic underestimation of enemy capabilities and intentions froze both military and civilian leaders of the Jewish state into the "conception" that the Arabs could not fight a sustained war and that therefore they had not yet learned to fight one, to fight it well, and to fight it together.

### Agranat Commission

On November 18, 1973, just weeks after the war, the Israeli Cabinet issued a communiqué announcing that a commission of enquiry would be set up to investigate and report to the Cabinet on the pre-war intelligence, its assessment and the decisions based on it, as well as the IDF's preparedness, deployment and actions up to the enemy's containment. The communiqué also announced that the commission would consist of five members appointed after consultation with Dr. Shimon Agranat, the President of the Supreme Court. Dr. Agranat chose as members of the commission, which bore his

*Capability of Arabs to fight sustained war not recognized*

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