

**Bittersweet Legacy** from page 15

**U.S. Gains An Ally**

Still, the war altered the regional balance, opening up possibilities for peacemaking despite the difficulties. The United States, which until 1967 had been wary of getting too close to Israel, forged a strategic alliance with the Jewish state, becoming its main weapons supplier and diplomatic backer as well as a major trading partner.

The Arab failure in the war — seen in part as a failure of Soviet arms and support — marked the beginning of the decline of Soviet influence in the region.

This change in the regional super-power balance created the conditions for Israeli-Egyptian peace, mediated by the Americans, in the late 1970s.

Israel's occupation of Palestinian-populated territory precluded further peacemaking, however. Indeed, the occupation was the most bitter legacy of Israel's 1967 victory on the battlefield. According to some military experts, decades of policing the occupation eroded the army's battle proficiency over time and was partly responsible for the ground forces' poor performance in last summer's Lebanon War.

The occupation also proved a public-relations disaster. Worse, during the second Palestinian intifada that began in 2000, the ongoing occupation led to renewed calls for a binational state with an eventual Palestinian majority, which would mean the end of Israel as a Jewish state.

The Oslo peace process of the 1990s was a serious attempt to end the occupation and transform the results of the 1967 war into an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal based on two peaceful, neighboring states. As it implied an end to occupation, the 1993 Oslo framework agreement also paved the way for a peace deal between Israel and Jordan.

The unraveling of the Oslo process after the failure of the Camp David summit in July 2000 and the radical

Islamic attack on America on Sept. 11, 2001, exacerbated the moderate-radical divide in the Arab world and among the Palestinians. Given the weakness of the moderates and the intransigence of the radicals, in 2005 Israel began a unilateral withdrawal from territory occupied in 1967.

The idea was to create conditions for an eventual two-state solution and preempt the growing threat to Israel's existence from the revived one-state idea.

The limited success of the 2005 Gaza withdrawal and the ongoing occupation of the West Bank leave Israel still grappling with the bittersweet legacy of the Six-Day War.

Two of the main 1967 belligerents, Egypt and Jordan, are helping to promote an agreement with moderate Palestinians that Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni says will entail further Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank.

On the other side of the Muslim divide, Palestinian and Islamic rejectionists, primarily Hamas and Iran, are working to undercut any potential progress, pleased to see Israel weighed down by the occupation.

The Israeli government strategy is to bypass Hamas with help from the moderates. However, critics argue that the moderates either aren't really so moderate or won't be able to deliver, and that the best Israel can hope for is an interim agreement — negotiated with Hamas or with Hamas' approval — that significantly reduces the amount of territory Israel occupies.

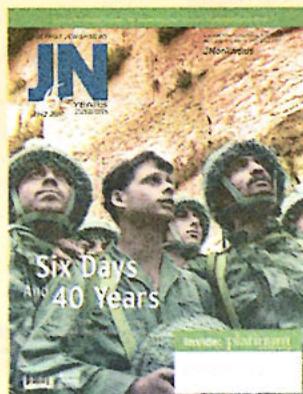
Settlers and other right-wingers see in both these strategies a sellout that may gain Israel some breathing space but which will boomerang sooner or later, with devastating effect.

Forty years later, it seems, Israel remains saddled with the results of its great victory in 1967, unable either to swallow the territories or to reject them. □

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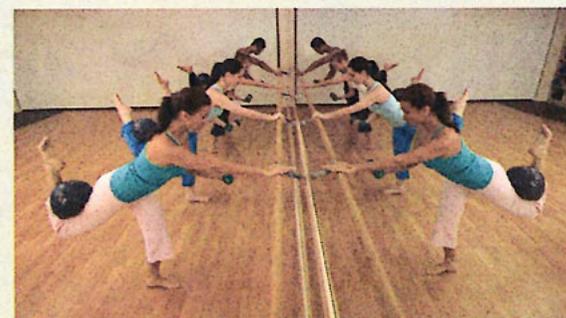
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