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Ehud Eilam, *The Next War between Israel and Egypt: Examining a High-intensity War between Two of the Strongest Militaries in the Middle East*. Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2014. Pp. xv, 247. ISBN 978-0-85303-838-2.

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What would happen if Israel and Egypt were to wage another conventional, high-intensity war? Author Ehud Eilam assumes they would fight on the old battleground of the Sinai Peninsula, where neither side would have an effective existing military infrastructure to rely on. *The Next War between Israel and Egypt* considers a whole gamut of operations that would come into play—air battles, artillery bombardments, and collisions of infantry and armor; Eilam also takes into account weapons' systems and naval power. He does not sketch overall scenarios of such a war, instead analyzing its discrete components or aspects, with careful attention to historical precedents. Given the destabilizing effects of the "Arab Spring" on Egypt and its tense relations with Israel, a serious crisis or even a war is not entirely inconceivable.

Eilam's argument is based on a sound historical understanding of previous armed clashes and their implications for future struggles. Nearly all his book's chapters proceed from historical background to contemporary and possible future issues. Eilam draws on his personal knowledge¹ and a meticulous reading of unclassified Israeli government and military documents, reports and articles by journalists and civilian experts (with a strong bias toward Israeli commentators), as well as academic histories and biographies. The resulting book is clearly and systematically written, but lacks sufficient charts and maps and an adequate index.

A short introduction provides a summary of the volume's fifteen chapters but no synopsis of its overarching purpose. Chapter 1, "Doctrine and Military Build-up," puts special emphasis on the "Americanization" of both countries' armed forces, a process that has made their military establishments quite similar. Chapter 2, "Controlling the Skies," argues that Israel and Egypt would try to achieve air superiority by downing enemy planes or destroying them on the ground at their bases. Eilam believes gaining supremacy in the air would be critical to winning the war. Chapter 3, "Air-Land Operations," explains how air superiority would affect the allocation of resources in the sort of air-land battles seen in previous wars, when ground forces were exposed to aerial bombardment. Chapter 4, "Land War," assesses the need for ground forces in the Sinai, with due consideration of tanks, infantry, and combinations of artillery, as well as engineering and logistical matters. Eilam relies heavily on the precedents set in the Six Day (1967) and Yom Kippur (1973) wars. Chapter 5, "Offence and Defence," scrutinizes the abilities of the two forces to carry out such maneuvers as flanking, concentration of forces, and counteroffensives. In contrast to previous wars, there would be no fortifications along the border to forestall swift penetrations into the Sinai Peninsula. Chapter 6, "Defence in Depth or Forward Defence?" shows that, again compared with previous conflicts, neither Israelis nor Egyptians would have any significant military infrastructure in the Sinai area. Thus the deployment there of ground forces would necessitate long, vulnerable supply lines. Chapter 7, "Operational Aspects," focuses on problems of command and control (particularly at night) of corps-level formations in the expansive terrain of the Sinai.

Chapter 8, "Airborne Assaults," concerns tactics like flanking, ambushes, raids, and capturing vital positions. Chapter 9, "Using Similar Weapons Systems," moves the discussion in a slightly different direction with an interesting look at the implications of both sides' use of the same or comparable equipment, like F-16 fighter-bombers, Apache helicopters, and similar armored personnel carriers, among others. One result

1. According to the book's dust jacket, he holds advanced degrees in the field of Israeli national strategy and military doctrine, and worked for some years as a private researcher for Israel's Department of Defense.

of this could be difficulty in distinguishing enemy from friendly planes and vehicles, with lethal consequences. In addition, an American weapons embargo against either or both sides would give the United States formidable power to stop the war or determine its outcome. Chapter 10, "Military Infrastructure," investigates the likelihood and effects of either side building military facilities, including strongholds and airfields, in the Sinai over the course of war. Chapter 11, "The Sea Arena," concerns the struggle to control sea routes in the Mediterranean and Red Seas and the ability to mount sea or air-sea assaults. Chapter 12, "Manpower," treats issues of military personnel, highlighting questions of motivation and experience in high-intensity warfare. Chapter 13, "High, Hybrid and Low-intensity Wars," investigates variations in the scale and potentials of operations and forces that might be involved in a future war. Chapter 14, "Reasons for a Future War," speculates on possible causes for a termination of the now decades-long peace between Egypt and Israel.

Chapter 15, "Conclusion," offers a slightly fuller summary of the chapters than does the introduction, but no integrated presentation of a general thesis. This omission is the book's greatest weakness. This excerpt from the conclusion typifies the book's prose style throughout:

Following the turmoil in Egypt in recent years, it seems that everything could happen there, even if it does not make sense to people outside of Egypt or to many inside as well. Many Egyptians could believe to a certain point, out of despair and frustration, that a war with Israel was the best way to save their country from ongoing instability and even civil war. Some might think it would be better to jeopardize their lives fighting Israel than to clash with their own people. If the choice seemed to be either peace with Israel and war at home or vice versa, the decision would be clear for Egyptians. (216)

This reads more like a briefing for military and political decision-makers than an academic analysis meant for students of history.

The book has two other shortcomings. First, it makes too many highly questionable assumptions about the prospect of a rerun of the wars of 1967 and 1973. To be sure, as Eilam convincingly shows, future wars will include conventional high-intensity encounters, but twenty-first-century armed forces have evolved in many ways beyond the limitations they faced in the earlier period. Most critical has been the combination of conventional methods of war-making with such unconventional tactics as terror attacks, insurgencies, proxy wars, and local alliances.

Second, Eilam almost completely ignores the likely political settings of any future war. I do not mean that he should have written an altogether different book, but a better awareness of, for example, Egypt's regional alliances (going it alone against Israel does not seem a good option) would make the author's claims about strictly military matters much more persuasive. As it is, he leaves unconsidered the exigencies and potential advantages—for either side—of coalition warfare.

These reservations aside, *The Next War between Israel and Egypt* is a suggestive, well-informed study that will appeal to military and political experts, scholars interested in high-intensity warfare, specialists in modern Middle Eastern military history, and university students and professors of history. It provides a good starting point for serious reflection on the possibility and likely nature of war between two American-armed military forces.