**The Failure Before 1973: Israel’s Intelligence Failure in 1967**

**Gil-li Vardi**

**Lecturer**

**Department of History**

**Stanford University**

The Israeli intelligence’s failure to predict, identify, and warn against an impending Egyptian-Syrian attack in October 1973 has by now become a benchmark of intelligence failure followed by a strategic surprise. The failure became a well-studied history, almost too banal to discuss. Its sources, too, have been exhaustively examined. The Israeli “*conception*,” resting on the assumption that the Egyptians are required to take certain necessary steps before they attack, and that Israel has “special means” at its disposal to detect these steps and invariably alert it when an attack is immanent, led the heads of AMAN (Israeli military intelligence) to believe that they are safe in assuming the Egyptians do not plan to attack Israel in the Sinai in October 1973. (Gilboa, 2014; Bar-Joseph 2005)

But what were the sources of AMAN’s willingness to stick to its assessment, no matter the warning signals suggesting the opposite; to arrogantly silence diverging opinions effectively creating an environment in which they are preempted; and mostly, why would the Head of Intelligence cultivate a culture in which his opinion, and his alone, is the first and final word?

The 1973 intelligence failure was predated by a 1967 intelligence failure: as late as the spring of 1967 AMAN failed to predict an immanent war, which would start shortly thereafter in June 1967. AMAN’s 1967 oversight is not recognized in Israeli historical narratives or public discourse. It was never acknowledged as a failure or studied as one. In effect, it guaranteed that AMAN, and its leader, will fail spectacularly when tested again.

Examining a wealth of archival sources from the IDF General Staff, this paper argues that between January and May 1967 AMAN failed to understand that war was an option for Egypt, that this option was indeed on the table, and worse, that Israeli actions—IDF actions—were pushing Nasser to opt for war. Beside failing spectacularly, in this way the AMAN leadership laid down the foundations for the emergence of serious organizational pathologies that would adversely impact the military intelligence performance in the years to come.