Rethinking the Six Day War:
An Analysis of Counterfactual Explanations

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Abstract

The Six Day War of June 1967 transformed the political and physical landscape of the Middle East. The war established Israel as a major regional power in the region, while the Israeli territorial acquisitions resulting from the war have permanently marred Israel's relationship with its Arab neighbors. The May crisis that preceded the war quickly spiraled out of control, leading many to believe that the war was unavoidable. In this paper, I construct three counterfactuals that consider how May and June 1967 might have unfolded differently if a particular event or person in the May crisis had been different. Ultimately, the counterfactuals show that war could have been avoided in three different ways, demonstrating that the Six Day War was certainly avoidable. In the latter half of the paper, I construct a framework to compare the effectiveness of multiple counterfactual. Thus, the objective of this paper is twofold: first, to determine whether war was unavoidable given the political climate and set of relations present in May and June 1967 and second, to create a framework with which one can compare the relative persuasiveness of multiple counterfactuals.

Introduction

The Six Day War of June 1967 transformed the political and physical landscape of the Middle East. The war established Israel as a major regional power, expanding its territorial boundaries and affirming its military supremacy in the region. The Israeli territorial acquisitions resulting from the war have been a major source of contention in peace talks with the Palestinians, and has permanently marred Israel's relationship with its Arab neighbors. The May crisis that preceded the war quickly spiraled out of control, leading many to believe that the war was unavoidable. In the first part of the paper I will explore whether or not the war was unavoidable in June 1967. More specifically, I will construct three counterfactuals, or hypothetical worlds, that consider how May and June 1967 might have unfolded differently if a particular event or person in the May crisis had been different. Ultimately, the counterfactuals show that war could have been avoided in three different ways, demonstrating that the Six Day War was certainly avoidable.

In the latter half of the paper I will construct a framework with which to compare the persuasiveness of multiple counterfactuals and then

apply the framework to the three proposed counterfactuals. The framework will be valuable on two levels. First, it will flesh out, in concrete terms, what it means to be a "compelling" counterfactual, avoiding the arbitrariness and inaccuracies of using one's intuitions as the basis for comparison. Second, by offering a systematic method for comparing multiple counterfactuals it fills a major void in contemporary counterfactual literature.

Thus, the objective of this paper is twofold: first, to determine whether war was unavoidable given the political climate and set of relations present in May and June 1967 and second, to create a framework with which one can compare the relative persuasiveness of multiple counterfactuals.

Background to Counterfactual Analysis

As the root of the word suggests, a counterfactual world is a hypothetical world that is counter or contrary to the actual world. It is a world where some event x, does not happen but could have occurred. For example, in deciding to attend the University of Pennsylvania after high school graduation, I simultaneously decided not to attend Berkeley where I was also accepted and not to take a gap year. Besides the actual world where I decide to attend the University of Pennsylvania, there exist two distinct counterfactual worlds: one where I decide to take a gap year and one where I attend Berkeley. In either of the two counterfactual worlds, my life could have unfolded very differently. I might have majored in something else, not studied abroad in Cambridge, or even decided to pursue a different career. Counterfactual thought experiments isolate an independent variable (what to do after high school graduation) and examine how a dependent variable (my major) might change if the independent variable changed (I decide to go to Berkeley instead of Penn). By changing the independent variable repeatedly and assessing the corresponding effect on the dependent variable, one develops a more complete picture of what was possible at the particular point in time. In the context of the college example, the counterfactual worlds are all the historically possible ways that my life could have been different given my post-high school graduation decision.

In addition to determining what was historically possible, counterfactual thought experiments are useful for making causal claims, particularly in history, where traditional scientific experiments cannot be used to determine causal relationships. To determine the cause of a war or an economic downturn, a historian does not have the luxury of testing a hypothesis by changing the independent variable and observing the change in the dependent variable. However, a historian can argue that A caused B if he/she can prove that "if A had not occurred, B would not have occurred and the world would be otherwise similar."[1] For example, a historian might

argue that the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center caused the War on Terror. To prove a causal relationship, the historian would have to show that if the September 11 attack did not occur then the War on Terror would not have occurred and the world would have been otherwise similar. The "otherwise similar" clause is meant to rule out causes that are so remote that if they were absent, not only would the proposed effect not happen, the world itself would look very different. For example, one might argue that the assassination of Abraham Lincoln caused the War on Terror by demonstrating that if Lincoln had not been assassinated, the War on Terror would not have happened. While the counterfactual statement could be correct (the War on Terror might not have happened), the causal claim would be inaccurate. The world would have changed too much in the 140 years between the assassination and the war to make any direct claim of causation.

It is important to note that counterfactual thought experiments, which I will refer to as "counterfactuals" from this point on, can alter more than one independent variable at a time or assess the effect on more than one dependent variable. However, changing more than one independent variable makes it more difficult to isolate a direct causal relationship. Consider a counterfactual that argues that the War on Terror as well as the current recession would not have occurred if al-Qaeda had not attacked the World Trade Center and President Bush had not been reelected in 2004. It is not clear which independent variable (terrorist attack or reelection) would have caused the dependent variables (war and recession) to change. Even so, many historical events, such as war and recession, are the product of multiple factors so a counterfactual with a corresponding number of independent variables would be appropriate.

The three counterfactuals in this paper each alter one or two independent variables and assess the change in the likelihood of war in 1967 (the dependent variable). To clarify even further, the dependent variable in the counterfactuals is the likelihood of a war in May/June 1967 between Israel and Egypt that involves a heavy exchange of firepower and results in major changes in territorial boundaries. This is the kind of war that we are interested in measuring because of its long-term implications on Israel's relationship with the Arab world and its borders.

Counterfactual 1: Soviet Misinformation and Israeli Provocation

On May 13, 1967 Anwar Sadat arrived back from Moscow with a message for Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian president. According to Soviet intelligence, Israel was amassing 10-12 brigades in preparation for an invasion of Syria. Heightening the sense of urgency, the Soviets warned that an invasion would take place within a of couple days. Nasser was told to

expect "an Israeli invasion of Syria immediately after Israel's Independence Day, with the aim of overthrowing the Damascus regime."[2] It was at this point that the localized exchange between Israel and Syria began to unravel into a full-blown regional crisis.

By this time, tension had been building for months. Border exchanges slowly intensified with Fatah increasing the number of raids on Israeli water construction sites and areas in the demilitarized zones. Hoping to deter further guerilla raids, Israel responded with disproportionately devastating attacks as evidenced by its massive raid on the West Bank town of Es-Samu. The border exchanges reached a symbolic height on April 7 when Israel responded to Syrian firing on an Israeli tractor in the demilitarized zone by shooting down six Syrian MiG 21s (fighter jets) and pursuing the remaining MiGs into Damascus.[3] By flying its jets over Damascus on April 7, the anniversary of the Syrian Baath party, Israel demonstrated to the populace celebrating below that they were fully exposed to Israeli air power.[4] Like many other retaliatory raids, this demonstration of Israeli military strength did not have the deterrence effect it was intended to have. Instead, Syria used the incident to put additional pressure on Egypt to fulfill its commitment under the mutual defense agreement of 1966.[5]

During these months of increasing tensions, Nasser had maintained a position of nonintervention, claiming that Egypt's obligation to defend Syria only applied to Israeli conquest of Arab territory and not to localized exchanges of fire.[6] This position became increasingly difficult for Nasser to maintain as his Arab neighbors scathingly criticized him. He was taunted by Jordan for "hiding behind the skirts of UNEF [the United Nations Emergency Force]" after the Es-Samu incident and suffered excruciating humiliation for his inaction in response to the April 7 attack.[7] Nasser was so "stung by the criticism of his Arab foes" that the prospect of further embarrassment resulting from inaction started to appear even more dreadful than a conflict with Israel.[8]

Egypt's inaction also became very difficult to defend given the provocative Israeli rhetoric hinting at plans to take military action against Syria. Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol declared, "in view of the 14 incidents in the past month alone, we may have to adopt measures no less drastic than those of 7 April."[9] In another public speech, Eshkol announced that he intended to empower the Israeli Defense Forces so that they would be capable of repelling aggression and striking "a decisive blow within the enemy territory."[10] A statement made by one senior Israeli military officer on May 12 particularly angered Nasser. Although the source and exact text of the statement have not been verified, Nasser claims the officer said, "Israeli commanders have announced they would carry out military operations against Syria in order

to occupy Damascus and overthrow the Syrian government."[11] As Nasser would describe on May 23, it was "a very important statement," one that made it increasingly difficult for him to justify Egypt's continued inaction.[12] An Israeli threat to invade Damascus could not be rationalized as a local dispute and would certainly require an Egyptian response under the mutual defense agreement of 1966.

Unable to deny the applicability of the mutual defense agreement and unwilling to endure another episode of humiliation, Nasser was left with no choice but to take action if Israel began to take steps to realize their threats. It was in this state of mind that Nasser received the Soviet message about Israeli troop build-up and concrete plans to invade Damascus on May 13. Once Syria publicized the warning delivered by the Soviets, Nasser could not ignore it without destroying what was left of his reputation throughout the Arab world.[13] The Israeli threats just two days prior, coupled with the Soviet information, "led Nasser to believe that the situation was getting out of hand" and so he mobilized Egyptian troops into the Sinai.[14]

The ordering of troops into the Sinai set into motion a chain reaction that would eventually propel Egypt and Israel into a war that neither seemingly wanted. Nasser stationed troops in the Sinai as a "purely defensive" measure to ensure that Egypt could swiftly come to Syria's aid if Israel attacked.[15] To secure the safety of UNEF forces stationed at checkpoints where the Egyptian Army was now deployed, Egyptian General Mohammed Fawzi requested the removal of the forces stationed at those specific positions.[16] U Thant, the UN Secretary General, responded that a partial removal was not an option because it undermined the effectiveness of the force. As a result, Nasser had no choice but to request the full withdrawal of UNEF.[17] With UNEF forces removed from all positions, including the port of the city of Sharm el-Sheikh, Egyptian troops now controlled the Straits of Tiran. At this point, Nasser had reestablished his position as leader of the Arab world and garnered enthusiastic support from Algiers to Baghdad.[18] Intoxicated by his recent political success and reassured by all the messages of support, Nasser decided to close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping on May 23.[19] Israel had made it clear after the Suez crisis in 1956 that closure of the Straits was a *casus belli*, or justification for war, and warranted an Israeli response. After a failed attempt to reopen the Straits with an international regatta and Egyptian rhetoric threatening the destruction of Israel, Israel launched the first attack of what would be a brief yet momentous war in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The three weeks preceding the war unfolded with a significant amount of momentum. As the crisis unfolded into war, it became increasingly difficult for any party to intervene and alter the course of the

events. A variety of factors contributed to this increasing force, including poor Soviet judgment, American impotence, Nasser's miscalculations and Israel's cabinet divisions.[20] Despite the increasing momentum, could war have been averted in 1967? I assert that war could have been prevented if Israel had not made threats about invading Damascus and if the Soviet Union did not plant misinformation about Israeli troop buildup on May 13. The combination of these two events within three days created enough initial energy for increasing tensions to unravel into war. The Israeli threats between May 11 and 13 created "the spark that ignited the long accumulating tinder" while the Soviet message added enough oil to the fire that it became nearly impossible to put it out with a diplomatic solution.[21]

If Israel had not made threats to invade Damascus and the Soviets had not sent a warning about Israeli troop build-up, May and June of 1967 would have unfolded very differently. Without any evidence of Israel's intent to invade Syria, Nasser would have been able to maintain Egypt's position of nonintervention by denying the applicability of the mutual defense agreement. The public statements made by Eshkol and other senior military officials revealed how far Israel was willing to go to put an end to the Fatah raids, which included invading Syria. While there is no evidence that Israel actually planned to invade Damascus, the Syrians were able to manipulate the threats to support their claims that Israel posed a serious threat. On May 13, just days after Eshkol hinted at the possibility of invading Syria if necessary, the Syrian Foreign Ministry convened ambassadors from countries on the Security Council to describe the plan that the "imperialist and Zionist quarters" created to undermine the Syrian regime.[22] The Ministry claimed that the plot was revealed by the "statements of Zionist Chief of Staff Rabin."[23] The Soviet warning on May 13 supported Syria's depiction and gave it even more leverage to pressure Nasser into taking action. Syria's success in leveraging the Israeli threats and Soviet warning is evident in Nasser's resignation speech. In the June 9 speech, he asserted:

> "All of us know how the crisis started… there was an enemy plan for the invasion of Syria and the statements by his politicians and his military leaders openly said so. Sources of our Syrian brothers were categorical on this…Add to this the fact that our friends in the Soviet Union warned the parliamentary delegation…that there was a premeditated plan against Syria. We considered it our duty not to accept this silently. This was the duty of Arab brotherhood."[24]

Nasser cited as primary evidence of a plot against Syria the Israeli threats, Soviet warning and Syrian sources, demonstrating the weight he gave to

those three sources. If the Israeli threats and Soviet warning had not occurred, all that would remain are empty Syrian calls for assistance, which had been the status quo since April 7. Those two pieces of evidence were crucial for providing Syria leverage. Without it, Syria would have been unable to get Nasser to mobilize troops in the Sinai.

Indeed, Syria and much of the Arab world would have continued to criticize Nasser for being weak and ignoring his responsibilities to Syria; however, Nasser would have been able to keep Egypt out of the conflict by citing the localized nature of the exchange. Just as he had kept Egypt out of the conflict since the April 7 incident, Nasser would have been able continue to weather the criticism without taking action. Besides the Israeli threats and Soviet warning, there was nothing distinct about the week preceding May 14: the day Nasser gave the order to mobilize troops in the Sinai. Egypt was still reluctant to enter into a confrontation with Israel given the severe internal economic crisis and the fact that the best third of its army was bogged down in Yemen.[25] The excerpt from Nasser's resignation speech confirms that Egypt had not wanted to initiate any kind of aggression. According to Nasser, it was Israel that started the crisis with a plan of invasion and Egypt was simply reacting to the threat by mobilizing troops.

If Nasser had not been pressured into mobilizing troops, there would not have been a need to request the removal of UNEF. As discussed earlier, Egypt had requested the partial removal of UNEF to ensure that Egyptian forces would not be inhibited by the UNEF presence at certain check points and to ensure the safety of UNEF troops.[26] There would not have been such a concern if Egyptian troops were not deployed into the Sinai in the first place. Without an Egyptian request for removal, UNEF would have been able to remain at all its posts, including Sharm el-Sheikh. With UNEF forces still deployed in Sharm el-Sheikh, Nasser would not have needed to redeploy Egyptian troops to the port city nor would he have wanted to do so. If Nasser ordered troops into Sharm el-Sheikh, he would have been faced with the dilemma of risking war with Israel by closing the Straits or allowing Israeli ships through and facing ridicule by his Arab neighbors. His decision to request only the partial removal of UNEF demonstrates that Nasser had not wanted to be put in such a position. If he had wanted to occupy Sharm el-Sheikh and close the Straits of Tiran from the beginning, he would have asked for a complete removal of UNEF in his initial request. He made it clear that he wanted quite the contrary. To remove any potential ambiguity in his position, Nasser deleted the word "all" from the sentence in the drafted letter to UNEF General Rikhye that stated: "I request that you give orders to withdraw all of these troops immediately."[27] Even though the previous sentence in the letter made it clear that "all of these" referred only

to those troops along Egypt's eastern border, Nasser wanted to "prevent any misunderstanding regarding the continued presence of UNEF in Gaza and in Sharm al-Sheikh."[28]

Without Egyptian troops occupying Sharm el-Sheikh, Israeli ships would have been permitted to pass through the Straits of Tiran, leaving Israel without a *casus belli* with which to justify a preemptive attack on Egypt. During the May crisis, Israel argued that Nasser had initiated the aggression by closing the Straits of Tiran, committing "a blatant act of war."[29] Because Nasser had initiated hostilities and America failed to reopen the Straits with an international regatta, Israel was confident that it would not jeopardize American support if it launched a preemptive attack. Walt Rostow, the U.S. National Security Advisor, had declared, "Any Israeli unilateral action could be justified only after all peaceful measures had been exhausted."[30] Israel had cooperated with the U.S. in an effort to resolve the conflict peacefully but those attempts had failed. The Israelis also reasoned that if the U.S. was willing to "take any or all measures in its power to open the Straits," it could not really fault Israel for "taking all measures in its power."[31]

In a world where Nasser does not close the Straits of Tiran, Israel would not have been able to launch an attack on Egypt without undermining its relationship with the U.S., something it had no intention of doing. If Israel had launched an attack it would have appeared as the aggressor, which it very much wanted to avoid. President Lyndon Johnson asserted during the May crisis, "I think it is a necessity that Israel should never make itself seem responsible in the eyes of America and the world for making war. Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go it alone."[32] Secretary of State Dean Rusk also noted the repercussions of Israeli aggression, "if Israel fires first, it'll have to forget the U.S."[33] Israel did not want to jeopardize its "special relationship" with the U.S. because it relied heavily on American military and monetary aid.[34] Israel's concern for maintaining a good relationship with America was evident in Eshkol's decision to delay a preemptive attack at Johnson's request despite the intense pressure he was experiencing from the Israeli public and generals.[35] Because Israel valued U.S. support so dearly and Egypt had not initiated any hostilities, it would not have launched a preemptive attack on Egypt in June 1967.

Without an Israeli attack, it would appear as though war would have been averted in June 1967. Removing the Soviet warning of May 13 and the Israeli threats of May 11-13 would have fundamentally altered the way the last two weeks of May unfolded. Like the first two weeks of May, Nasser would have continued to be berated by his Arab neighbors for not coming to Syria's defense, but he would have been able to maintain his position because Syria would not have appeared to be in any imminent danger. The conflict

would have remained localized, with Fatah using guerilla tactics to sabotage Israeli water construction sites and Israel retaliating with disproportionate force.

Counterfactual 2: Amer's Resignation

A cautious prime minister feeling immense internal cabinet pressure, an outspoken chief of staff seeking to provoke the Egyptians into war, a disparaged president longing for his once enviable position in the Arab world, and finally, an incompetent minister of defense yearning for an opportunity to redeem himself from his 1956 failure –these characters were instrumental in shaping the outcome of the Six Day War and the crisis that preceded it. With varying degrees of success, Levi Eshkol, Yitzhak Rabin, Gamal Abdel Nasser and Abdel Hakim Amer all attempted to manage the May crisis in a way that advanced their distinct goals. While all four personalities played a significant role in shaping the crisis, Amer was the most successful in manipulating the crisis to his benefit. Ever since his disastrous failure in the 1956 Suez crisis, he was anxious to redeem himself and sought to do so through another armed conflict with Israel. Seizing the opportunity that presented itself in May 1967, Amer manipulated Nasser into escalating tensions with Israel to a point that would inevitably mean war. Contemporary Egyptian explanations place much of the blame for stumbling into the war on Amer, portraying Nasser as a leader hoping to win a political victory without inciting a war and Amer as a trigger-happy minister of defense "looking for a military confrontation from the start."[36] I argue that Amer was so instrumental to the outbreak of war in June 1967 that, had he not been minister of defense, war could have been averted. More specifically, if Nasser had accepted Amer's resignation after the 1956 crisis, a major armed conflict between Egypt and Israel in June 1967 would have been averted.

To understand how Amer was the driving force in the outbreak of the Six Day War, it is important to have a basic understanding of the relationship he had with Nasser. The two first met in military college and began what would become a "lifelong" friendship, developing a strong sense of trust in and loyalty for one another.[37] After serving together as young officers and later plotting the 1952 revolution together, their friendship grew stronger and they became much more like brothers, even naming their sons after each other.[38] When Nasser became president in 1956, he appointed Amer as minister of defense and commander in chief of the armed forces even though many other officers were much more qualified for the position.[39] Because Amer's "main qualification for the job was not his military achievements but the fact that he was the man Nasser trusted most," it was not surprising that Amer struggled during the 1956 Suez crisis.[40] While Egyptian troops exchanged fire with the

Israelis in October 1956, Nasser found Amer "paralysed with indecision in his headquarters, tears pouring down his face."[41] Sorely embarrassed by the Egyptian defeat, Amer offered his resignation, which Nasser refused to accept, presumably out of loyalty.[42] Instead, the Egyptian president put Amer under constant surveillance, stating that he "would rather resign" than have Amer purged.[43]

Even though Amer maintained his posts as minister of defense and chief of staff of the army, his friendship with Nasser deteriorated. He grew very envious of Nasser's following and public presence. In fear of Amer turning the army against him, Nasser attempted to reassert some control over the armed forces but was ultimately unsuccessful due to resistance from Amer.[44] Nasser did not want to risk a showdown and still needed Amer to keep the army under control so he abandoned his goal of reasserting control over the armed forces. Despite the lack of trust between the two, strange vestiges of their friendship remained. By the early 1960s, the two were as much rivals as they were friends.[45]

When tensions began to rise between Syria and Israel in 1967, Amer saw an opportunity to redeem himself from his disastrous failure in 1956 and planned to take advantage of the opportunity by exploiting his special relationship with Nasser. At all the major turning points in the May crisis, Amer's actions pushed Egypt closer to war with Israel. The first critical juncture was the Soviet message about Israeli troop concentrations along the Syrian border. Despite Israeli evidence showing otherwise and testimony from Egyptian chief of staff Muhammad Fawzi confirming the Israeli evidence, Nasser believed that Israel was amassing troops.[46] After all, his close friend and advisor, Amer, boasted of seeing aerial photographs confirming Israeli troop build-up along the border.[47]

Uncertain how to proceed with the Soviet warning, Nasser met with Amer to discuss the potential ramifications of an Israeli invasion of Syria and to decide on an appropriate response.[48] Nasser worried that if he failed to intervene and Israel invaded Syria, the Ba'ath regime would topple, generating a domino effect that could undermine the stability of all progressive Arab regimes in the region including Iraq, Yemen and even Egypt.[49] Moreover, the mutual defense pact with Syria would be proven useless, undercutting Egypt's stature both in the Arab world and in the eyes of the Soviets. Nasser feared that "the Eastern front could collapse" as a result, and that "Egypt could find itself facing Israel alone."[50] As much as Nasser wanted to avoid such a scenario, he was reluctant to intervene given Egypt's current commitment in Yemen and its economic struggles. Unable to definitively agree on a plan of action, Amer and Nasser resolved to have the general staff convene the next day to determine the appropriate military response.[51] After

military intelligence chief Muhammad Ahmad Sadiq reviewed the Soviet information and conferred with other generals, Amer "took control of the meeting" and made the final decision to put all troops on the highest alert and to call the reserves to active duty.[52] Over the next two days, the Egyptian army moved into the Sinai, reassuring Syria of its commitment to the mutual defense pact and signaling to Israel that it was prepared to enter into an armed conflict if necessary.

The mobilization of troops in the Sinai created an opportunity for Nasser to address the presence of UNEF forces on Egyptian territory. Repeatedly taunted for hiding behind the "skirts of UNEF," Nasser was anxious to have part of the force removed. General Fawzi and Mohamed Heikal, both close advisors to Nasser, recall that Nasser and Amer had made it clear long before 1967 "that they wanted to seize on any international or regional situation which [would] permit doing away with that force [UNEF]."[53] According to Heikal's 1967: Al-Infijar, the prospect of removing UNEF and redeploying the Egyptian army was first discussed at the third Arab summit in 1964 and then again by Amer in 1966.[54] While both Amer and Nasser agreed that UNEF should be removed, they differed on the extent of the withdrawal. Seeing UNEF as an impediment to his ultimate goal of leading Egypt to a glorious victory against Israel, Amer wanted full withdrawal of UNEF. On the other hand, Nasser only wanted a redeployment of troops away from the Israeli border and was unwilling to assume responsibility for defending Gaza or deploying troops into Sharm al-Shiekh.[55] He was only interested in a political demonstration of force that would boost his prestige in the Arab world, and unlike Amer, had no intention of pushing Egypt into an armed clash with Israel.[56] Seeking to avoid any ambiguity on this point, Nasser asked Amer to replace "withdraw" with "redeploy" in the letter the military drafted for General Fawzi to send to UNEF General Rikhye.[57] Amer replied that the letter had already been sent but that he would try to stop the courier en route; he informed Nasser later that he was unable to intercept the message.[58]

Upon receiving the request, General Rikhye advised UN Secretary General U Thant that a partial withdrawal would not be possible without undermining the effectiveness of the entire force. Agreeing with Rikhye, U Thant informed Nasser that he would not authorize a partial withdrawal of UNEF but that Egypt had the right to request a complete removal of UNEF if it sought to do so. With the entire Arab world watching, Nasser couldn't afford the public humiliation of retracting his initial request so he asked for the entire force to be removed.

With UNEF forces removed and Egyptian forces now deployed at Sharm al-Sheikh, the Egyptian president was forced to address the issue of

Israeli shipping through the Straits of Tiran. Nasser knew that closing the Straits would allow him to reestablish himself as leader of the Arab world, but he was reluctant to do so for fear of pulling Egypt into a military conflict it could not handle. Relying on the expertise of his close friend and minister of defense, Nasser consulted Amer about Egypt's military preparedness for an armed confrontation with Israel. Amer reassured Nasser of Egypt's military supremacy and its ability to deter Israeli action, asserting, "on my neck, the army is prepared for the situation with both defensive and offensive plans."[59] Amer's confidence in Egypt's military supremacy was central in Nasser's calculation of the benefits and potential costs associated with closing the Straits.[60] If Egypt could win in a military confrontation with Israel or at least defend itself until the superpowers stepped in to impose a ceasefire, closing the Straits would be the strategic choice. He could recover much of the prestige he had lost over the last decade and reestablish himself as leader of the Arab world without risking another embarrassing military defeat. Because of Amer's assurance that Egypt was prepared to confront Israel militarily, "Nasser's gamble became bolder and more provocative."[61] To the delight of Amer, Nasser decided to close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping on May 23 and brought Egypt one step closer to war with Israel.

Since the Suez crisis, Israel had made it clear that closing the Straits would be considered a *casus belli*, and thus, perceived Nasser's move as an act of war. Up until the closure of the Straits, Israel interpreted Nasser's moves as purely political demonstrations intended to boost his prestige in the Arab world.[62] After May 23, Israel began to see Egypt as a real threat to its security. Even though the closure of the Straits was considered an act of war, the Israeli cabinet was divided on the appropriate response due to American reservations and ambiguity with regard to the nature of the Egyptian threat.

Encouraged by the lack of an American or Israeli response to the closure of the Straits, Amer moved forward with his plans for an offensive attack against Israel—code name Operation Dawn. Orders for the operation came directly from Amer's house, circumventing Supreme Headquarters.[63] Some Egyptian accounts claim that Amer executed the operation in blatant opposition to Nasser's orders, hoping to create an opportunity to redeem himself from his 1956 failure. Amer explained to General Murtagi, "Between me and Moshe Dayan there is a feud going back to the Tripartite War…This is my opportunity to teach him a lesson he won't forget and to destroy the Israeli army."[64]

As Amer redeployed the Egyptian armed forces in preparation for Operation Dawn, Nasser received news from the Soviet ambassador that plans for the offensive had been revealed to Israel.[65] In spite of Amer's best attempts to convince him otherwise, Nasser called off the operation in fear

of Egypt appearing as the aggressor. Even though the operation was called off, news of its existence was enough to heighten Israel's sense of emergency. News of Operation Dawn confirmed that Nasser's closure of the Straits was, indeed, an act of aggression and that another Egyptian offensive was imminent. Using Operation Dawn and Amer's redeployment of troops as evidence of an imminent Egyptian attack, the hawkish members of the Israeli cabinet were able to persuade the rest of the cabinet and the United States that a preemptive attack was necessary. Frightened by the prospect of an Arab attack from all sides, prime minister Eshkol gave the orders to launch a surprise attack on Egypt's air force on June 5, 1967. The following six days would prove to be an even more humiliating defeat for Egypt, and especially for Amer, than the 1956 war had been.

Throughout the May crisis Amer proved to be a powerful force, pushing Egypt progressively closer to an armed conflict with Israel. I assert that Amer was so instrumental to the outbreak of war that if Nasser had accepted his resignation after the 1956 crisis, a major armed conflict between Egypt and Israel would not have occurred in June 1967. If Nasser had accepted Amer's resignation in 1956, General Mohammed Fawzi would have likely replaced Amer as minister of defense during the May crisis of 1967. Given that Nasser selected Fawzi to replace Amer and rebuild the Egyptian army in the aftermath of the Six Day War, it is not unfathomable that he would have chosen Fawzi a decade earlier to similarly clean up after Amer's mishandling of the 1956 war. As Nasser's chief advisor on foreign affairs and a longtime friend, General Fawzi was one of the few individuals in Nasser's small circle of trusted staff.[66]

Unlike Amer, Fawzi was a diplomat and supported Nasser unconditionally, never seeking to undermine him. These two characteristics would have been very consequential for how the May crisis would have played out had Fawzi held the position of minister of defense in 1967. The decision to mobilize troops, request the removal of UNEF, close the Straits of Tiran and execute Operation Dawn were, in large part, the product of Amer's attempts to manipulate Nasser into starting a war with Israel to redeem himself. As a diplomat, General Fawzi would have emphasized the risks involved with escalating tensions further, advising Nasser against pursuing actions that would lead to war. Moreover, General Fawzi had no personal incentive, like Amer did, to enter into a war because he had not publicly embarrassed himself during the 1956 crisis. As a Nasser loyalist, General Fawzi would not have tried to undermine Nasser's desired position by misinforming him about Egypt's military capacity or executing an operation in blatant opposition of Nasser's wishes.

These distinctions would have become salient on May 13, when

Nasser received the Soviet message about Israeli troop build-up. Reluctant to take immediate action, Nasser sent General Fawzi to see first hand if there was any truth to the warning. Upon returning, Fawzi informed Nasser and the general staff that there was no abnormal troop build-up, but he was drowned out by the higher-ranking Amer, who claimed to have seen aerial photographs of Israeli troop concentrations. In the absence of Amer's false testimony, Fawzi's report would have played a more central role in Nasser's decision about whether or not to mobilize troops. Given Egypt's military presence in Yemen and its internal economic troubles, there is a good chance that Nasser would have been deterred from mobilizing troops, knowing that Israel did not pose an imminent threat to Syria. Nevertheless, one might object that Nasser would have mobilized troops in an attempt to boost his prestige in the Arab world. Even so, the Six Day War could still have been averted if General Fawzi was minister of defense.

If Fawzi had been minister of defense in 1967, Nasser would have been able to more accurately calculate the potential costs associated with closing the Straits of Tiran and conclude that doing so would not be in his best interest. Without Amer's false reassurances about Egypt's military strength, Nasser would have had a more realistic understanding of Egypt's capabilities. Unlike Amer, General Fawzi had no incentive to misrepresent Egypt's military preparedness. In fact, he did quite the opposite in 1967. Agreeing with the assessment of many other Egyptian commanders, Fawzi reported that the Egyptian army was ill prepared and disorganized for an armed conflict with Israel.[67] As a result, he was very much opposed to war, calling the reoccupation of Sharm al-Sheikh a "needless provocation" and Operation Dawn "disastrous."[68] Had Amer been absent from the cabinet, Fawzi's assessment of the armed forces and his recommendation against occupying Sharm al-Sheikh would have been sufficient to persuade Nasser against closing the Straits. Between the internal economic struggles and the Yemen quagmire, Nasser's regime would not have been able to survive another embarrassing defeat by the Israeli Defense Forces. Fawzi's doubt about Egypt's military capabilities would have sufficed to deter Nasser from closing the Straits.

If the Straits remained open to Israeli shipping, Israel would not have launched a preemptive attack on June 5. In the absence of a *casus belli*, Israel would have continued to perceive Nasser's mobilization of troops and removal of UNEF as purely political demonstrations, not posing any imminent threat to its security. If Israel did not feel threatened by a looming Egyptian attack, it would not have launched a preemptive attack and would have focused instead on its internal economic and immigration struggles.[69] Even if one objects that Israel did want to launch an offensive, it would not

have been able to do so without undermining its alliance with the United States, a relationship it heavily depended on for economic and military aid.

Similarly restrained by its alliance with the Soviet Union and its internal economic woes, Egypt would not have launched an offensive attack on Israel. As discussed earlier, Nasser had no intention of firing the first shot, but instead, hoped to boost his prestige in the Arab world through bluffing and propaganda. Without Amer present to undermine this position, Nasser would have been able to enjoy his political victories from early on in the May crisis and avoid war with Israel. With both sides unwilling to attack first, it appears as though war would have been averted in June 1967. If only Nasser had accepted Amer's resignation after the Suez crisis, Egypt could have avoided another embarrassing defeat.

Counterfactual 3: Delayed Soviet Intervention

Discussion of the U.S.S.R.'s role in the Six Day War tends to be centered around its warning to Egypt and Syria on May 13 about Israeli troop build-up. Scholars describe the Soviet move as highly manipulative, citing the misinformation as a means of coaxing Egypt into coming to Syria's defense. Indeed, the Soviet warning about Israeli troop build-up played an important role in the build-up to war. However, the more crucial Soviet action during the crisis was what it failed to do. The Soviet failure to prevent Nasser from closing the Straits of Tiran was far more instrumental to the outbreak of war than its message about Israeli troop build-up. In fact, I assert that if the Soviet Union had taken a stern position against closing the Straits and had threatened Nasser against pursuing such action, the Six Day War could have been averted.

The crisis began to unfold on May 13, 1967 when Moscow sent a message to Syria and Egypt warning that Israel was amassing 10-12 brigades in preparation for invading Damascus.[70] The message had been fabricated by the Soviet Union in an attempt to induce Nasser to come to Syria's defense under the mutual defense agreement signed in 1966. The U.S.S.R. was concerned for the safety and stability of the pro-Soviet Ba'ath regime, which at the time, had been experiencing internal unrest as well as persistent retaliatory raids from Israel.[71] The Israeli raids were intensifying, peaking on April 7 with Israeli fighter jets shooting down six Syrian MiGs and following the remainder into Damascus.[72] The U.S.S.R. was aware that a conflagration between Syria and Israel would certainly lead to "a serious Syrian defeat" that would likely result in the removal of the pro-Soviet regime.[73] Lacking confidence in the "Syrian hotheads'" willingness to quell the Fatah attacks or make concessions to resolve the internal crisis, the Soviet Union sought to enlist the help of the Egyptians.[74]

In response to the Soviet warning about Israeli troop build-up, Nasser mobilized troops in the Sinai, going far beyond what the Soviets had intended. Nevertheless, the U.S.S.R. thought it could benefit from Nasser's mobilization. The Soviets were confident that the U.S. was too preoccupied with Vietnam to get involved in the Middle East and thus saw it as a unique opportunity to strengthen its position in the region without risking a direct confrontation with the U.S.[75] Even though Nasser's mobilization of troops caused some worry, the Soviets were confident that neither Egypt nor Israel was in a position to start a military confrontation. From the Soviet perspective, Eshkol's indecisiveness and perceived weakness along with a series of internal factors including an economic recession and low immigration made Israel an unlikely candidate for initiating hostilities.[76] Similarly, the Soviets believed Egypt was not militarily capable of winning a war against Israel and would not seek to initiate hostilities, especially if the Soviet Union had opposed such action. As a result, the Soviet Union decided to retroactively support Nasser's mobilization of troops, seeing it as an opportunity to ensure Syria's security, deepen Nasser's dependency on the U.S.S.R. and recover some of Nasser's prestige in the Arab world. [77]

Nasser misinterpreted this support along with Soviet messages of cooperation and friendship as military backing if Egypt were to enter into a military confrontation with Israel.[78] The Soviet Union was very careful in declaring its support of Egypt, only using general terms of "support" and "help" and offering to defend only the "lawful interests of the Arab States."[79] Adding to the miscommunication, Nasser had interpreted the Soviet warning about Israeli troop build up as "encouragement to move against Israel."[80] These misperceptions created a false sense of security for Nasser because he wrongly assumed that the Soviet Union would come to its defense militarily if armed conflict erupted or use its international clout to quickly end a conflict diplomatically as it had during the Suez Crisis. This false sense of security coupled with a desire to repair his reputation in the Arab world led Nasser to continue to escalate tensions with Israel by requesting the removal of UNEF at particular checkpoints. UN Secretary General U Thant replied that partial removal would not be possible because it would undercut the effectiveness of the force.[81] Tempted to put an end to the taunts for "hiding behind the skirts of UNEF" and reassured by Soviet backing, Nasser requested the complete withdrawal of UNEF.[82] The Soviet Union was surprised by the request because Nasser had not consulted them prior to making the decision.[83] U Thant's speedy compliance with the request also came as a shock.[84]

With UNEF removed and Egyptian troops deployed in the port city of Sharm al-Sheikh, Nasser had to decide whether or not to close the

Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. The mobilization of troops in the Sinai and the removal of UNEF enabled Nasser to recover much of the prestige he had lost in recent years.[85] Intoxicated by his recent political success and the outpouring of support from across the Arab world, he was anxious to regain his position as the uncontested leader of the Arab world, something he believed closing the Straits would give him.[86] Nasser knew that closing the Straits would likely lead to war but he was confident that the Syrian and Egyptian army, along with Soviet backing, could defeat Israel.[87] He was told by his Minister of Defense, Abdel Hakim Amer, that the Egyptian army "[was] prepared for the situation with both defensive and offensive plans" and thus, remained confident that the Egyptian army could at least hold off Israel long enough for the Soviets to intervene.[88]

At this point, Nasser was still under the assumption that the Soviets would intervene on Egypt's behalf if necessary. All the anti-imperialism rhetoric and messages of friendship and cooperation were still in the back of Nasser's mind. The absence of a strong Soviet response following Nasser's mobilization of troops and the removal of UNEF confirmed his initial interpretation regarding the Soviet warning about troop build-up: the U.S.S.R. wanted Egypt to take action against Israel. Moreover, Moscow described the withdrawal of UN troops as "justified" and a "strong move," giving Nasser the impression that he had made the right decision.[89] Given his confidence in Soviet backing and Egyptian military strength, Nasser concluded that it was in his best interest to close the Straits.

Closure of the Straits on May 22 was a turning point in the May crisis. Up to that point, Israel had viewed the mobilization of troops and the removal of UNEF purely as demonstrations intended to boost Nasser's position in the Arab world, not as serious threats to Israel's security.[90] Because closure of the Straits was considered a *casus belli* Israel began to see Egypt as a real threat to its security. Demonstrating that he was well aware of how his move would alter the direction of the crisis, Nasser stated on May 26, "occupying Sharm-el sheikh meant a conflict with Israel."[91] Unwilling to get involved in such a conflict, the Soviets reminded Nasser that it had only promised to neutralize the U.S. if it decided to get involved but that "its support would not go beyond that."[92] The Soviet clarification began to chisel away at the solid backing Nasser had believed he had from the U.S.S.R.[93] Recognizing the vulnerability of Egypt's new position, Nasser told Dmitrii Pozhidaev, Soviet ambassador to the UAR that "it was of utmost importance…that the Soviet Union declare its support of the just struggle of all the Arab peoples."[94]

The Soviet Union had no interest in providing the type of support Nasser desired if it entailed getting involved militarily if a war broke out. After May 22, the U.S.S.R. realized that the crisis had spiraled out of control

and that their previous "hands-off" approach was no longer advantageous. In an effort to prevent armed conflict from erupting, Moscow activated the hotline with Washington and gave explicit instruction to Nasser to avoid initiating any hostilities.[95] These instructions were repeated during talks between Egyptian War Minister Badran and Soviet leaders on May 25 when Kosygin, a Soviet statesman, emphasized that "it was now time to cooperate" and that the Soviet Union would not support Egypt if it initiated hostilities.[96] The Soviet warning crystallized what had been ambiguous to Nasser in the two weeks prior to closing the Straits: Moscow did not want Egypt to initiate any hostilities against Israel. Soviet reservations weighed heavily on Nasser, and as a result, he decided to cancel Operation Dawn, an offensive on Israel planned for May 27.[97] Nevertheless, the Soviet threat had come too late. Nasser had already initiated the first act of war by closing the Straits and was intent on keeping them closed, making armed conflict almost inevitable.[98] After delaying plans for an ultimately futile U.S. attempt to reopen the Straits, Israel launched the first attack on June 5. The Israeli strike on Egypt's air force would mark the first day of what would be six days of unprecedented destruction and ultimately, a humiliating defeat for the Arab world.

The May crisis that preceded the outbreak of war seemed to unfold without much Soviet resistance until the very end. The Soviets calculated that a certain level of escalation would strengthen their position in the Middle East so they did not do much to restrain Egypt in the beginning. However, once armed conflict became likely after the closure of the Straits, the U.S.S.R. took steps to prevent further escalation. It is important to note that the Soviet failure to prevent war was not a function of its inability to restrain Egypt but instead a result of its timing. It had decided to restrain Nasser too late into the crisis, not realizing that the start of war had been marked by the closure of the Straits. I assert that if the Soviet Union had warned Nasser against closing the Straits after his request for the removal of UNEF, the Six Day War could have been averted. Indeed, "there is not the slightest doubt that if at the decisive moment, before or immediately after the announcement of the blockade, the Soviets had adopted a resolute and clear attitude of 'anti-imperialism—yes; war against Israel—no,' the war would have not taken place."[99]

If the Soviets had threatened Nasser after the withdrawal of UNEF, he would not have closed the Straits of Tiran. Even without a Soviet threat, Nasser had serious "hesitations, doubts and second thoughts" about closing the Straits given the likelihood of war erupting.[100] He had not wanted war, but rather had wished to restore his reputation by increasing tension and then exploiting Soviet diplomatic support to quell the situation.[101] Egyptian

troops had occupied Sharm al-Sheikh on May 20, but it took Nasser three days to announce the closure of the Straits, revealing the extent to which these reservations weighed on his decision.[102] Given Nasser's preexisting reservations about closing the Straits, a Soviet threat to withdraw support would have been more than sufficient to deter him from pursuing such action.

Heavily dependent on the financial and diplomatic backing of the U.S.S.R., Nasser would not have risked Soviet support by closing the Straits. By 1967 the U.S.S.R. had become Egypt's "major international benefactor and protector," providing unequivocal diplomatic support and supplying over $1.5 billion worth of military equipment to Egypt.[103] Of particular importance was the Soviet Union's persistent support of Egypt against Israel, which was most apparent at a UN meeting when the U.S.S.R. vetoed UN resolutions unfavorable to the Arab states.[104] Soviet support was instrumental to neutralizing U.S. support of Israel on both a diplomatic and financial level. Without it, Egypt would have been far more vulnerable to an Israeli attack and much less capable of defending itself if war broke out. Recognizing that Soviet support of Egypt was more important than recovering lost prestige, Nasser would have agreed to the Soviet request and stopped escalating the conflict after the removal of UNEF. Nasser's decision to cancel Operation Dawn after he received a Soviet threat to withdraw support serves as additional confirmation that he would have abandoned any plans for further escalation, including closure of the Straits.

If Nasser had not closed the Straits of Tiran, Israel would not have launched a preemptive attack on Egypt. Even though Nasser had already escalated the crisis with the mobilization of Egyptian troops in the Sinai and the withdrawal of UNEF, "the crisis was still manageable."[105] As mentioned earlier, Israel was not particularly alarmed by these moves, but rather interpreted them as simple demonstrations intended to boost Nasser's reputation within the Arab world.[106] At that point, Israel had no intention of starting a war and even took measures to prevent it, including restraining Israeli political and military personalities from making provocative statements.[107] Affirming Israel's desire to avoid war, Prime Minister Eshkol stated, "We have no intention of attacking any Arab country or of endangering its security, territory or rights."[108]

An attack preceding any closure of the Straits would not have been advantageous for Israel, for it would have been interpreted as an act of aggression that would have seriously jeopardized Israel's relationship with the United States. Secretary of State Dean Rusk had warned against Israeli aggression, noting, "If Israel fires first, it'll have to forget the U.S."[109] Echoing Rusk's message, Johnson reminded Israel that it would have full

U.S. backing in a conflict with Egypt "unless it decides to go it alone."[110] Given the unprecedented amount of financial and military support Israel was receiving from the U.S., it would not have jeopardized its relationship with the U.S. by attacking Egypt.[111]

In the absence of an Israeli preemptive attack, war would have been averted in June 1967. If Nasser had received explicit instruction from the U.S.S.R. to keep the Straits of Tiran open and to avoid attacking Israel, he would have had very little room to escalate the crisis further. With similar warnings from the U.S. to refrain from shooting the first shot, Israel would have had to rely on purely defensive measures for responding to Nasser's escalatory moves. Instead of producing a bloody and destructive Six Day War, June 1967 would have unfolded in a relatively calm manner. As long as the U.S. and U.S.S.R.'s threats remained credible and their regional allies continued to rely on their support, the deadlock between Egypt and Israel would have persisted.

Comparison

In presenting three distinct counterfactual scenarios, the objective has been to determine whether or not the Six Day War was unavoidable given the political climate and set of relations present in May and June 1967. I assert that the counterfactuals have provided three plausible accounts for how the Six Day War could have been averted, demonstrating that the war was by no means inevitable. I consider the counterfactual scenarios plausible because they all respect the minimal rewrite rule and the cotenability standard to some degree. I will examine the extent to which each scenario meets these two standards in order to make a claim about how compelling each counterfactual is relative to the other two. Such an analysis is highly subjective as it involves identifying the components of a compelling counterfactual and requires establishing a metric for comparing the degree to which each counterfactual has the components. Despite the subjective nature of the analysis, comparing the counterfactuals in some qualitative manner will still be useful for analyzing the relative importance of the different actors and events in the counterfactuals and attributing some degree of responsibility for the war.

Importance of Minimal Rewrite and Cotenability Standards

Before comparing the counterfactuals, it is important to understand the significance of the minimal rewrite rule and the cotenability standard in counterfactual analysis. The minimal rewrite rule requires a counterfactual to be historically consistent with well-established historical facts, eliminating the possibility of far-fetched counterfactuals that radically alter the temporal landscape.[112] To meet the minimal rewrite standard, a counterfactual must a)

begin with the real world, as it was known at the time, and b) avoid undoing the past and rewriting large periods of history.[113] The minimal rewrite rule seems to be an intuitive part of a compelling counterfactual. After all, if I wrote a fourth counterfactual that made the Soviet Union democratic, it would certainly be less compelling than the other counterfactuals simply because it would require a complete overhaul of over 40 years of history. Such an overhaul might even be sufficient for questioning the existence of a May crisis in the first place. If the Soviet Union had not been ideologically opposed to the U.S., would there have been a Cold War? Would Egypt have had enough military and financial resources to provoke tensions? When a counterfactual attempts to rewrite such a large part of history many uncertainties arise, making it very difficult for the counterfactual to provide any conclusive claims for how history might have been different.

The minimal rewrite rule is a necessary part of a plausible counterfactual but it is certainly not sufficient. In addition to respecting the minimal rewrite rule, a counterfactual must also meet the cotenability standard. Cotenability requires that the connecting principles linking the antecedent (what would have been different in the counterfactual) with the consequent (the change in how history unfolded) be consistent with each other and with both the antecedent and consequent.[114] The connecting principles specify what would have to be true in order for the counterfactual to work. They encompass everything from assumptions about weather patterns to theories about how states interact. For example, imagine a man standing in front of a house covered in gasoline and holding a box of matches. In reality, he does not light a match and the house stays covered in oil, but consider a counterfactual scenario where he lights the match (antecedent) and the house lights on fire (consequent). For the counterfactual to work, we need to assume, among other things, that the man was close enough to the house to light it on fire, that there was oxygen in the air, that the man knew how to light a match, that it was not raining, etc.[115]

While the connecting principles appear to be relatively simple in this example, they can be fairly complex, especially when considering counterfactuals that require changing a state's behavior or capacities. Consider a counterfactual world where the American South acquires nuclear weapons (antecedent) during the mid 19th century, and as a result, wins the Civil War (consequent). For this counterfactual to work, we would have to assume that the South had the technology to produce and the capacity to deploy the weapons correctly, that the North did not also have nuclear weapons, that the Confederacy was driven by self-interest, etc. In this case, a Confederacy armed with nuclear weapons (antecedent) would not be cotenable with our beliefs about scientific knowledge and military capabilities at the time

(connecting principles). We could not link the acquiring of nuclear weapons with winning the Civil War without changing our beliefs about the South's ability to successfully deploy nuclear weapons, a military capability it was far from developing. A counterfactual scenario that requires us to undo such foundational assumptions would be highly implausible and not very useful for determining the historical possibilities at a particular juncture in the past.

A compelling counterfactual is one that persuades the reader to believe that history could have easily played out very differently. To persuade the reader in such a way, a compelling counterfactual alters a minor act or event in history (minimal rewrite) and demonstrates how significant changes would result without unreasonably disturbing one's beliefs about the actors or historical landscape (cotenability). The degree to which one counterfactual is more compelling than another will depend on its ability to better approximate the minimal rewrite and cotenability standards.

A framework to compare how closely different counterfactuals adhere to a set of criteria has not been formally established in counterfactual literature, making it difficult to definitively say that one counterfactual is more compelling than another. I will attempt to fill this void by outlining two metrics, which can be used to assess how cotenable and minimally rewritten one counterfactual is relative to another without making any claims about the absolute value of the persuasiveness of the counterfactuals. Indeed, the measurement of such intangible objects is not a science and what I propose will not be perfect. Nevertheless, it is a workable framework within which one can make an informative claim about the *relative* persuasiveness of a counterfactual.

It is important to note that the framework is tailored for idiographic case-study counterfactuals, which analyze particular junctures in the past to determine what was historically possible and impossible within that period of time and particular set of relations among political entities.[116] While the two standards will still be important, the metrics will not necessarily work as well for assessing other types of counterfactuals, such as nomothetic counterfactuals, which are more concerned with applying theoretical generalizations to historical events and identifying lawful regularities across the events.

Using the metrics I put forth, I will demonstrate that the counterfactual requiring stronger Soviet intervention during the May crisis is the most compelling of the three. Since it is the most compelling, I will argue that the Soviet Union should assume a higher degree of negative responsibility for the war than Nasser or Israeli leaders because it was in the best position to prevent the war but failed to do so.

Framework Part 1: Minimal Rewrite

      To measure the degree to which a counterfactual minimally rewrites history, one should examine both the quantity and the significance of the changes in the antecedent. In other words, how many parts of history are rewritten in the counterfactual and how significant are those changes. Looking simply at the number of changes would be an oversimplification that could lead to a counterintuitive assessment of the relative persuasiveness of a counterfactual. Consider the counterfactual discussed earlier where the Six Day War does not occur because the Soviet Union is democratic. If we simply examined the number of rewrites we would conclude that this fourth counterfactual is more compelling than the first counterfactual that requires multiple changes, including Israeli leadership refraining from making provocative statements and the Soviet Union refraining from incorrectly warning Nasser. Even though the hypothetical fourth counterfactual isolates one variable to change, it is a significant one that would require us to undo a much larger section of history.

      While comparing counterfactuals based on the number of rewrites might be relatively clear-cut, incorporating significance into the metric requires a more subjective analysis. To overcome some of the arbitrariness in this analysis, I suggest a general ordering of various types of rewrites based on how many historical facts would have to change to make the antecedent true (See Figure 1). If ordering from least to most significant, the bottom of the hierarchy would include rewrites that involve natural occurrences like heart attacks, tsunami's, earthquakes etc. Given the random nature of these events, it would be very easy to rewrite a single event in history while leaving virtually all other historical facts the same. On the other hand, rewrites involving individual persons require more undoing of historical facts, and thus, would be ordered above natural occurrences. Rewrites that replace individuals in certain capacities or require individuals to choose a different course of action would fall within this tier. "As a human being, subject to all the fragilities of flesh," an individual's personality, risk aversion, emotional intelligence etc. could be easily rewritten without changing many historical facts.[117] Replacing an individual in a particular capacity would require rewriting slightly more historical facts. For example, a counterfactual that replaces Nasser with Sadat as president in 1967 would require a more significant rewrite than a counterfactual that makes Nasser more risk averse because it would require rewriting, among other historical facts, the mechanism through which Nasser came to power in the first place.

      The next rational tier in the ordering would be rewrites that change the actions or characteristics of a group. This tier would include counterfactuals that rewrite the Soviet Union as democratic or require the

Israeli cabinet not to approve a preemptive attack on Egypt. The rewrites in these counterfactuals are an aggregation of rewrites at the individual level, requiring more historical facts to be changed. The distinction here becomes salient if we consider a counterfactual where Nasser decides to declare war on Israel in June 1967 versus a counterfactual where the United States Congress votes to go to war with Egypt. In the first scenario, Nasser is the only one that would have needed to change his mind, whereas in the second scenario, many congresspersons would have had to change their mind, making it a more significant rewrite.

The final tier requiring the most significant rewrite of history includes counterfactuals that attempt to artificially change the capabilities or resources of an actor or group. This group of counterfactuals might give nuclear weapons to the Confederacy or airplanes to the Mayans. They require a much more extensive alteration of historical facts in order for the counterfactual world to even be conceivable. It is important to note that this subset excludes counterfactuals that rewrite one's capabilities or resources through historically conceivable means. While artificially giving the Confederacy nuclear weapons would be a significant rewrite, enhancing the South's capabilities with firepower and financial support from Britain would not be. The latter counterfactual would fall under the less significant collective action rewrite because it requires parliament members to agree on providing support.

In categorizing a rewrite within the framework I have put forth, it is useful to consider whether or not the counterfactual undoes an abnormality in history. A counterfactual that rewrites an abnormal event, person or decision should be ordered below a counterfactual that rewrites an event, person or decision that follows a norm because it requires less historical facts to be altered.[118] Consider a counterfactual that rewrites the first Oslo Accords to end in a stalemate and a counterfactual that rewrites the U.S. support of Israel during the Yom Kippur War. The former rewrite would require less undoing of historical facts because negotiations before and after the Oslo accords ended in a stalemate (i.e. Madrid Peace Conference, Camp David Summit, Taba Summit etc.), making Oslo more of an exception than the norm. In contrast, the United States has been steadfast in its support of Israel so a rewrite changing this norm would require many historical facts to change, making it more significant than the Oslo rewrite.

Framework Part 2: Cotenability

The ordering I have developed for comparing the significance of rewrites in counterfactual scenarios serves as a good starting point for evaluating cotenability. The significance of both rewrites and cotenability

are related in that the more significant a rewrite is the more likely it is that the connecting principles will require one to undo his/her beliefs about the historical landscape, relationships, characters etc. To better understand this relationship, consider two counterfactuals at opposite ends of the rewrite ordering: first, a counterfactual that claims that there would not have been a Six Day War if Nasser had been more risk averse and second, a counterfactual that asserts that the Confederacy would have won the Civil War if it had nuclear weapons. In the first counterfactual, Nasser's personality is only slightly rewritten and does not require us to undo our beliefs about the historical landscape, including our beliefs about Egypt's capabilities, its relationship with Israel, the realist theory of international relations etc. In contrast, to make an argument for how nuclear weapons would allow the Confederacy to win the Civil War, our beliefs about the South's military capacity, scientific knowledge, and war tactics at the time would have to be undone.

While the ordering developed for comparing the significance of rewrites is helpful, it is not sufficient for determining how cotenable one counterfactual is relative to another. The ordering can give us a general idea of where particular types of counterfactuals might fall relative to others on a hypothetical cotenablility scale, but a case by case analysis will be required to make a definitive comparison. To determine the cotenability of a counterfactual scenario, one should identify what would need to be true in order for the antecedent (what is imagined to have been different) to lead to the consequent (how history would have changed as a result), and determine if those connecting principles are consistent with each other as well as the antecedent and the consequent. Once the beliefs that are not cotenable are isolated, one should compare the counterfactuals based on the number of inconsistent beliefs as well as how integral those beliefs are to the antecedent successfully leading to the consequent. Indeed, this component of the comparison is not clear-cut and will require some informed judgment, however, the subjective analysis should not detract from the legitimacy of the metric, but instead, signal its workability. Any metric that attempted to eliminate all subjectivity from the analysis would be denying the complexity of each counterfactual and its connecting principles, and ultimately fail to provide any unique insight.

Application of Framework

Applying the framework to the three counterfactuals about the May crisis will be useful not only for determining which counterfactual is more compelling but also for clarifying how the two metrics should be applied. Using the two metrics, I will prove that the counterfactual requiring stronger

Soviet intervention is the most compelling. For simplicity's sake, I will refer to the counterfactual requiring the Soviet Union to refrain from sending its warning on May 13 and requiring the Israeli leadership to refrain from making provocative statements as the "Provocation counterfactual." The "Amer counterfactual" will refer to the counterfactual requiring Nasser to accept Amer's resignation after the Suez crisis. Finally, the "Soviet counterfactual" will refer to the counterfactual that requires the Soviet Union to intervene after the removal of UNEF and threaten Nasser against closing the Straits of Tiran.

To compare the three counterfactuals based on the first metric, the number of rewrites will first need to be isolated. In terms of the number of events rewritten, the Provocation counterfactual requires the most changes. While the Amer and Soviet counterfactuals only rewrite one event each (the acceptance of a resignation and the sending of a threatening message, respectively), the Provocation counterfactual requires two events to be rewritten: first, the Soviet warning on May 13 and second, the provocative statements of Israeli leadership. Based on the number of rewrites alone, the Provocation counterfactual is less compelling than the Amer and Soviet counterfactuals, and the Amer and Soviet ones are equally compelling.

Incorporating significance, the Provocation counterfactual begins to look even less compelling in comparison to the other two, and the Amer counterfactual begins to look more persuasive than the Soviet one, see Figure 2. The Provocation counterfactual rewrites the actions of both Soviet and Israeli leadership, placing itself in the second tier in terms of significance ordering. Although it is not clear exactly how many individuals would have had to change their votes or refrain from making provocative statements, it can be concluded with relative certainty that more people would have had to change their course of action than in the other two counterfactuals. In the Amer counterfactual, Nasser is the only actor changing his mind about accepting Amer's resignation, which places the rewrite in the third tier of the significance ordering. In the Soviet counterfactual, Soviet leadership has to collectively decide to intervene before they originally intended to, which places it in the second tier of the significance ordering. While the Provocation and Soviet counterfactuals both fall within the second tier of significance, the overall magnitude of the rewrite in the Provocation counterfactual is larger because it involves the additional change of public statements made by Israeli leaders. After taking into account both the number and significance of the rewrites, the Amer counterfactual should be ranked the most minimal, followed by the Soviet counterfactual in second place, and the Provocation counterfactual in third. See Figure 3 for a summary of the arguments supporting this ranking.

Comparing the three counterfactuals based on their ability to meet the cotenability standard will be slightly more difficult than comparing them based on minimal rewrites. To begin, it is important to identify what would need to be true for the antecedent in each counterfactual to lead to the consequent. To avoid getting bogged down in assessing every connecting principle, I will focus on the ones I see as most central and most likely to pose a problem of cotenability.

For the Provocation counterfactual to work, the Soviet Union would have to find it disadvantageous to misinform the Egyptians, and Israeli leaders would have to be deterred from making provocative statements. The first assumption is not consistent with our beliefs about how the Soviet Union perceived its relationship with Egypt and its interests in the Cold War. As Egypt's primary international benefactor, the Soviet Union was confident in its ability to control Egypt. Moscow believed that the Arab-Israeli conflict was yet another proxy war, where the superpowers determined the rules and regulated the international behavior of its satellite powers.[119] Given the instability of the pro-Soviet Baath regime and the Soviet belief that it could control Egypt, it was in the Soviet Union's best interest to plant the misinformation and manipulate Nasser into defending Syria. Even if the initial Soviet warning were rewritten away, the Soviet Union would have been incentivized to spark tensions in some other way later in May or June. Consequently, we cannot hold the belief that Moscow saw the conflict as a proxy war and thought it could control Egypt while also believing that they would not provoke tensions in May 1967. While this first assumption is not cotenable with some of our previously held beliefs, the second assumption about deterring Israeli leadership is. After Israeli leadership made the initial remarks, Eshkol told Rabin to refrain from making any additional provocative statements, pointing out that "this week has had its fill of threats and warnings."[120] Because Eshkol successfully deterred Israeli leaders from making any additional remarks later on in the crisis, our beliefs about Israeli leadership would not have to be undone in order for this part of the counterfactual to be successful.

For the Amer counterfactual to work, Nasser would have had to be willing to accept Amer's resignation in 1956 and Fawzi would have had to remain minister of defense through June 1967. The first assumption runs contrary to our beliefs about Nasser's relationship with Amer. Nasser had a longstanding but complex friendship with Amer where he felt simultaneously deeply loyal to, but also distrustful of, Amer. Despite pressure from his cabinet to accept Amer's resignation in 1956, Nasser rejected it precisely because he had such a unique relationship with Amer.[121] Out of both fear and loyalty, the Egyptian president said "I would rather resign" than have

Amer purged.[122] Thus, our belief about Amer's relationship with Nasser is not cotenable with our assumption that Nasser would have accepted Amer's resignation.

With regard to the second assumption, it is not clear whether or not Fawzi would have remained in the position of minister of defense through 1967. Because Fawzi was a Nasser loyalist and remained minister of defense until Nasser died, there is no reason to believe that he would have been replaced as minister of defense if he had been appointed to the position in 1956. Because nearly a decade separates the antecedent and the consequent in this counterfactual, it is important to consider, however, how Fawzi's appointment as minister of defense in 1956 might have affected Nasser's decisions before the May crisis. As a diplomat and pragmatist, Fawzi could have convinced Nasser to pursue more diplomatic routes with the U.S., avoid deploying troops in Yemen, or even advise against signing the mutual defense pact with Syria. While our belief that Fawzi would have remained minister of defense through 1967 is cotenable with our beliefs about his relationship with Nasser, our belief that the circumstances preceding May 1967 would have remained the same even without Amer is not cotenable with our beliefs about Fawzi's diplomatic nature.

For the Soviet counterfactual to work, the Soviet Union would have had to intervene a few days earlier than it actually did, and Nasser would have had to heed the warning. Because the Soviet Union did intervene, albeit a few days too late, the assumption that the Soviet Union would have wanted to threaten Egypt against closing the Straits is cotenable with our previously held belief that the Soviet Union wanted to avoid war. Moscow "had absolutely no intention of bringing about a conflagration," however, it did hope to escalate tensions enough to consolidate pro-Soviet Arab forces, deepen Nasser's dependency, and raise Nasser's prestige in the Arab world.[123] Moreover, the connecting principle that assumes that Nasser would have heeded the Soviet threat against closing the Straits is cotenable with our beliefs about Egypt's relationship with the Soviet Union. Unwilling to jeopardize Soviet diplomatic, military, or financial support, Nasser called off Operation Dawn when the Soviet Union advised him against making the first offensive move. Thus, it is not inconsistent to assume that Egypt would have responded similarly if the Soviet Union had intervened after the removal of UNEF.

Before combining the individual assessments of cotenability with the minimal rewrite evaluation, it is useful to rank how cotenable each counterfactual is relative to the others. Without any striking inconsistencies, the Soviet counterfactual appears to be the most cotenable (see Figure 2). To assess how cotenable the Provocation counterfactual is relative to the

Amer one, we will need to compare the number of inconsistent beliefs as well as how integral those beliefs are to the antecedent (what is imagined to be different in history) successfully leading to the consequent (the absence of war) for each counterfactual. In the Provocation counterfactual, there is one inconsistency and it pertains to our belief about the Soviet Union's incentive structure and the connecting principle that assumes the Soviet Union would not have provoked tensions in May. The connecting principle is fairly important to the success of the counterfactual but there is a chance that the counterfactual could still work even if the assumption is not made. The crux of the argument in the Provocation counterfactual is that the Soviet message, in tandem with the provocative Israeli statements, created the initial momentum that eventually spiraled out of control. However, there is a chance that the consequent (absence of war) would have still occurred even if the Soviets tried to increase tensions later in May. In other words, Soviet provocation might not have been sufficient to create the initial momentum in the absence of provocative Israeli rhetoric.

Compared to the Provocation counterfactual, the Amer one has both more inconsistent beliefs and beliefs that are more instrumental to the consequent occurring, making it less cotenable overall. The Amer counterfactual is not cotenable in two ways. First, one cannot believe that Nasser was deeply loyal to Amer while also believing that Nasser accepted Amer's resignation in 1956. Second, the assumption that most of the 1967 circumstances would have remained the same if Fawzi became minister of defense in 1956 is not cotenable with our beliefs about Fawzi's diplomatic and pragmatic character. While the first inconsistency renders the Amer counterfactual unsuccessful, the second inconsistency is only remotely worrisome. If we must undo our belief about Nasser's loyalty to Amer in order to accept the antecedent (Nasser's removal of Amer in 1956) as true, then the whole counterfactual is futile. Without a sense of loyalty, Nasser would have never appointed Amer in the first place –let alone felt compelled to follow his advice –making Amer much less potent. On the other hand, if we accept the belief that Nasser was deeply loyal to Amer, then the counterfactual does not work because Nasser would have never accepted Amer's resignation in 1956.

With regard to the second inconsistency, ignoring the potential effects of Fawzi's appointment to minister of defense would not hinder the antecedent (removing Amer) from producing the consequent (absence of war) and thus, is not a significant inconsistency. In comparison to Amer, Fawzi was much more diplomatic and pragmatic, meaning that his actions in the decade separating the Suez and May crisis would have made it less difficult to prevent war. For example, Egypt may not have entered a mutual defense agreement with Syria if Fawzi had been minister of defense. This

would have left Syria without much leverage to pressure Nasser into coming to its defense. Thus, the ordering of the counterfactuals based on their ability to meet the cotenability standard should have the Soviet counterfactual ranked first as the most cotenable, followed by the Provocation one in second, and the Amer one in third. See Figure 3 for a review of the cotenability issues facing each counterfactual.

Integrating this ranking with the minimal rewrite ordering reveals that the Soviet counterfactual is the most compelling while the Amer counterfactual is the least. In the minimal rewrite analysis we concluded that the Amer counterfactual should be ranked first as the most minimal, followed by the Soviet one in second, and the Provocation counterfactual in third. Figure 2 plots this minimal rewrite ordering as well as the cotenability ordering on a single plot, illustrating the relative distance between the counterfactuals in each ranking. While the graph shows the relative position of the counterfactuals on each scale, a system for each of the two scales must be established in order to create a final ranking for relative persuasiveness.

I assert that the cotenability standard should be weighted more heavily in assessing the relative persuasiveness of a counterfactual because it can constitute a compelling counterfactual on its own while the minimal rewrite standard cannot. If one were to write a counterfactual that was completely cotenable but did not respect the minimal rewrite rule at all, it would be at least plausible if not minimally persuasive. In contrast, a counterfactual that rewrites the most random and insignificant historical fact but is not cotenable with a considerable number of previously held beliefs is not likely to be considered plausible, let alone persuasive in any way. Using these extreme cases is useful for thinking about how integral each standard is for a counterfactual to be compelling. To avoid the arbitrariness of placing an exact number on the weight of each standard, I will use a relative weight that only assumes that cotenability should be weighted more than .5 in the assessment.

Looking back at the two orderings, the Provocation counterfactual is strictly dominated by the Soviet counterfactual in both rankings, meaning the highest position it can take in the final ordering is second, see Figure 2. To determine the relative ordering of the Amer and Soviet counterfactuals, it will be useful to review how far apart they are in each ranking (see Figure 3). In the minimal rewrite ranking, both counterfactuals have only one rewrite; however, the Soviet counterfactual may involve a group of people (Soviet leadership) while the Amer one does not (only Nasser must accept Amer's resignation). In the cotenability ordering, the Soviet counterfactual has no striking cotenability issues while the Amer counterfactual has two, one of which is very debilitating. Because the cotenability standard is weighted

more heavily, the difference in the ordering is further magnified. I assert that the small disparity between the positions of the Amer and Soviet counterfactuals in the rewrite ordering will be overcome by the significant difference on the cotenability scale, making the Soviet counterfactual more compelling overall. Consequently, the Soviet counterfactual should be ranked the most compelling overall because it is more compelling than the Amer counterfactual and strictly dominates the Provocation counterfactual on both orderings.

To position the Provocation and Amer counterfactuals in the final ranking, consider the distance separating them on both scales. In the minimal rewrite ordering, there is a significant gap between the two counterfactuals, see Figure 2. While the Amer counterfactual only involves one rewrite that is not very significant (it only changes one of Nasser's actions), the Provocation counterfactual requires two rewrites of higher significance (it changes the actions of both the Soviet Union and Israeli leadership). On the cotenability scale, the Provocation counterfactual is not cotenable in one fairly significant way, but the consequent (avoiding war in June 1967) may still have occurred even if we do not undo our beliefs about the Soviet Union's interests and its relationship with Egypt. The Amer counterfactual is not cotenable in two ways, one of which is very significant: either the consequent cannot occur because Nasser would have never dismissed Amer, or the counterfactual is rendered futile if our beliefs about Nasser's close friendship with Amer have to be undone. The two counterfactuals appear to be equally compelling because they are equidistant from each other on both scales, each compensating for a deficiency on one scale with success on the other, see Figure 2. However, because the cotenability criteria is weighted more than .5, the distance separating the counterfactuals on the cotenability scale is magnified in the total calculation, making the Provocation counterfactual more compelling overall. Incorporating this information with the previous conclusion that the Soviet counterfactual should be ranked as the most compelling, the final ordering of relative persuasiveness should list the Soviet counterfactual first, the Provocation one second, and the Amer one third.

Assessing the relative persuasiveness of the three counterfactuals serves two purposes. First, it highlights the components of a successful counterfactual, demonstrating that a counterfactual can be compelling in more than one way. Second, it informs the discussion of how to attribute responsibility for the war. If a counterfactual can persuasively show that the absence of a particular actor or event in May 1967 would have almost certainly lead to the absence of war, one can justifiably claim that that particular actor or event is responsible in some way for the war. For example, showing how Nasser's removal of Amer in 1956 would have meant no Six Day War enables

one to conclude that Nasser was responsible, to some degree, for the outbreak of the war. Because all three counterfactuals offer distinct arguments for how war could have been avoided, one cannot attribute sole responsibility for the war to any one actor or event. However, using the rankings of persuasiveness, one could distribute responsibility according to how easily war could have been avoided. As the most compelling scenario, the Soviet counterfactual shows that the Soviet Union could have easily prevented the war by intervening earlier. In contrast, the Amer counterfactual demonstrates that Nasser could not have really been expected to release Amer in 1956 given his deep friendship and intense fear of Amer. Thus, one could argue that the Soviet Union was more responsible for the war than Amer.

Conclusion

The two main objectives of this paper was to determine whether or not the Six Day War was unavoidable given the political climate and set of relations present in May and June 1967, and to create a framework with which the persuasiveness of multiple counterfactuals can be compared. With regard to the first objective, I have offered three counterfactual explanations for how the Six Day War could have been avoided, each highlighting a distinct factor that contributed directly to the outbreak of war. The Provocation counterfactual revealed how the Soviet warning coupled with provocative rhetoric from Israeli leadership made it nearly impossible for Nasser to keep Egypt out of the conflict. Pointing to more internal factors, the Amer counterfactual told a story of intense rivalry and friendship, which prevented Nasser from accepting the resignation of the person who can be said to have single-handedly escalated the conflict into war in 1967. Finally, the Soviet counterfactual highlighted the Soviet Union's inability to control the conflict, focusing on the Soviet failure to intervene before Nasser closed the Straits. Taken together, the three counterfactuals demonstrate that war was certainly not inevitable and could have, in fact, been avoided in multiple ways.

In many ways, the May crisis of 1967 resembles the current crisis between Israel and Iran over Iran's nuclear ambitions. Iran, with its overly provocative rhetoric about having Israel "wiped off the map" has imbued Israel with a heightened sense of fear by evoking, like in May 1967, images of the holocaust.[124] Similarly, Israeli leadership has not been shy about publicizing its willingness to resort to force or launch a preemptive attack, but seems to be holding back until the U.S. "turns off the red light" like it did in 1967. The counterfactual analysis of the May crisis has some important implications for the current crisis. First, it demonstrates that war is not the only possible outcome or resolution to the crisis. For example, war could be

averted if the U.S. chooses to intervene early in the crisis, firmly advising Israel not to attack just as the Soviet Union did with Nasser before Operation Dawn. Second, the counterfactual analysis reveals how seemingly inconsequential decisions can have serious implications for the course of the crisis. If avoiding war is the preferred outcome of the crisis, which is not completely clear at this point, then President Ahmadinejad and Prime Minister Netanyahu should be particularly cautious in crafting their statements and political moves to avoid propelling the crisis past a point, like the closure of the Straits of Tiran, where there are not many viable options besides war.

While the first half of the paper focused on the first objective of determining whether or not the Six Day War was inevitable, the latter half addressed the second objective of creating a framework for comparing counterfactuals. By isolating the two most important components of a compelling counterfactual and creating a metric with which to measure the components, I have created a framework that can be used to assess the relative persuasiveness of multiple counterfactuals. Applying the framework to the three counterfactuals described in the first half of the paper has revealed the complexities involved in assessing cotenability and the minimal rewrite rule; however, it has also proved that the framework is ultimately workable. Indeed, there are points where the framework falls short. As the framework is applied to more counterfactuals, it will become increasingly difficult to create an ordering of relative persuasiveness. One way to potentially address this concern is to set an exact weight for the cotenability and minimal rewrite standards. This might be done by surveying how often each standard is respected in contemporary counterfactual literature. Even if the current framework cannot provide a complete ordering of a large set of counterfactuals, it can still be used to compare counterfactuals within the group, making it a unique contribution to the contemporary literature on counterfactual analysis.

Moreover, the framework is valuable for its systematic treatment of counterfactuals, which avoids the arbitrariness and inaccuracies of depending on one's intuitions for comparing the persuasiveness of three counterfactuals. Plagued by poor heuristics and inconsistencies, our intuitions lead us to believe that particular counterfactuals are more compelling than others for wholly irrelevant reasons. For example, our intuitions might lead us to believe that a counterfactual is most compelling because it alters a peculiar fact, like what president Truman ate for breakfast the morning he ordered the atomic bomb to be deployed, and ignores to what extent the breakfast actually lead to ordering the atomic bomb, or how likely the breakfast was to change in the first place. In identifying the components of a successful counterfactual and providing a means of measuring them, this framework is useful for disciplining the way we assess counterfactuals.
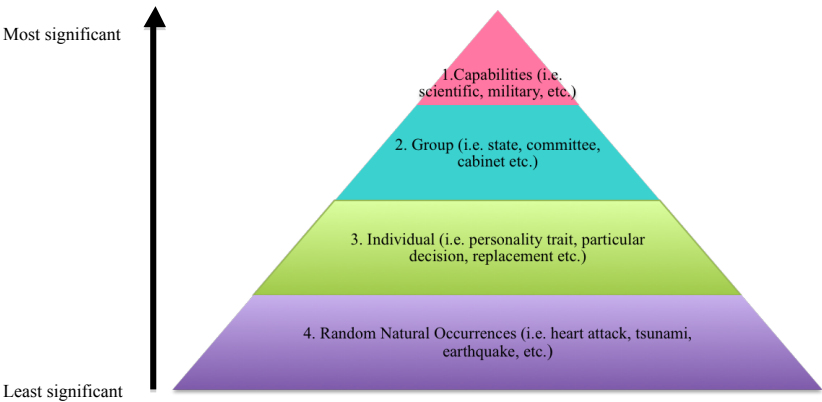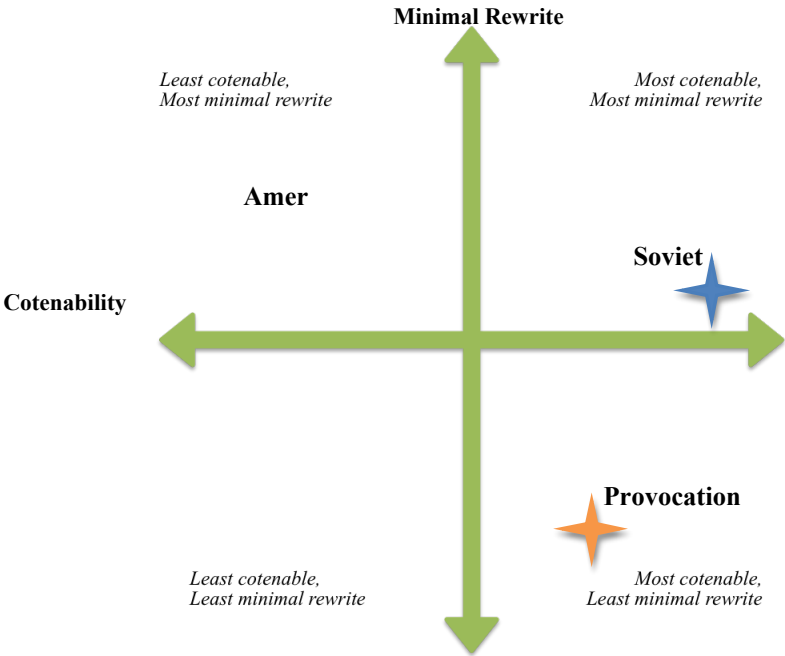
Appendix
Figure 1: Tiers of Rewrite Significance

Most significant

1. Capabilities (i.e. scientific, military, etc.)

2. Group (i.e. state, committee, cabinet etc.)

3. Individual (i.e. personality trait, particular decision, replacement etc.)

4. Random Natural Occurrences (i.e. heart attack, tsunami, earthquake, etc.)

Least significant

Figure 2: Graph of Minimal Rewrite and Cotenability Orderings

Minimal Rewrite

Least cotenable,
Most minimal rewrite

Most cotenable,
Most minimal rewrite

Amer

Soviet

Cotenability

Provocation

Least cotenable,
Least minimal rewrite

Most cotenable,
Least minimal rewrite

Endnotes

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