

UNDERSTANDING MODERN ARAB

MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS

In June 1944 the Soviet Union launched Operation Bagration against the German Wehrmacht's Army Group Center in Byelorussia. Although the Germans were a veteran army defending well-fortified lines, the Soviets had tactical surprise and overwhelming material advantages. They had three times as many troops as the Germans, six times as many tanks, and eight times as many artillery pieces. The result was a total rout. Soviet infantry and artillery blasted huge holes in the German lines, and Soviet tanks and cavalry poured through the gaps and drove deep into the German rear, encircling large formations. Two months later the Soviet advance finally came to a halt on the banks of the Vistula River in Poland, almost 1,000 kilometers from their start lines. In that time the Red Army had obliterated Army Group Center, shattering thirty German divisions and capturing or killing nearly 450,000 of Germany's finest soldiers.¹

Twenty-nine years later, in October 1973, the Syrian army launched a similarly massive offensive against Israeli forces occupying the Golan Heights. Like the Germans, the Israelis were a veteran army defending fortified lines, and like the Soviets, the Syrians had surprise and overwhelming material advantages on their side, having ten times as many troops as the Israelis, eight times as many tanks, and ten times as many artillery pieces.² Syria achieved an even greater degree of surprise than had the Soviets because the Israelis, unlike the Germans, were at peace and not expecting a fight. Nevertheless, the Syrian offensive was a fiasco. They were able to break through the Israeli lines in only one of two designated assault sectors. Syrian armored columns got no farther than twenty kilometers before they were stopped by tiny Israeli forces. Within two days the attack had run out of steam without accomplishing any of its objectives. An Israeli counterattack on the third day of the war smashed the Syrian forces and

sent them reeling, driving them off the Golan and erasing all of their modest gains. The Israelis then continued on, pushing toward Damascus itself before they were forced to stop because of the unexpected arrival of reinforcements from Jordan and Iraq.

In 1973 the Syrians had all of the advantages that the Soviets had enjoyed in 1944, probably even more. But the Syrians were unable to achieve the same results as the Red Army. Whereas the Russians went on to win one of the most stunning victories in modern history, the Syrians suffered one of their nation's worst defeats. The Soviet success in Byelorussia was so crushing that it paved the way for the final Soviet assault on Germany and ended the threat to Russia from Hitler's Reich. The failed attack on the Golan was equally decisive, persuading Syria that it had no option to regain the area from Israel by conventional assault, a conclusion that has held firm for nearly thirty years.

Comparing Syrian and Soviet fortunes demonstrates that the history of warfare in the Middle East defies understanding by traditional, material measures. Since the end of the European and Ottoman empires, the Middle East has been consumed by conflict. The Arab states have repeatedly gone to war with Israel, with Iran, with indigenous ethnic groups, with Africans, with Europeans, with Americans, and with each other. Yet in each of these wars, the Arabs have fared worse than expected. The Soviet-Syrian comparison demonstrates that when traditional Western (particularly American) methods for assessing military power are applied to the Middle East, they generally fail to explain the actual outcomes. The Soviets prevailed in 1944 because of the advantages of surprise and numbers. Yet the Syrians, with the same advantages, lost badly.

Nor can other conventional measures of military power adequately explain the outcome of modern Middle Eastern wars. In addition to the numeric balance and considerations of surprise, Western military analysts have traditionally explained battlefield outcomes by reference to imbalances in firepower, the quality of weaponry employed by the combatants, air support, foreign intervention, and a variety of lesser factors. However, the history of Arab armies in combat demonstrates that none of these factors could reasonably explain the outcomes. Numerous examples can be found of Arab armies that, like the Syrians in 1973, enjoyed commanding advantages in one or all of these categories yet still lost, often disastrously.

For example, Libyan forces defending Tripoli's conquests in northern Chad in 1987 deployed far more advanced and more powerful weaponry than their Chadian opponents but were crushed nonetheless. The Libyans were armed with Soviet-made T-62 and T-55 tanks, BTR-60 and BTR-70

armored personnel carriers (APCs), D-30 and M-46 artillery pieces, and MiG-21, MiG-23, and Su-22 fighter-bombers. In contrast, Chadian forces possessed nothing more sophisticated than a handful of older Western armored cars and mostly relied on Toyota pick-up trucks mounting crew-served infantry weapons. The Chadians had no tanks, no APCs, no artillery, no air force, no infantry weapons heavier than the Milan antitank guided missile, and only the complicated and ineffectual Redeye shoulder-launched surface-to-air missile (SAM) for air defense. What's more, the Chadians did not operate their weaponry very well. Nevertheless, an army of as many as 20,000 Libyans was demolished by 10,000 Chadian regulars and 20,000 tribal militia during eight months of fighting.³

Similarly, against Iran in 1980, Iraqi forces enjoyed a heavy advantage in the firepower they could bring to bear. Iraq boasted 2,750 tanks, 1,040 artillery pieces, 2,500 APCs, and 330 fighter-bombers. Against this, Iran could muster no more than about 500 operational tanks, probably no more than 300 functioning artillery pieces, and less than 100 operable aircraft.⁴ In every battle the Iraqis were able to bring enormous firepower to bear against the outgunned Iranians. Despite this advantage, Iraq's invasion of southwestern Iran hardly dented the disorganized and demoralized Iranian military, nor did Baghdad conquer anything of military or economic value in three months of largely unimpeded offensives. By the end of that same war, Iraqi forces not only enjoyed very sizable advantages in numbers of equipment but also possessed an equivalent edge in the sophistication of their weaponry. For instance, Iraqi forces deployed nearly 5,000 tanks compared to the less than 1,000 operable tanks Iran could muster — and most of the Iraqi tanks that saw the brunt of the fighting were advanced T-72s and T-62s, while the Iranians were mostly equipped with miserable Chinese Type-59s. Whereas the Iraqi Air Force had nearly 700 combat aircraft, including new French Mirage F-1s and Soviet MiG-29s, the Iranians had less than 100 flyable U.S. F-14s, F-4s, and F-5s, few of which were fully functional as a result of the U.S. arms embargo. Still, Iraq was able to eke out a win in 1988 only by resorting to liberal doses of chemical warfare and creating local force ratios of 20- or even 30-to-1 in tanks, troops, and guns.

In short, conventional measures cannot explain Arab experiences in battle. Since 1945 the Arab states have experienced problems that have denied their armed forces the success on the battlefield that objective factors suggest should be within their grasp. The source of this problem is what is often referred to as the "human factor" or military effectiveness. Military effectiveness is the ability of an armed service to prosecute military operations and employ weaponry in military operations.⁵ It is therefore a mea-

sure of the quality of an army's personnel — not the quality of its weaponry or the quantity of its men or materiel. Military effectiveness refers to the ability of soldiers and officers to perform on the battlefield, to accomplish military missions, and to execute the strategies devised by their political-military leaders. If strategy is the military means by which political ends are pursued, military effectiveness refers to the skills that are employed.

Of course, military effectiveness is not the same thing as victory and is only one of many factors that determines victory or defeat. Highly effective armed forces may still lose wars, and highly ineffective militaries may still win them. For example, the Germany army from 1914 to 1945 is widely considered to have been extremely competent in many areas of military operations, yet it ultimately lost both world wars. But George Washington's Continental Army could never match the battlefield proficiency of its British foes, yet it found a way to win the American Revolutionary War.

It is clear from the comparisons above and a raft of other examples that in the Middle East military effectiveness has played the decisive role in determining the outcome of the various wars fought between the Arabs and their foes. Israel's triumphs over larger and better-armed Arab armies have been a clear sign that the military balance in the region has primarily been driven by the military effectiveness of the opposing forces rather than numbers, equipment, or any other material factor. Thus, since 1948, military officers, analysts, politicians, journalists, and historians have all concluded that war in the Middle East has principally been decided by the quality of the combatants, not their numbers or weapons, their industry or technology, their morale or allies.⁶

Explanations for Arab Military Ineffectiveness

Although there is a consensus that the principal culprit hobbling the Arab states in war is the limited effectiveness of their armed forces, there is disagreement over the specific problems they encounter in combat.⁷ Over the course of time, different military officers, analysts, and historians have offered divergent assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of Arab armies and air forces.⁸ In every case they have identified certain kinds of military operations they believe the Arab armed forces perform poorly and have claimed that it has been these specific problems that have limited Arab victories and exacerbated their defeats.

Unit Cohesion

Among the most well-known arguments regarding Arab military ineffectiveness is the claim that their armies have been plagued by poor unit

cohesion, or the willingness of small military formations — platoons, companies, battalions, squadrons, and such — to stick together and continue to fight and act as a team in the stress of combat. Since the Second World War, a number of American authors, particularly the distinguished combat veteran S. L. A. Marshall, have argued that an army's tactical unit cohesion is probably the single most important element of its overall effectiveness.⁹ Several months after the Six Day War, Israel's military intelligence chief, Yehoshofat Harkabi, wrote an article arguing that the collapse of the Arab armies during that war and the 1956 Sinai-Suez War derived from poor unit cohesion, which he in turn ascribed to societal influences in Arab interpersonal relations. Harkabi asserted that Israeli victory had been possible — in fact, easy — in these conflicts primarily because the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian units they fought fell apart quickly when attacked by the Israelis. He described the fighting as consisting of sharp blows from Israeli forces that caused the Arab units to dissolve and left every man for himself. Since Arab units fragmented upon contact, the Israeli victories were quick and required little fighting.¹⁰

Generalship

Another explanation for Arab military ineffectiveness is that Arab armies have regularly been disappointed by the performance of the generals who led them. This argument is frequently heard in the wake of Middle Eastern wars, especially from the Arabs themselves, many of whom claim that their troops fought well but were betrayed by the incompetence or perfidy of their senior leaders. For example, after the Six Day War, the Egyptians blamed Field Marshal 'Amr for the catastrophe; the Jordanians heaped all fault for their defeat on the Egyptian commander of the eastern front, Lt. Gen. 'Abd al-Mun'im Riyad; and the Syrians nearly ousted Hafiz al-Asad from his post as defense minister for losing the Golan Heights.¹¹ Likewise, the generals who led the Egyptian, Iraqi, and Syrian armies were all held culpable for their defeat at the hands of the Israelis in 1948, and Saddam Husayn purged nearly all of his top army and air force commanders for the poor showing of Iraqi forces during the 1980 invasion of Iran.¹²

Tactical Leadership

Another explanation for the problems of Arab armed forces is that Arab junior officers are unable to conduct modern maneuver warfare. Competent tactical leadership is crucial to contemporary military operations.¹³ On land, combat is dominated by infantry, artillery, tanks, and other armored vehicles, often engaging in fluid battles of maneuver. In the air, combat is

dominated by nimble fighter and attack aircraft, whose pilots likewise must prevail in chaotic and quickly changing engagements. The fluidity of these battles places a tremendous burden on tactical leadership.

To succeed on the modern battlefield, a military must be able to decentralize command and have the kind of leaders at the scene with the right demeanor to seize fleeting opportunities to defeat the enemy. In a tank battle it is the commander who recognizes a gap opening between two enemy units and plunges in immediately, before his adversary can close it, who usually prevails. It is the same in air combat, in which a pilot must recognize in the midst of a swirling dogfight—or an airstrike against a heavily defended target—when an opportunity arises allowing him to drive home an advantage. Consequently, modern combat demands tactical leaders—platoon, company, battalion, and brigade commanders as well as pilots and squadron leaders—who are aggressive and have the initiative to take immediate, independent action; who are innovative and able to find creative solutions to battlefield problems; who are flexible and can quickly change their actions to adapt to unforeseen circumstances; who realize the importance of maneuvering to gain a spatial advantage over the enemy and constantly search for ways to achieve this; and who understand how their own mission fits into the larger battle so that they can improvise solutions to unexpected problems and help the efforts of their commanders.

Success on the modern battlefield also requires the tactical integration of the various combat arms. Normally, it is the army that can best coordinate the actions of its infantry, armor, mechanized infantry, artillery, antitank units, aircraft, combat engineers, and antiaircraft forces (to name only a few) that prevails. Because the whole of a modern military working as a team is much more powerful than the sum of its parts, it is crucial for any army to demonstrate good combined-arms operations if it is to perform at its peak. This means that tactical commanders must ensure that their armored forces are properly supported by infantry and artillery to suppress enemy antitank teams, that their infantry is able to advance by using armor to punch through enemy lines and air power to silence enemy artillery, that their engineers clear routes for the tanks and infantry over minefields and across water obstacles, and that their air forces are able to fly unhindered by using armored forces to disrupt enemy air defenses in addition to other considerations.

Many Israeli military officers and Western military historians have cited problems in these areas as the greatest failings of Arab armed forces.¹⁴ Israeli field commanders, almost to a man, aver that Arab junior officers are unable to function in the manner required of tactical leaders in the kinds of

fluid ground and air battles that frequently prove decisive in modern wars. Indeed, the Israelis have consciously structured their own military doctrine to take advantage of this perceived weakness.¹⁵

Information Management

Another problem of military effectiveness frequently ascribed to Arab armed forces is poor acquisition and management of information. Knowing more than one's adversary is often a decisive advantage on the battlefield and failing to get the right information into the hands of those who most need it is often a crippling liability. Israelis, Westerners, and even many senior Arab military officers have acknowledged that Arab armed forces have tremendous difficulty handling information. Here the claim is that Arab militaries pay inadequate attention to gathering intelligence—especially at tactical levels—about their adversaries and that Arab soldiers and officers do not properly pass information along the chain of command to ensure that every unit has the information it needs to execute its mission. In particular, these officers state that Arab militaries compartmentalize information, that little information flows from top levels down to field formations, and that lower levels of the chain of command regularly distort or even fabricate information to exaggerate successes and hide failures.¹⁶

Technical Skills and Weapons Handling

Machines are an integral part of modern warfare. The weapons of modern armed forces—even the simplest ones such as pistols and rifles—are all mechanical devices. Moreover, since World War II, increasingly complex weapons have been added to the national arsenals. The relatively simple antiaircraft guns of 1945 have been superseded by highly complicated SAMs and radar-controlled guns. Even the most complex tanks of World War II are child's play compared to the computer-controlled versions of the Persian Gulf War of 1990–91. Likewise, the propeller-driven airplanes of the 1940s are a different kind of machine altogether from the jets of the 1990s. In short, throughout the last fifty years, technology and machines have been the sinews of war. It is almost inconceivable to make war without them, and the more powerful the machines an army possesses, and the better an army is able to employ the machines at its disposal, the better it is likely to fare on the battlefield.

A charge frequently leveled against Arab armed forces is that they are unable to fully exploit the capabilities of the weapons and other military equipment they possess. On some occasions, they have complained that the equipment they fielded was either inferior to that of their opponents or

obsolete altogether. However, the large number of wars the Arabs have waged in which their equipment was equal or even superior to that of their foe undermines this claim. But Western and Israeli military personnel who have faced the Arabs in battle have repeatedly opined that Arab soldiers and officers are rarely able to employ their equipment to the full extent of its capabilities. They argue that Arab personnel are not technically expert enough to handle their weapons in the fashion intended by the manufacturer, and that the more sophisticated the weaponry, the less able are Arab personnel to employ it properly. Thus, Arab armies have fallen victim to their own lack of technical proficiency and their own inability to use their tanks, artillery, aircraft, and other weapons properly.¹⁷

Logistics and Maintenance

Closely related to these charges is the claim that Arab armies likewise have difficulty sustaining their forces in battle. Logistics has always been the linchpin of military operations, and today, because of the mechanization of armies and the development of air power, supplying military forces has had to become vastly more complex to handle the quantum increase in logistical demands created by mechanization. Quartermasters now have to worry about not only feeding, clothing, and quartering troops but also ensuring an adequate flow of fuel, lubricants, spare parts, ammunition, and other consumables for the vast array of vehicles and weapons a modern army deploys.

Moreover, it is not enough simply to provide supplies for this equipment; it must be maintained as well. This entails both routine preventive maintenance to ensure that the machinery continues to function properly and repair work to fix or replace equipment damaged by movement, weather, neglect, or combat. Just as supplying a modern army demands technically sophisticated personnel who understand the needs of a mechanized force and can see that its supply requirements are met, so maintenance demands large numbers of technically able support personnel who can keep this military hardware functioning.

Morale

Still another explanation offered for Arab military problems is poor morale. Many observers, particularly in the Arab world, have excused the performance of their armed forces by claiming that the soldiers and officers have lacked the will to fight. They often note that a despotic regime fought these conflicts for goals that were less than compelling to their troops. The Iraqi collapse during the Gulf War is often cited as an example of this phenome-

non. In other cases, class differences resulting in friction between officers and enlisted men have been cited as the culprit, creating a spirit of ambivalence or even hostility that sapped any commitment to the cause. This charge is often leveled at the Egyptian army during the Six Day War, in which Egyptian officers—having no ties to their men—allegedly abandoned them to their fate as soon as the Israelis attacked, demoralizing the soldiers and leading to the rout of the entire army.¹⁸

Training

Some scholars of the Middle East have asserted that Arab defeats resulted from misguided or inadequate training and claim that because Arab militaries are often charged with defending their regime against internal threats, their forces are preoccupied with policing the streets to guard against any popular revolt and shielding the palace of the despot to prevent a coup d'état. Proponents of this explanation argue that Arab militaries train and prepare to deal primarily with internal threats—riots, coups, and revolutions—and not for conventional military operations against foreign armies. It is this lack of preparation that has plagued Arab armed forces, they charge, and claim that if the Arabs were ever to dedicate themselves to a training regimen for conventional warfare, they would do just fine.¹⁹

A few Western military officers and analysts aver that Arab militaries simply do not train “seriously” for modern combat. By this they mean that training is lackadaisical, sporadic, and often entirely neglected. This is not to say that the preparation is “bad” or “misguided,” as those who believe Arab training focuses excessively on internal threats argue. Instead, these commentators assert that rather than being *inappropriate*, Arab training is simply *inadequate*. They believe that this lack of attention to training causes poor tactical leadership, poor morale, poor combined arms operations, poor weapons handling, and poor intelligence gathering. Thus, they claim that many, if not all, of the problems diagnosed by other experts are ultimately the result of inadequate training.²⁰

Cowardice

Perhaps the most malicious theory offered to account for the failings of Arab armies in combat is that Arab soldiers and officers are simply cowards who break and run at the first sign of danger. Few military experts subscribe to this, but it has been a widely held belief among Western civilians and even a number of Western military officers, including some with considerable experience fighting the Arabs. For example, Winston Churchill once remarked, “It appeared easier to draw sunbeams out of cucumbers than to

put courage into the *fellah*,” referring to Egyptian peasants.²¹ Some Israeli military officers have also suggested this explanation.²²

Assessing Arab Military Effectiveness

Clearly, there is no shortage of explanations for Arab military ineffectiveness. The goal of this book is to examine these explanations and assess their validity, both in an absolute sense and relative to one another. Thus, the following chapters attempt to answer two questions: first, to what extent did Arab armies and air forces suffer from each of the problems claimed to be the cause of their difficulties in battle? And second, which of these problems was most detrimental to their fortunes in war? After all, it may well be that while the Arabs experienced a range of problems that all contributed to their poor military effectiveness, some problems may have been more harmful than others. By answering these two questions, one can determine both the problems the Arabs experienced in battle since 1945 and the true causes of their defeats and costly victories.

To accomplish this task, this book recounts the post–World War II military history of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Syria in some detail to allow the reader to observe how each of these armed forces performed a broad range of operations. These six states encompass the lion’s share of Arab experience in war since 1945. Moreover, plumbing their military history allows one to examine a range of battles that pitted Arab forces against a variety of different opponents, in a variety of different kinds of terrain, and in a variety of different missions. This spectrum is important to ensure that any conclusions do not depend on who the Arab armies fought, or where they battled, or what they were trying to accomplish.

Warfare is a competitive activity. Consequently, in any particular conflict an army’s effectiveness can be measured only in relation to that of its opponent. It may be that against certain adversaries an army will conduct one type of mission well, but against another opponent it will conduct the same type of mission poorly because of unique features of that adversary’s forces. To ensure that any conclusions about a military’s effectiveness are not warped by who they are fighting, it is important whenever possible to measure them against a number of different opponents. By examining the full military histories of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Syria since 1945, one can observe these Arab powers in combat against Israelis, Europeans, Americans, Kurds, Persians, Africans, and each other — a wide enough range to ensure that any conclusions do not simply reflect the interaction of Arab forces with one particular adversary.

By the same token, it is important to observe an army in different geo-

graphic settings to properly assess its effectiveness. Land warfare is highly dependent on the terrain in which it is conducted. Deserts, mountains, jungles, forests, rivers, swamps, farmland, grassland, and cities all shape military operations in very different ways. Each constrains some types of operations and aids others. For instance, forests impede the movement of armored vehicles and greatly hinder aircraft attempting to locate and attack ground targets. But forests also can conceal the build-up of forces and hamstring a defender from rapidly shifting reserves to a threatened sector. Because of the tremendous effect of topography on ground combat and on the ability of air forces to contribute to the ground battle, it is important to examine military performance in a range of environments. The Egyptians, Iraqis, Jordanians, Libyans, Saudis, and Syrians have fought in almost every kind of terrain imaginable — except for triple-canopy jungle. Arab armies have fought in the mountains of Lebanon, the deserts of the Sinai, the marshes of Khuzestan, the fields of central Iraq, the savannah of East Africa, the hills of the West Bank, and the streets of Khorramshahr, Port Suez, Port Sa'ïd, and Jerusalem.

Finally, when attempting to assess the effectiveness of a country's military, it is important to examine its execution of a range of different missions. Different political goals and different military strategies tend to demand certain military skills over others. For instance, a purely defensive strategy probably will test an army's ability to perform tactical defensive operations, counterattacks, and defensive counterair missions more than its ability to conduct large-scale assaults and offensive counterair missions. Thus, the performance of the military in such a role will tell somewhat more about its abilities in defensive operations than in offensive operations. Consequently, it is useful to examine the forces in question while attempting to perform various missions. The history of the six Arab armies investigated here includes all-out offensives, limited attacks intended to serve narrow political objectives, protracted attrition battles, border skirmishes, counter-insurgency campaigns, and defensive operations of every stripe.

The History of Arab Military Effectiveness

Each of the following chapters contains a description of the course of the wars fought by Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. These accounts are not so much meticulous lists of details so much as broader analyses of how well the Arab armies and air forces prosecuted their missions in each campaign. Consequently, I have left out much extraneous material — peacetime operations, the army's relationship to its broader society, and even some minor military operations — that might be important

for a pure history of the armed forces but is irrelevant to the development of its effectiveness. In addition, in several cases I have glanced over or left out altogether certain minor skirmishes and peripheral operations that shed little light on the question of military effectiveness. For instance, I do not address the remarkable Israeli drive along the eastern coast of the Sinai toward Sharm ash-Shaykh during the Six Day War because this operation offers no insight into Egyptian military effectiveness.

Another important consideration in writing this book was to present the development of Arab military effectiveness in the proper political and strategic setting. As Clausewitz admonished over 150 years ago, war is a political action fought within a political context. It is impossible to judge the competence of an army if one does not know what it is trying to accomplish. Therefore, for each Middle Eastern war examined, I also outline the strategy and goals of both the Arab militaries and their adversaries to provide the political yardstick against which their military performance must be judged. This is particularly important when attempting to assess generalship because the crucial measure of a strategic plan is its ability to translate political objectives into military operations. The overall mission is less important when assessing tactical performance because a battalion can fight just as well trying to secure what ultimately may prove to be a meaningless objective as it can trying to secure what turns out to be a vital one.

Each chapter also addresses the question of why the Arab militaries won or lost each campaign in which they participated. It is critical to know not only the patterns of military effectiveness evinced by Arab militaries but also the *importance* of each pattern. Since I am attempting to identify the greatest problems afflicting the Arab armies since 1945, their patterns of poor performance are only important to the extent that they influenced the outcome of the conflict. For this reason, each chapter not only describes the course of each war but also includes an assessment of the various factors that resulted in victory or defeat.

For the same reason, each chapter also considers a number of other factors that often are important in deciding the outcome of a conflict. It is important to keep these other influences in mind so that the effect of the different aspects of military effectiveness can be placed in the right context. For instance, it may be that an army not only had awful strategic leadership in a given campaign but also was surprised by an enemy with superior weaponry and a huge advantage in numbers. In this case, the army's poor generalship would not loom as large as a source of defeat as it otherwise might. After all, given the huge disparity in numbers and weaponry, as well as the disadvantage of having been surprised, the army might still have lost

the battle even if its generals had been more competent. Therefore, for each campaign, I note the quantitative balance of forces, the effect of the terrain, any weapons superiority, and any advantage of surprise. Another factor I consider is which side was on the defensive. In the modern era, there is an inherent advantage to the defense and therefore the attacker must have some kind of an advantage — quantitative or qualitative — to allow him to prevail.²³ In Clausewitz's words, "The defensive form of warfare is intrinsically stronger than the offensive."²⁴ Finally, for every engagement, I address the capability of the opponent, even if only implicitly, because warfare is always a competitive activity, and one side's skill level can only be judged relative to that of its adversary.