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LESSONS LEARNED, LESSONS FORGOTTEN

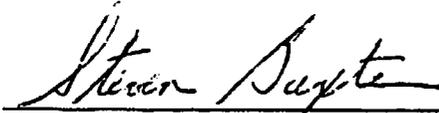
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Steven Baxter
LCDR, U.S. NAVY

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

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Abstract of
THE ARAB-ISRAELI WAR OF OCTOBER 1973

The Arab-Israeli War in October 1973 holds many operational lessons for U.S. forces. The October War (called the "Yom Kippur War" by the Israelis and the "Ramadan War" by the Arabs) began on 6 October 1973. It lasted for some 18 days and was marked by violent tank battles, air warfare, skirmishes at sea and heavy artillery attacks. Infantry forces on both sides played a major role. Nearly 13,000 soldiers, sailors and airmen died during the conflict, the most recent of the major Arab-Israeli wars.

Coming just six years after the "Six Day War" in 1967 each side was affected by that brief encounter. The Israeli conduct in 1973 was largely based on successes in 1967. Badly mistaken in that they failed to account for Arabian changes in operations and tactics, the IDF was very nearly beaten in the first forty-eight hours of battle. Operational lessons can be taken from this simple premise: Never assume that any future opponent has accepted the *status quo* imposed upon him on the basis of past operational victories. Discussion here focuses on those combat lessons learned as well as mistakes made in the Israeli Intelligence estimates of the pre-war environment. It is also submitted that there exists a disconnect between the Israeli National Strategy for its armed forces and the employment of its military might. The United States must also guard against this disconnect given the massive military draw-down without lessening military commitments around the world. It is recommended that the Armed Forces of the United States not accept its victory during "Desert Storm" as a "cookie cutter" approach to the next one. While the opponent may not be the same, it must be assumed that he will have learned from the mistakes of the Iraqi's and will attempt to exploit those areas where we have not learned our own important lessons.

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ARAB-ISRAELI WAR
LESSONS LEARNED, LESSONS FORGOTTEN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Arab-Israeli War of October, 1973 offers important lessons for the study of operational art. In this war, the operational level of conflict was sharply defined between national strategies and unit tactics. The theater of war was clearly indicated, and two distinct theaters of operations existed, each one in support of the combatant commander's campaign plan. Each theater of operations was led by a commander who controlled elements from more than one service, serving as a joint force commander.

This paper focuses on the Israeli conduct of the war, but not to the neglect of the Arabian coalition. In 1973 the Israeli Defence Forces more clearly bore the mark of their American trainers and suppliers, thus providing more parallels to the familiar American operational art. The Arabian forces (primarily Egypt and Syria) were more directly shaped by the Soviet Union, practicing operational art as it was passed down by them. Each side offers lessons to be learned and each committed mistakes to avoid in the future.

CHAPTER II

"Significant Lessons"

The Arab-Israeli War offers significant lessons. While Israel was forced to painfully learn that "rules" from past wars were not inviolable, Egypt and Syria were to benefit from the lessons taught in 1967. From both sides, Arab and Israeli, the American military can withdraw models from that October in 1973. Israel can teach us that we must never hold all truths from past battles as unchanging principals upon which to plan future wars. Arabian actions in 1973 teach us that past enemies do change. They learn from our successes just as surely as they learn from their own. No potential opponent remains static. During the time one side lives in peace, the other is making preparations for war.

For the Israeli Defence Forces, the "War of Atonement" (as it came to be known) was a battle vaguely anticipated. There was little doubt as to an eventual Arab attack. When and how it would occur was anything but certain. Precariously balanced upon self notions of superiority, weighed against the perceived weaknesses of their Arab opponents, the armed forces of Israel were very nearly beaten in October, 1973. On 10 August 1973, in a speech to the graduates of the Israeli Military Staff and Command College, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan remarked:

The total balance of forces is in our favor, and outweighs all other Arab considerations and motives, and puts a break on the immediate renewal of hostilities...Our military superiority is the double result of Arab weakness and our own strength. Their weakness derives from factors, which, I believe, will not quickly change. (Jerusalem Post, 11 AUG 73)¹

As events were to unfold, the war of Yom Kippur very nearly saw the destruction of the Israeli State.

For the Arab coalition, the "Ramadan War" had its origins at least six years earlier.² Stung by defeat in the "Six Day War" in June, 1967, the Arab Nations (principally Egypt and Syria) sought the return of territories lost in that conflict. For them, "Operation Badr"³, the simultaneous attack on Israeli forces from the North and South, would correct an unacceptable situation.

Strategically, the two sides held diametrically opposed objectives. In the Israeli mind, any conflicts with the Arab Nations very clearly raised the issue of national survival. For the Arabian coalition, destruction of the "Third Temple" was an often stated goal. Despite an international climate of *detente* among the Superpowers, and relative calm after the cessation of the "War of Attrition" with the Egyptians in 1970,⁴ the Israeli's did not for a moment believe that the Arabs had renounced their dream of exterminating Israel.⁵

The War of October 1973 highlighted operational warfare in all of its many facets. The battles in the Sinai, Golan Heights and surrounding waterways and seas are particularly useful in an examination of operational level warfare. Because the territory involved is relatively compact, and the strategic importance of the area so clearly understood, the critical linkage between "operational art", strategy and tactics is clearly defined. The period immediately preceding the outbreak of hostilities is also instructive in that it highlights the successes that may spring

from operational deception, security and surprise.

The war (actually a series of widely separated, yet coordinated, campaigns) exhibited multi-dimensional operations on and above the earth's surface. Many avenues of assault were employed by both sides, utilizing sequenced axes of attack. Additionally, coordinated "umbrellas" of offense and defense as well as sophisticated command and control were used, all culminating on multiple operational objectives. Initial Arabian successes took advantage of their strengths and Israeli weaknesses. Israeli Defence Forces were sent reeling by coordinated attacks in the North and South, by the Syrians and Egyptians, respectively. Following initial Arab victories (aided by the Moroccans, Iraqis, Saudis and Jordanians), Israel mounted successful counter-attacks to stabilize and eventually overcome Arabian advances.

This paper, focusing on the operational aspects of the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, will also address those aspects of the conflict germane to the United States following the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Parallels may be drawn between the two on both the strategic and operational levels of war. Israel, owing to its success in the "Six Day War" of 1967, chose not to adapt or readjust many of its strongly held operational beliefs vis a vis potential enemies. Israeli military leaders had felt that they had found the perfect mix of weapons and tactics to defeat any enemy. Utilizing a blend of highly mobile armor and total air superiority, the IDF held themselves to be nearly invulnerable.

As a result, many of the losses incurred in 1973 were directly attributable to errors of omission in the face of changed enemy operations. Israeli victories in 1967 were seen as invariable principles for future wars, lessons to be taken away in the assumption that Arab armies would "always fight that way."

The Arabian forces in general, and the Egyptians in particular, did not rest on assumptions based upon their experiences in the Six Day War. Working from a basis of self recognized inferiority in respect to Israeli operational concepts, the Egyptians "re-interpreted" the concepts of "superiority". Whereas the Israelis envisioned "control of the skies" as involving aircraft and skilled pilots, the Egyptians saw surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) as their weapon of denial. The Israelis historically fought a maneuver based tank war, emphasizing speed, firepower and tactical air support. The Egyptians and Syrians, on the other hand, opted for infantry carried anti-tank weapons and shoulder fired anti-aircraft missiles. Operationally, the Israeli's sought to offensively seize control of the air and ground environment. The Egyptians sought to defensively deny the two.

The United States, its perceptions colored by the hues of rapid victory in 1991, must not fall into the same traps as Israel found itself in October, 1973. As the Israelis found most clearly, and that which the United States must guard against, is that "nothing fails like success."⁶

CHAPTER III

"Military and Geographic Factors"

The military and geographical conditions that shaped the hostilities in October of 1973 actually had their roots in the days immediately following the Israeli victory in June, 1967. Israeli spoils following that war included some 65,000 square kilometers⁷, encompassing the Sinai desert in the south, and the Golan Heights to the north. Operationally, these additional lands forced Israel into an altogether different military posture than that which existed prior to June, 1967.

Prior to the Six Day War, in the south, Egyptian occupation of the Sinai put them uncomfortably close (from an Israeli vantage point) to Israeli centers of population. Additionally, with an Egyptian controlled Sinai, a crossing of the Suez canal by them (as a precursor to large scale deployment in the region) would have initiated a sequenced warning period for Israeli Defence Forces.⁸ This warning period would allow sufficient time to mobilize the reserves needed to defeat the invading armies. The IDF standing forces were recognized to be insufficient (in size) to withstand a full fledged war.⁹ At best, Israeli troops would be able to maintain a holding action to await mobilization of sufficient reserve forces.

After the Six Day War, the Sinai offered Israel (in a manner not unlike the Soviets in World Wars I and II) the opportunity to trade space for time against an invader. Egyptian forces planning to violate Israel proper faced the enormous task of crossing 150

miles of desert, all the while fighting Israeli occupation troops.¹⁰ A first strike by Egyptian forces would allow Israeli military commanders the option of maneuver, a luxury not available in an Egyptian controlled Sinai. The initial shock of an attack could be countered, it was thought, by an orderly redeployment, reserve mobilization and counter-attack.

Israel had to weigh this new capability to deploy its forces in operational depth, however, with the added disadvantage of reduced warning time before contact with enemy forces. With Israeli troops on the East bank of the canal, "nose to nose" with the Egyptians, any crossings would result in direct contact between opposing armies. It (the post 1967 borders) had resulted in a situation described by Colonel David Jablonsky such that, "the Israeli Defense Force was in the dangerous position of depending on a reserve structure that required a minimum of two days warning while faced with a situation in which there could be no real warning."¹¹

To the north, in the Golan Heights and along the eastern frontier with Jordan, the post-1967 borders also changed the operational and strategic environment. Previously, the Jordanian and Syrian armies were within easy artillery range of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. Israeli victories in 1967 and acquired territories now afforded a degree of strategic depth and defensible terrain between them.¹²

The military leaders in the Northern and Southern Commands had, as their strategic goal, the defence of Israel. Major

General Yitzhak Hofi, General Officer Commanding (GOC) Northern Command, faced a Syrian Army mobilizing at an alarming rate in the first week of October, 1973. Between them were the relatively open plains of the Golan Heights, an area suited for the maneuverable Israeli tank forces. Behind Major General Hofi lay the Jordan River, beyond which he knew he could not allow the Syrian army to pass. The forces he had under his command, the Seventh and Barak Brigades, were in keeping with the Israeli philosophy of border defence, to "hold the line" until the reserve forces could be mobilized. Once called to arms the IDF, bolstered by the presence of its "Citizen Soldiers" and massive support from the air forces, would still be outnumbered by the Arabians by a ratio of 2.5 or 3:1.¹³

In the south, GOC Major-General Shmuel Gonen faced a similar situation. He had seen the enemy build up their forces across the frontier separating the two, in this case, the Suez Canal, described by General Moshe Dayan as "one of the best anti-tank ditches available."¹⁴ Across this "anti-tank ditch" was, on 6 October, a force of two Egyptian field armies, made up of five infantry divisions and a number of independent infantry and armor brigades. Under his command, Maj-Gen. Gonen counted upon 436 Israeli soldiers, seven artillery batteries and 277 tanks.¹⁵ In both cases, however, the relative ratio between forces was considered acceptable (in terms of static defence) by the IDF. The Israeli's had chosen to be "lean and mean" and would carry the battle to the enemy on the wings of a superior air force, reserve

mobilization and tactics that had worked so brilliantly in the six victorious days of June, 1967.

From an operational perspective, it must be asked why was such disparity permitted? Given the strategic importance of the two regions (Golan and the Suez) why were the responsible Generals given so little (in terms of standing resources) to achieve their Nation's strategic goals? Furthermore, given the observation of enemy mobilization, why were Israeli reserve forces not called upon sufficiently in advance before the situation in each theatre became desperate?

To answer each question, in general terms, it must be said that the Israeli government, and its Defence Forces, allowed themselves to be deceived. Presented with empirical evidence that nations hostile to themselves were massing along their borders, the Israelis did not want to perceive hostile intent. Projecting their own concept of a wars outcome with the Arabs, the Israeli government found it inconceivable that the armies of an Arabian coalition would risk "inevitable" defeat in war. It did not make sense to the Israelis that a nation would go to war with a purpose short of total military victory. In presuming that what was good for Israel (peace), the same must also be good for the enemy. In that presumption, it was inconceivable that the Arabs would be planning a major, coordinated offensive.¹⁶

On an operational level, Israeli adherence to what became known as "The Conception" prevented a coherent formulation of military defensive (or more importantly, offensive) measures. The

Conception consisted of two assumptions held with respect to any attacks against Israel by the Egyptians and/or the Syrians. First, it was assumed that Egypt would not go to war until she was able to stage deep air strikes into Israel, particularly against her major military airfields, in order to neutralize Israel's Air Force. Secondly, it was thought that Syria would not launch a full-scale war against Israel unless Egypt was in the struggle too.¹⁷

Because Israel held air supremacy in such high regard, it was natural to assume that any enemy would do the same. Furthermore, prior to attempting a major ground assault against Israel, the assumption was made that an enemy would require, as a prerequisite, the destruction of the Israeli Air Force. Guilty of "mirror-imaging" it was inconceivable that an enemy would attempt an attack without neutralization of the air threat.

The second assumption, that regarding Syrian intentions, grew out of the Israeli belief in Arab disunity. Because military activities on the two borders had never been synchronized previously, Israel had been "desensitized" to the developments that were taking place just prior to the sixth of October.¹⁸

In examining the "strategic goal" of Israel, and coming to the realization of that goal as being one of "self-preservation" it appears that there is a mismatch--a strategic/operational disconnect-- between the Israeli military and the nation it supports. More specifically, the notion of an "offensive" military strategy is quite opposite that of a Nation who holds

self-preservation and defence of its borders as the zenith of its strategic outlook. In other words, it is inherently difficult (if not anathema) for such a Nation to conduct large scale pre-emptive military attacks. Faced with the mobilization of hostile armies on its borders, an offensive operation designed to prevent an attack will, in all likelihood, result in exactly that, i.e., an attack on its borders. As a result, the very being of the IDF is predicated on the notion of repelling attacks, not initiating a cycle of aggression and resulting defence against an enemy that outnumbers it by as much as 3:1. Therefore, despite being given *prima facie* evidence of impending attack, the Israeli Defence Forces are obliged to await the first blow, hoping all the while that it does not come.

Mobilization of reserve forces brought additional complications. Premature mobilization could be interpreted as a sort of a "proxy first blow" by the enemy. As it has been noted, a first strike by the Israelis would be seen as self defeating in the long run, and was to be avoided at all costs. What's more, the "Middle East Theatre" did not, in 1973, exist in a vacuum. At that time the rise and fall of military concentrations in the region brought swift notice to the opposing superpowers, the United States and Soviet Union. The latter, arms supplier and trainer of the Arab nations could, conceivably, indirectly apply additional pressure on the Israeli's through greater weapons supplies to Egypt. The United States viewed any conflict in the Middle East as a very real threat to the supply of oil to itself

and other Western nations. A war in the Golan Heights would directly threaten the integrity of the "TAP", the longest oil pipeline in the world, an economic lifeline of some 1200 miles, twenty miles of which runs directly across the Golan Heights.¹⁹ In the Southern Command, war across the Suez Canal would surely close that vital "choke point" a situation unacceptable to the oil hungry nations of the Western Hemisphere.

Initial Arabian victories in October, 1973 cannot all be described on the basis on Israeli culpability, however. Successful operations by Egypt and Syria were just as much the result of careful operational planning on their behalf as it was on operational and strategic missteps on the Israeli side. It will be noted however that success, particularly by the Syrians, was more directly attributable to misinterpretation by the Israelis than a deliberate attempt to deceive by their opponent.

On 13 September 1973, over the eastern Mediterranean, an air to air battle occurred between Israeli and Syrian fighters. Thirteen Syrian MiGs were shot down, prompting the IDF Northern Command to undertake emergency precautions in anticipation of Syrian reprisal attacks.²⁰ For three weeks, the forces of the IDF prepared defensive barriers along the "Purple Line", the cease fire boundary established after the Six Day War in 1967. During preparations for battle the troops celebrated Rosh Hashanah and prepared for Yom Kippur, the 6th of October. When war began, at 1400 on the "Day of Atonement", the outnumbered men of the Northern Command were already physically and emotionally

exhausted.²¹

Operational deception was more actively pursued by the Egyptian forces. Spreading rumors and misinformation at every opportunity, the Egyptian forces sought to deceive the IDF at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Egyptian claims of inadequate maintenance and lack of spare parts caused Israeli tactical commanders to believe they would face ragged tanks that would break down under the strains of battle. Operational commanders interpreted the lack of an Egyptian air force would leave his infantry and armor free from air delivered ordinance. This, in turn, would assist him as he blocked "poorly trained" Egyptian forces from crossing the Suez "anti-tank ditch". On the strategic level, President Anwar Sadat and his staff were leaking stories to the Western press about the growing "rift" between the Egyptian forces and their Soviet advisors. Sadat is quoted as saying, "...a report (had) reached Israel saying that the exodus of the Soviet experts rendered the Egyptian missiles valueless...It could be that they relied on this evaluation..."²² The Egyptians also recognized the value of security. Even among their own forces, the impending attack on Israel was anything but a well known plan. General Herzog, (page 39) states, "...95% (of the Egyptian soldiers) learnt [sic] only on the morning of 6 October that the exercise in which they were engaged in was in fact preparation for war and that they were about to go to war."²³ (Emphasis in original). The Syrians, too, practiced security going so far as to take the radios away from their front line soldiers.²⁴

Operationally, the Syrians held as their objective a two day battle in which they would recapture the Golan Heights. Like the Egyptians in the south, the Syrians held limited operational goals, specifically, the recapture of disputed territories.²⁵ Movements to the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee across the Golan Heights would result in a favorable position. Additionally, both Arab states envisioned a rapid cease fire after their initial gains, employing Soviet assistance towards that goal. Fully cognizant of the strategic importance of the region, the Arabs hoped to play the "superpower wildcard" in assisting them in changing the status quo in the Middle East.

CHAPTER IV

"HOSTILITIES COMMENCE"

Confronting Israel at the outbreak of hostilities was a two front war at the opposite ends of its occupied territories. Israel's concept of security on the basis of defensible borders dissolved quickly under the weight of Arab advances in the north and south. Unable to mobilize in time, Israeli forces in the Northern and Southern Commands were left to battle armies at great numerical disadvantage.

In the north, the ratio of Syrian tanks to Israeli was as much as 50:1 in some battles.²⁶ The Syrians operated with great speed, throwing mass against the qualitatively superior, but smaller, Israeli forces. The Syrians also operated in darkness, utilizing night vision equipment supplied by the Soviets. Israeli aircraft, attempting close air support for the beleaguered ground forces were quickly shot down by the Syrian surface to air missile batteries. For forty-eight hours the Israelis slipped closer and closer to defeat in the Golan.

The Southern Command, under Major General Gonen (IDF), was equally in trouble. The Egyptians, sacrificing mass, stormed across the full length of the Suez Canal. As a result the Israeli forces, woefully outnumbered to begin with, were unable to identify and attack an Egyptian center of gravity. The Egyptian Second Army crossed to the north, between the Great Bitter Lake and the Port of Said. To the south, the Third Army crossed the "tank ditch" with practiced speed and efficiency. The Israeli

"Bar-Lev Line", made up of 30 forts, each manned by fifty men, was quickly over-run. Within hours, the Egyptians had nearly 500 tanks across the canal ready to fight. Israeli armor was outnumbered two to one.²⁷ The Israeli forces were quickly overcome, and called for assistance from the reserve troops still in Israel.

Israeli air forces, always successful in the past, were challenged above the invading Egyptian Armies, covered as they were by an effective umbrella supplied by the SA-6 "Gainful" missiles on the western bank of the canal. Also in support of the Egyptian infantry was a massive artillery barrage, coordinated with the movement of troops across the canal. In the first minute of the attack, at 1400 on 6 October, 10,500 shells fell on the Israeli positions at the rate of 175 shells per second.²⁸

By the morning hours of 7 October the Israeli Theatre Commanders were close to defeat. The defensively positioned soldiers of the Northern and Southern Commands were heavily outnumbered and taking heavy casualties. Significant assistance would not come from the mobilized reserve forces until the next day.

On the 8th of October, the Israeli Defense Forces had been operationally defeated. Strategically, the Nation still survived but its armed forces were badly mauled. Great distances separated the two fronts and movement of the reserves, once mobilized, was slow. An advantage the Israeli's did have, however, was the relative security of internal lines of support and reinforcement.

Men and equipment brought to the front lines were protected from direct enemy attack. Armies at the forward edge of the battle area did not have to spend additional energies to protect the weapons and soldiers coming to their assistance. A balancing factor to this relative protection, however, was directly attributable to the length of resupply as troops arriving on the front were tired from the journey.

The Arabian forces advancing into enemy territory had to weigh the advantages that came with each victory. With every yard gained in the Sinai and Golan Heights came the need to defend the territory they had just left. Once faced with the full weight of Israeli reserve mobilization, defence of a tenuous logistical pipeline weakened their strength of advance.

Israeli commanders were faced with a difficult choice. They needed to decide, in rapid order, which battle front would need the most direct and intense air support. In selecting the Northern Command, the deciding factor was its relative proximity to Israeli centers of population. In this decision, National leaders translated a strategic goal (defense of the Homeland) into the operational deployment of a military asset (the IDF Air Force under General Benjamin Peled). The forces in the Southern Command would be left to fight an attritional battle until the war in the North could be won (or lost).

The commitment of some 420 aircraft²⁹ to the Northern sector gave Major General Hofi an effective joint command. The combined arrival of the Air Force and Reserves began to turn the tide in

the Golan Heights. Still outnumbered, the IDF now had the opportunity to apply some degree of mass to the theatre. The reserve soldiers, though great in number, were poorly organized and had yet to get their first taste of battle. With the higher number of troops under his command, Maj-Gen Hofi began to feel the "pinch" of a strained logistical train. Despite these additional burdens, Hofi and his Northern Command transitioned to the offensive, utilizing armor and air power to destroy 1000 of 1250 Syrian tanks on Israeli territory.³⁰ Nearing the Syrian capital of Damascus, the IDF paused to allow the logistical trail time to "catch up". This pause was nearly devastating, as it allowed the Syrians time to regroup and rest. Intervention by the Soviet Union and the United States, with warnings from the former not to attack Damascus, eventually stabilized the front lines and led to the cease fire on 22 October 1973.

Along the Suez Canal the situation was desperate. Israeli counter-attacks on the 7th of October were chewed up by Egyptians armed with RPG-7 and PUR-64 "Sagger" anti-tank weapons.³¹ The Egyptians had crossed the Canal *en masse*, holding a narrow beach-head on the Eastern shores. For a week, attacks and counter-attacks were conducted by both sides, neither claiming victory nor territory. By the 14th, 1200 Egyptian tanks had journeyed across the Suez on motorized barges designed for the purpose.³² By this time the Israelis had "turned the corner" in the Golan and were within artillery range of Damascus to the north. As a result, the Southern Command under Maj-Gen Gonen began to benefit from the

strength of the reserve mobilization.

With sufficient assets available, Gonen sought to gain the initiative. The Egyptian momentum had been halted. After crossing the Canal with their tanks, the Egyptians had left much of their logistical support on the other side. Harassed by Israeli attacks, it was difficult to expend concerted effort in ensuring the transport and delivery of the assets needed to sustain an advance through the Sinai. In effecting a brilliant and rapid crossing of the Suez Canal, the Egyptians had gone past the culminating point of victory. The initiative they had grasped by crossing the canal was now being transferred to the strengthened Israeli forces.

In a brilliant use of his environment, Maj-Gen Gonen attacked the southern flank of the Egyptian Third Army. By selecting the avenue of advance that he did, Gonen allowed the Great Bitter Lake, a large body of water along the Suez Canal, to protect his own flank. In this fashion he was able to utilize the forces that would have been necessary for that task to be used in the penetration of the Egyptian front lines. Utilizing captured Egyptian barges, one armored and one mechanized (Paratroop) brigade crossed the canal on the morning of 16 October.³³

It was at this point that the Israelis suffered from significant disunity of command. Perhaps overcome with victory, brigade commanders on the west bank began to move towards Cairo. To do so would have been operational folly in that Israeli re-supply lines would have been non-existent. Correctly, Maj-Gen

Gonen ordered the IDF units to establish a defensible bridgehead on the canal and maneuver to cut off Egyptian logistical lines. The Egyptian Third Army, facing significant IDF assets on both fronts, was left to await the cease fire and withdrawal orders.

It is worthy to note that during the Israeli breach of the Suez Canal the Egyptian Air Force remained on the ground. It stayed there until it appeared as though the IDF was seriously threatening Cairo and the survival of the Egyptian armies.³⁴ Once they took to the skies, Egyptian and Israeli air forces engaged in heated air-to-air combat. In the southern theatre of war, 200 MiGs and Sukhois Egyptian aircraft were killed by Israeli aircraft for an IDF tally of only three. More telling, however, is the number of IDF aircraft downed by surface to air missiles: 100.³⁵

On 22 October 1973 Security Council Resolution No. 338 called for a cease-fire no later than 1852 (local) on that day. Sporadic hostilities occurred after that time, but the Arab-Israeli war was essentially over. During the course of eighteen days, the Arabian forces lost nearly 10,000 men, 2300 tanks and 475 aircraft. The IDF lost nearly 2,400 soldiers, 200 tanks and 115 aircraft. Each side lost a number of ships and patrol craft with numerous sailors lost at sea.³⁶ Both combatants fielded armies and air forces from countries no more populated than many American cities. Each was armed with weapons supplied (for the most part) by arms industries outside of their own borders. By many accounts, hostilities in the Middle East in 1973 brought the world to the brink of nuclear war as each Superpower felt its interests were vitally threatened.

CHAPTER V

"American Parallels and Conclusions"

The American led coalition swept to victory during Operation "Desert Storm" in January and February 1991. After a six month buildup in the Middle East, the tools of war were in place and accessible upon the commencement of hostilities. Utilizing "cutting-edge" technology against a numerically large yet still "backward" military, the coalition air forces conducted pin point strike after strike. U.S. Navy ships in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea launched Tomahawk missiles at an enemy hundreds of miles away. While allied ground forces waited in friendly territory, a massive conventional bombing campaign prepared the battlefield before the need arose to march across hostile lines. Once called to action the tanks and infantry conducted an operationally brilliant maneuver to encircle and crush the remaining enemy forces. Relying on speed, maneuver and mass (both technological and physical) the ground forces culminated "Desert Storm" in only 100 hours.

What might our potential enemies have learned? As the Egyptians learned between 1967 and 1973, a superior enemy can be beaten on terms other than those he seeks. While it is true that Israel overcame initial Arabian success, it did so only after horrible losses in men and materiel. For Israel, the survival of the Nation depended on persistent effort and continued resistance. America, no longer threatened by another superpower, must ask "How much effort is it to expend after initial defeats by an ally?"

These questions reside more properly on the strategic level. On the operational side, what is an enemy to take away from "Desert Storm"? How can an American led coalition be defeated in the next war? How can American aircraft be prevented from delivering precision guided munitions? How can allied coalition forces be made to feel less secure before a battle? How can American warships be made to feel threatened as they attempt to deliver long range cruise missiles? How can American ground forces be stopped from conducting a ground war of maneuver and speed? In 1967 the Egyptians fell victim to a "Desert Storm" like attack. They were soundly defeated by an Israeli military that focused on the strength of speed, maneuver and firepower. In the intervening years they clearly saw "discrepancies between tactical assumptions of actualities and strategic assumptions of possibilities."³⁷ Between the two they (Egyptians) developed an operational art to close the gap. While not completely victorious, they taught an important lesson: the enemy will change. If the opposing force does not, he does so at his own peril. One must not judge an enemy by the same values as those held by ones' self. Military victory is not always the highest goal an opponent may set for himself.

Today, American military (and political) thinking must guard against feelings of "superiority" when planning for potential enemies. While it is undeniable that the United States leads all armies in technological superiority, it must not ascribe common notions of battle to all potential enemies. The countries of the

Middle East or Northeast Asia cannot match American firepower or fighting skill. Like the Arabian coalition in the inter-war years, they have not been privy to the same growth in military technology that America or Israel had been. While their weapons may not be "cutting edge" in all cases, they can strike deeply into American political or national resolve. A shoulder-fired "dumb" weapon that destroys a C-5B loaded with American troops may turn the tide of war as quickly as a precision guided bomb that penetrates the thickest enemy command post. American forces must not hide behind the arrogance that came with quick victory in "Desert Storm". There is no such thing as a "minor" conflict in which the United States is a participant.

1 Michael I. Handel, "The Yom Kippur War and the Inevitability of Surprise", International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 21, No. 3, September, 1977, p. 481.

2 Hassan El Badri, et. al., The Ramadan War, 1973 (Dunn Loring, Virginia: T.N. Dupuy Associates, Inc., 1978), p. 9.

3 The tenth day of Ramadan, or 6 October, was the day in the year 624 in which the Prophet Mohammed began preparations for the battle of Badr, which led six years later to his triumphant entry into Mecca and the start of the spread of Islam.

4 Hassan El Badri, et.al., p. 10.

5 Handel, p. 481.

6 Ibid., p. 492.

7 Hassan El Badri, et.al., p. 4.

8 Chaim Herzog, The War of Atonement October 1973, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975), p. 4.

9 Handel, p. 483.

10 Herzog, p. 3.

11 Colonel David Jablonsky, "Strategy and the Operational Level of War" The Operational Art of Warfare Across the Spectrum of Conflict, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1 Feb 87, p. 9.

12 Herzog, pp. 3-4.

13 Ibid., p. 58.

14 Ibid., p. 147.

15 Ibid., pp. 150-151.

16 Handel, p. 472.

17 Information regarding the "Conception" is taken from "Failures in National Intelligence Estimates: The Case of the Yom Kippur War", by Avi Shlaim, World Politics, Vol. 28, No. 3, April 1976. "The Conception" arose from the "Interim Report of the Agranat Commission of Inquiry", Jerusalem, Israel, 1 April 1974.

18 Avi Shlaim, World Politics, Vol. 28, No. 3, Apr. 1976, p. 497.

19 Herzog, p. 56.

20 Ibid., p. 60.

21 Ibid., p. 64-65.

22 Ibid., p. 34.

23 Egyptian security in this regard is also discussed in The Ramadan War, p. 53.

24 Herzog, p. 75.

25 Hassan El Badri, p. 24.

26 Herzog, p. 85.

27 Kenneth S. Brower, "The Yom Kippur War", Military Review, March 1974, pp. 25-26. The Egyptian Second and Third Armies had erected 14 Soviet supplied "Mod TPP" bridges. These were originally designed to be used in the Soviet European Theatre, to cross the Danube and Rhine Rivers.

28 Herzog, p. 159.

29 The Israelis utilized 130 F-4E, 165 A-4, 100 Mirage and 25 Super Mysteres aircraft on the Golan Heights, flying as many as 2000 sorties per day.

30 Brower, p. 28. Israelis claim kill ratio of 12:1 in their favor.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., p. 29.

33 Ibid., p. 30.

34 Ibid., p. 31. While Brower makes the assertion that Egyptian aircraft were maintained in bunkers during the early days of the war, Herzog states (p. 257), "The attack of the Egyptian Air Force heralded the major onslaught on 6 October." He (Herzog) also states that the initial Egyptian attacks were directed primarily at Israeli airfields, radar installations and headquarters in the Sinai.

35 Brower, p. 31.

36 Ibid., p. 25.

37 Abraham Ben-Zvi, "Hindsight and Foresight: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of Surprise Attacks", World Politics, March, 1976.

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