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NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE**

**Anwar Sadat's National Security Strategy in the October War: From Vision to  
Victory**

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*“The statesman’s duty is to bridge the gap between his nation’s experience and his vision.”*  
*“[He] must weigh the rewards of success against the penalties of failure. And he is permitted only one guess.”*

Henry Kissinger<sup>1</sup>

## **Anwar Sadat’s National Security Strategy in the October War: From Vision to Victory**

In the October 1973 war with Israel, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat successfully used Egypt’s available means to achieve national ends by conducting a limited military campaign designed to secure limited political objectives. His national strategy revolved around three political objectives: recapturing Egyptian honor in the wake of the humiliating defeat to the Israelis in the 1967 “Six-Day War,” regaining Egyptian territory in the Sinai and Gaza lost in the Six-Day War, and proving that Israel was not invincible. His supporting military objectives were to inflict heavy casualties on the enemy, attack across the Suez in order to regain control of the canal, and recapture as much occupied territory as possible. That a state would obtain its foreign policy objectives through force and statesmanship is not unique, but what is distinctive in this instance was Sadat’s ability to accomplish his objectives while at a considerable disadvantage in both military and political power in relation to his adversary, the Israelis, and while operating in a constrained bi-polar international environment. Sadat’s ability to develop a military plan to break the political stalemate with Israel was a result of carefully crafting specific

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Kissinger as quoted in War and conflict Quotations by Michael C. Thomsett and Jean F. Thomsett, Mc Farland & Company, Inc. London, 1997, p. 48-49.

political objectives and deliberately translating them into clear and feasible military objectives that accomplished his ends.<sup>2</sup>

### **Egyptian Statecraft as Part of the October War**

Anwar Sadat faced a daunting task as he ascended to Egypt's Presidency in 1970. He came to power barely three years after the Egyptians suffered a disastrous defeat by the Israelis in the 1967 Six- Day War. In that war the Egyptians lost an expanse of territory east of the Suez Canal that included the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip, as well as control of the canal itself. Even more devastating was the loss of national pride and honor.

The defeat in the Six-Day War was the third decisive defeat at the hands of the Israelis in two decades. This war was a stunning blow to the Egyptians who had entered the 1967 conflict with what seemed overwhelming odds for success. Boastful Arab propaganda before the war had produced extremely high expectations. In May 1967 Iraqi President Aref proclaimed: "The existence of Israel is an error which must be rectified. This is our opportunity to wipe out the ignominy, which has been with us since 1948. Our goal is clear—to wipe Israel off the map."<sup>3</sup> This aggressive behavior and Egyptian President Gamul Abdul Nasser's continued provocations and rhetoric prompted a surprise Israeli preemptive strike in June 1967. The overwhelming Israeli victory condemned not only the Egyptians, but also the entire Arab Community to a deep, consuming humiliation. It also entrenched Israel as the dominant regional force. The Israelis destroyed virtually the entire Egyptian Air Force on the ground in just three hours of

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<sup>2</sup> The authors are indebted to BGen Hamady A. Bekhiet, Egyptian Army, and a classmate at the National War College, for his perspective on this case study.

<sup>3</sup> William C. Varner , "Six Days In June" Friends of Israel Home Page, Israel My Glory, Internet <http://www.foigm.org/IMG/sixdays.htm>, Oct-Nov 1997, p.1

combat air operations. Egyptian ground forces were equally decimated and within three days the Israelis occupied the eastern edge of the Suez Canal. “Behind them lay the smoldering hulks of... more than 800 Egyptian tanks [which] had been destroyed, and thousands of soldiers were taken as prisoners of war.”<sup>4</sup> The shame and dishonor felt by the Egyptian people reverberated throughout the country—a situation that could not exist indefinitely without some redress.

How Sadat would achieve his political objectives represented a tremendous challenge in an environment of limited national resources and considerable risk. Sadat’s strategy made maximum use of virtually all instruments of Egyptian national power in the context of the early 1970s. He carefully orchestrated their implementation with brilliant strategic effect.

### **Anwar Sadat’s Political Objectives**

Sadat’s political objectives were calculated specifically to address three critical Egyptian national interests: national honor, territory, and security. First, regaining the national honor lost as a consequence of the Six-Day War was paramount. Without repairing this deep cultural wound there could be little political or economic progress within Egypt itself. Second, regaining the lost territory in the Sinai and Gaza was important to restore Egyptian honor and to insure Egyptian security. Sadat said, “As for us, our territory is partly under occupation and, therefore, our target at both the Egyptian and Arab levels is to remove the consequences of the aggression.”<sup>5</sup> With Israeli forces occupying the entire Sinai Peninsula, Egyptian security and its economic future were jeopardized. The ailing economy was also hindered by the need for a large standing

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 1. All data came from this article

military force—a mobilization made necessary by Israel’s hold on the east bank of the Suez Canal. This defense, required because of Israeli occupation, drained the national resolve and diverted resources that could otherwise be used to boost economic output. Finally, confronting Israel’s concept of security and proving that the enemy was not invincible was an essential element of the strategy.<sup>6</sup> On 30 September 1973, Sadat outlined this key element in his war order: “The strategic goal for which I am politically responsible...[is] to challenge the Israeli theory of ‘security’ with military action according to the capabilities of our armed forces...if we can successfully challenge this notion it will lead to certain results in the near and far future.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Sadat’s Strategy**

Sadat framed his strategy in the context of a “Year of Decision,” and at every opportunity he insisted that the post Six-Day War status quo was not acceptable. Although the “Year of Decision” slipped from 1971 to 1973 while Sadat crafted the circumstances needed for success, the strategic implication remained clear. Egypt would seek to resolve the deadlock with Israel in a finite period of time and would do so with whatever means necessary—diplomacy or force. In a Newsweek article in March 1973 Sadat was plain in his resolve: “If we don’t take our case in our own hands, there will be no movement...there is no sense in turning the clock back. Everything I’ve done leads to pressures for more concessions...Everything in this country is now being mobilized in earnest for resumption of the battle—which is now inevitable.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Farrar-Hockley, A. H., Major-General, The Arab-Israel War, October 1973: Background and Events, 1975, International Institute of Strategic Studies, London England, p. 15

<sup>6</sup> el-Sadat, Anwar, In Search of Identity: An Autobiography, 1978, Harper & Row Publishers, Inc p. 238

<sup>7</sup> El-Gamasy, Mohammed Abdel Ghani, The October War, American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, Egypt, 1993, p. 119.

<sup>8</sup> The Yom Kippur War by the Insight Team of the London Sunday Times, Doubleday & Co, Inc., New York, NY., 1974, p. 62.

The strategy required adept maneuvering and strategic vision. Sadat had to create a set of supporting efforts inside and outside Egypt. Inside the country he had to maintain the support of his people, strengthen his political power base, and revitalize the Egyptian military into a viable force. Outside of Egypt he had to rally international support, mend and mobilize a fractured Arab community, and carefully consider superpower involvement.

### **Risks of Sadat's Strategy**

In the context of the world in 1973 Sadat's strategy was extremely risky. Egypt had no real staying power for a war of attrition. Success, if it was to be achieved, had to be quick and decisive. The presence of the superpowers dramatically raised the stakes for Egypt. Not only could the United States and the Soviet Union attempt to prevent the war or intervene before Sadat's objectives were achieved, but there was the potential for a superpower confrontation. None of these scenarios served Egypt's interests. Sadat had already seen Russia's reluctance to supply him with the offensive weapons he needed to conduct an assault on the Israelis and he was aware that the goals of the superpowers were not the same as his. Sadat observed that: "It was clear that the stalemate--no peace, no war-- suited the superpowers."<sup>9</sup> To reject the Soviets outright could leave him isolated politically and without the support he needed to prosecute a war against Israel backed up by the United States. However, "the Soviet Union was in a poor bargaining position. Its influence in the Middle East largely depended on a presence in Egypt."<sup>10</sup> In the end, Sadat calculated that the Soviets needed him as much as he needed them.

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<sup>9</sup> The Yom Kippur War p. 54.

<sup>10</sup> The Yom Kippur War p. 54.

Economically an ill-timed war could bring financial ruin to a nation already in serious economic straits. The loss of revenues from the Suez Canal had a serious impact on the country. "...Let me tell you that our economy has fallen below zero," Sadat told his senior commanders on 30 September 1973, "We have commitments (to the banks, and so on) we should but cannot meet by the end of the year. In three months time, by, say, 1974, we shan't have enough bread in the pantry!"<sup>11</sup> Egypt had already been in a sizable mobilization for several years and the strain of longer commitments could derail future economic recovery, not to mention his own political viability.

Sadat incurred significant domestic political risks as well. Several groups were challenging his power and pushing for immediate action. Sadat was forced to defend his position and fight off a coup attempt led by rival Ali Sabry. Ali Sabry was a Marxist and commander of Egypt's air defense forces who was also favored by the Russians in 1971 "as the better long term bet."<sup>12</sup> Sadat also quelled journalist and student derision over delays in the "Year of Decision" in 1972. To lose in battle would seriously limit his basis for authority. A military defeat could easily harm the country's international standing and solidify Israel's territorial gains made in the 1967 war. Such pressures, combined with the country's economic troubles could stir domestic unrest, plunge the country into turmoil, and lead to Sadat's fall from power. Sadat's continuing reference to the inevitability of war with Israel reflected increasing international and domestic pressures.

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<sup>11</sup> Sadat, p. 254.

<sup>12</sup> The Yom Kippur War by the Insight Team of the London Sunday Times, Doubleday & Co, Inc., New York, NY., 1974, p. 60.

## **Ends vs. Means: The Context of Egyptian Strategy**

Sadat's effort to craft a national strategy was limited by a deficit of means to ends. Militarily, Egypt alone could not match Israel's tanks or air force. Israel had soundly defeated Egypt and with continued backing from its ally, the United States, remained Egypt's number one national security threat. Sadat's lack of offensive military equipment limited his ability to "take our case in our own hands."<sup>13</sup> Politically, Sadat faced domestic challenges to his authority, particularly over the perception of his lack of decisive action against Israel. Yet, Sadat believed that an attack on Israel would fail without adequate preparation. Diplomatically, Egypt suffered from a lack of credibility, a fractured Arab Community, and the oversight of nuclear-armed superpowers. Economically, Egypt was mired in financial difficulties.

Sadat turned this apparent shortfall in means into an asset. While the world contented itself on the "knowledge" that Egypt was not able or willing to mount a credible attack on the Israelis, Sadat began to strengthen Egypt. He started to coordinate the country's national power and waited until the pieces of the strategic puzzle were laid in place to support his objectives. Sadat believed any success would break the stalemate in negotiations. Superpower intervention at the appropriate time would heighten awareness of the success and provide possibilities for resolution. Sadat believed that "if we could recapture even 4 inches of Sinai territory (by which I meant a foothold, pure and simple)...the whole situation would change..."<sup>14</sup> It was the timing and preparation of that effort that mattered. Henry Kissinger pointed out after the war that, "What literally no one understood beforehand was the mind of the man: Sadat aimed not for territorial

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<sup>13</sup> The Yom Kippur War, p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> Sadat, p. 244

gain but for a crisis that would alter the attitudes into which the parties were frozen—and thereby open the way for negotiation.”<sup>15</sup> By limiting the ends of his political objectives, Sadat was able to provide focus for his limited means.

### **Alternative Approaches**

Sadat had few options. To demobilize would send the worst possible message both domestically and internationally. It would essentially be an admission of defeat. If Sadat kept his standing forces without regaining the revenues lost by the Israeli control of the Suez Canal, Egypt would go bankrupt. While the superpowers and Israel were satisfied with the status quo, Egypt would not let Sadat stay in power if he was not able to bring about the a significant change in the situation. He had to use his military despite the fact that Israel’s military power was superior.

### **Sadat’s Preparation to Achieve the Political Objectives**

It was in creating the circumstances for success that Anwar Sadat demonstrated impressive skill in statecraft. As Henry Kissinger said in his memoirs, “...Sadat fought a war not to acquire territory but to restore Egypt’s self respect and thereby increase its diplomatic flexibility. Rare is the statesman who at the beginning of a war has so clear a perception of its political objective; rarer still is the war fought to lay the basis for moderation in its aftermath.”<sup>16</sup> Sadat’s strategy involved many parallel actions in domestic politics, international politics, and his own military forces all emanating from the primary objectives.

For three years he prepared his people and his political power base for war. Domestic pressures highlighted the belief that “Egypt’s only solution was war, as soon as

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<sup>15</sup> Kissinger, Henry, Years of Upheaval, Little, Brown, and Company, New York, NY., 1982, p. 460.

possible.”<sup>17</sup> While in 1971 Sadat’s concerns about Egypt’s chances in a war caused him to first pursue diplomacy, he kept his options open for the future by building Egypt’s military strength. This was an early glimpse of his commanding strategic vision.

In 1972 and 1973 Sadat subdued students who protested after they were inflamed by his opponents and the media. The students demanded action, but Sadat was certain that the time was not right. He then reconciled with these factions by giving amnesty to the perpetrators and solidified national unity in September 1973 just before the outbreak of war.<sup>18</sup>

On the international front, Sadat orchestrated an extensive political and diplomatic effort to favorably shape the international political battlefield for his strategy. This was critical to his ultimate success. He carefully and painstakingly built support for his cause in a succession of steps from 1971 to 1973. Despite the cool reception he generally received, Sadat made repeated attempts to gain Soviet support for his war effort. Sadat felt on several occasions in 1971 and 1972 that he had forged a deal with the Russians to supply the arms he needed for war with Israel. But, each time an agreement was reached the Russians delayed and continually discouraged a war in the Middle East. “Nixon made his first visit to the Soviet Union in May 1972 as planned” Sadat said, “The first statement on détente was issued jointly by Moscow and Washington, advocating military relaxation in the Middle East.”<sup>19</sup> By June 1972 Sadat asked Soviet Premier Brezhnev for a specific clarification of their agreement concerning weapons and warned, “that Egypt’s relations with the Soviet Union depended upon the

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<sup>16</sup> Kissinger, p. 460

<sup>17</sup> The Yom Kippur War, p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> Sadat, p. 245.

<sup>19</sup> Sadat, p. 239

answers.”<sup>20</sup> Brezhnev’s response included the phrase “military relaxation” which Russia and the U.S. had agreed to as policy for the Middle East. This statement so angered Sadat that he ejected the Russians from Egypt on the spot. It was a bold move with significant psychological and political impact. While it served to unite his country and position in the Arab world, it still did not remedy the immediate problem of a lack of offensive weapons. Therefore, Sadat had no alternative but to rebuild relations with the Soviet Union. The Soviets also had few alternatives and “to preserve its bridgehead in the Middle East, the Soviet Union had reluctantly bowed to its client state.”<sup>21</sup> Sadat had redefined the Soviet-Egyptian relationship in favor of his country.

Sadat’s international preparations concerned Egypt’s relationship with numerous countries. Syria was recruited as a direct military participant. A military alliance with Syria would obviously reduce the military risk he faced in attacking Israel directly by forcing a two front war. It would also further reduce the Egyptian means to ends deficit and help in uniting the Arab community against Israel. But, he went even further and pursued political support on a broad front. “This is part of the strategy I had worked out, namely that the situation should be manipulated in our favor alike on the Arab front, on the African front (at the [Organization of African Unity] summit in Addis Ababa in 1973), on the international scene (through the Security Council resolution), and in the non-aligned world—at the Non-Aligned Summit Conference to be held in September 1973 in Algiers.”<sup>22</sup> He also renewed ties with old friends in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, tried to reopen communication with Jordan, and accepted the support of Iraq, Libya, and even Czechoslovakia.

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<sup>20</sup> The Yom Kippur War, p.56

<sup>21</sup> The Yom Kippur War, , p. 60

Sadat seized upon what would be a powerful weapon during his diplomatic maneuvering. “One of the objectives of the intensified diplomatic effort within the Arab world was to bring the ‘oil weapon’ into the battle with Israel.”<sup>23</sup> The significance of this effort would be realized “when the cutback in Arab oil production led Japan and the European Economic Community (Holland excepted) to endorse the Arab demands, [and] the isolation of Israel was complete (with the notable exception of the United States).”<sup>24</sup> As Sadat later reflected “Three weeks before Zero Hour, the support from more than a hundred countries had been secured. It had taken me many months—from January to September—to prepare the world for the war.”<sup>25</sup> With the political and diplomatic battlefield shaped, Sadat could now focus on the military element of power.

Sadat prepared his military forces to be a key instrument of his foreign policy. His previously mentioned reconciliation efforts with the Soviet Union freed up the offensive equipment and training needed to conduct the war. Financial backing from Saudi Arabia and direct military aid from the Soviet Union considerably bolstered his resources. He infused the military with money to support upgrades, training, and improved defense along the Suez Canal. These initiatives and Sadat’s desire to keep his senior commanders involved went far in restructuring the civil-military relationship and transformed the military into an effective instrument of policy. Sadat had acted to prevent politically uncontrolled and, more importantly, strategically uncoordinated aggression against the Israelis from jeopardizing his national aims. These preparations formed the foundation for building his military plan.

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<sup>22</sup> Sadat, p. 240.

<sup>23</sup> Bard E. O’Neill, *The October War: A Political-Military Assessment*, *Air University Review* 25 (Jul-Aug 1974), p. 31

<sup>24</sup> O’Neill, p. 31

## **Military Strategy in the October War**

Finally, after thoughtfully considering his national objectives and coordinating all of the elements of power, Sadat began to concentrate on a military strategy. In order to translate his political objectives into a military strategy Sadat first had to replace the War Minister, Muhammad Sadek. The Egyptian President had lost confidence in his War Minister because Sadek was not actively preparing for war as he had been ordered. Ahmed Ismail Ali replaced Sadek in October 1972.<sup>26</sup> The President and his new War Minister then reviewed the friendly and enemy situation at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

The strategic military concept that emerged was the result of Egyptian political and military leaders' careful appreciation of the centers of gravity, military capabilities, and vulnerabilities of Egypt and Israel. By today's definition centers of gravity are: "Those characteristics, capabilities, or localities from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight."<sup>27</sup> While the term, "center of gravity," a concept of Clausewitz, may not have been formally used by President Sadat and War Minister Ali, the military strategy that they devised showed an obvious appreciation for its importance.

At the strategic level Egypt's center of gravity was its reliance on an Arab coalition effort in order to place Israel on the horns of a dilemma. Having Syria conduct a coordinated attack on a separate front would force the Israelis to split their military effort to opposite ends of its country and prevent them from concentrating in the west within the Sinai and along the Suez Canal. Egypt's operational center of gravity was its

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<sup>25</sup> Sadat, p. 240.

<sup>26</sup> Sadat p. 234-236.

army. In contrast to Israel, Egypt's army of 300,000 was already mobilized, equipped and had conducted repeated rehearsals.<sup>28</sup> At the tactical level Egypt's center of gravity was its ability to conduct combined arms and joint operations. Israel seriously underestimated Egypt's armed forces. It would take a significant tactical ability to breach the water, mine, and embankment obstacles along the Israeli defenses of the Suez Canal known as the Bar Lev line. Most senior Israeli, US, and Soviet leaders did not think that Egypt's military had the capability to integrate the engineers, special forces, air defense, armor, infantry, and artillery necessary to conduct the complicated and difficult Suez Canal crossings.

Israel made the mistake of believing its strategic center of gravity was the control of key terrain. Israel was convinced that it could impose an "informal peace" by holding the occupied Arab territories.<sup>29</sup> Israel's feelings of invincibility after its sweeping success during the Six Day War in 1967 were reinforced by the strategic depth gained as a result of pushing its enemies past the Sinai, West Bank, and Golan Heights. At the operational level Israel's center of gravity was its army, the same as Egypt. However, because of its small population, Israel's standing army was composed of only 80,000 active duty personnel. The majority of Israeli forces consisted of 220,000 reserves and required mobilization.<sup>30</sup> Israel's tactical center of gravity was its coordinated use of armor and air. Given the limited size of its standing force and the requirement to project and sustain military power against two fronts, these lines were long and extended. The

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<sup>27</sup> Joint Pub 1-02, DOD, 1998, p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> Farrar-Hockley, p. 15

<sup>29</sup> Moshe Dayan as quoted in *The October War* by Mohammed Abdel Ghani El-Gamasy, American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, Egypt, 1993 p. 184.

<sup>30</sup> Farrar-Hockley, p. 15

Egyptians would use the vulnerability of Israel's lines of communication to unhinge the Israeli tactical center of gravity.

Sadat and his War Minister reviewed the military capabilities and vulnerabilities of both sides. They were aware of Israel's air power, armor capability and super power ally, the United States. Egypt could not directly oppose the United States. Sadat and his War Minister had carefully evaluated the time it would take for the Israeli army to mobilize and reach the Egyptian front. Additionally, they understood that because of the enemy's small population, high casualties would have a significant impact on the Israelis. The Egyptian President was also keenly aware of his country's critical vulnerability – the need for surprise. If the Israelis uncovered the Egyptian attack plan they could either mobilize and reinforce the Bar Lev line or conduct a pre-emptive spoiling attack. Either of these Israeli courses of action would make an Egyptian attack impossible.

### **Sadat's Military Objectives**

Evaluation of these circumstances and capabilities led Sadat, in coordination with War Minister Ali, to develop a strategic military concept with limited objectives. The goal was not the total destruction of Israel, the destruction of the Israel army, or the overthrow of the Israeli government. Additionally, Egypt would not attempt to regain the entire Sinai. Sadat prudently realized that such objectives were beyond his military capabilities and involved unacceptable risk. Instead, in order to support his political objectives, Sadat developed a set of limited military objectives to be generally accomplished in a sequential manner. First and throughout, Egypt was to inflict the highest losses possible on the enemy in terms of men and equipment. Second, the military had to establish five bridgeheads of ten to fifteen kilometers depth on the eastern

side of the Suez Canal. Finally, Egyptian forces were to liberate as much of the occupied territory as possible. Syrian allies would support Egyptian military objectives by attacking at the same time to seize the Golan Heights.<sup>31</sup>

In order to attack Israel's centers of gravity and take advantage of the enemy's vulnerabilities, Egypt's military forces would accomplish their objectives by using defensive tactics and infantry operating with anti-tank weapons under a surface to air missile umbrella to counter Israel's offensive tactics, armor and air. By attacking across a broad front with a shallow depth, pushing its air defense umbrella forward, and maximizing the use of infantry with Sagger anti-tank weapons, Egypt used an asymmetric approach to counter Israel's strong air force and ability to maneuver. The intent was to use a strategic offense to attack, secure a bridgehead, and move enough forces across to establish a tactical defense before Israel could mobilize and launch a counter attack.<sup>32</sup> This would cause heavy Israeli casualties as Egypt initially attacked in strength against an unprepared enemy and then Israel counterattacked piecemeal against prepared Egyptian defenses.

Any cost-benefit analysis of the Egyptian strategy must take into account the risks and the timing of these operations. Egypt was rapidly going bankrupt. The loss of the Suez Canal had denied revenues to the country. Support from the Soviet Union had proven to be limited and conditional as a result of the Russian superpower's commitment to a policy of detente.<sup>33</sup> Other elements of national power applied in isolation had failed to achieve Egypt's goals. Time was running out for President Sadat and driving him to

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<sup>31</sup> El Badri, Hassan; El Magdoub, Taha; and Dia El Din Zohdy, Mohammed, The Ramadan War, 1973, Hippocrene Books, Inc. New York, NY. 1978, p. 18; El-Gamasy, p. 191; and The Yom Kippur War, p. 60.

<sup>32</sup> El Badri, El Magdoub, and Dia El Din Zohdy, p. 20–21.

act. Yet it was the initial military actions that would be the most dangerous. This would be the first time Egyptian forces had used some of the weapon systems employed and a joint operational concept in battle. During the first phase of the attack, when forces attempted to breach the defenses of the Bar Lev line and cross the Suez Canal, Egypt would incur its greatest risk of military defeat. However, after the fighting began, for a limited period time would be on Sadat's side as long as Egypt caused heavy Israeli casualties and the United States did not directly enter the war. These costs had to be measured against the potential benefits derived by achieving Egypt's military and then political objectives.

To minimize Egypt's risks and protect its critical vulnerability Sadat took several precautions. Deception played a major role in the Egyptian strategy. The Egyptians conducted numerous training exercises that prepared their forces while confusing the Israelis. By the third quarter of 1973 Egypt had conducted six mock attacks stopping short of the Suez Canal. Israel responded by conducting mobilizations twice at a cost of \$20 million against attacks that never came.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the date of the attack was chosen to entice Israel to underestimate an October attack during Ramadan, the Moslem month of fasting, and to lessen Israel's ability to mobilize its reserves during Yom Kippur.<sup>35</sup> Another attempt to minimize Egypt's risk centered on the phasing of operations. Egypt's military objective of liberating as much occupied territory as possible would depend on the situation. Forces would not move deep into the Sinai unless enough build up had occurred and enemy opposition was weak.

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<sup>33</sup> The Yom Kippur War, p. 54-55.

<sup>34</sup> Farrar-Hockley, p. 17, and el-Sadat, p. 242.

<sup>35</sup> El-Gamasy, p. 180-181.

The result of Egypt's painstakingly crafted military strategy was a surprise attack on 6 October 1973 which succeeded in breaching the Bar Lev line, moving the Second and Third Armies across the Suez Canal, withstanding counter attacks, and inflicting heavy casualties on its enemy. While the Israeli forces were able to find a seam and conduct a breach between the Egyptian units, thereby isolating the Egyptian Third Army, they were not able to retake the Suez. Although, tens of thousands of tons were airlifted by both the United States and the Soviet Union in support of their allies (most Soviet support going to Syria), the superpowers were also instrumental in pressing Egypt and especially Israel to accept a cease-fire. In a military campaign that lasted less than 20 days Egypt had accomplished its limited military objectives.<sup>36</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Egypt's limited military objectives directly supported its limited political objectives, accomplishing national ends by using available means. While Egypt's military suffered heavy losses and failed to secure the Sinai passes during the October 1973 War, this campaign made Sadat's national goals achievable. The successful military operations immediately restored Egyptian honor, led to the negotiated peace between Egypt and Israel that returned the Sinai oil fields and use of the Suez Canal to Egypt, and demonstrated that Israel was not invincible. The war caused the United Nations and the superpowers to become actively involved. An example of this involvement was President Nixon's visit to Egypt in June of 1974. The United States pressured its Israeli ally to negotiate and set into motion a series of events that would lead to the Camp David peace accords followed by a peace treaty on 26 March 1979. By

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<sup>36</sup> Dupuy, Ernest R. and Dupuy, Trevor N. The Harper Encyclopedia of Military History, Harper Collins Publishers 1993, New York, p.1348-1354.

restoring confidence in its military, demonstrating Arab resolve, and proving to Israel and the world that the Jewish state was militarily vulnerable, Egypt compelled Israel and the superpowers to move beyond the status quo and toward the negotiating table.

After determining his political objectives and using all elements of national power to set the stage Sadat focused on a military strategy to accomplish his ends. Careful evaluation, planning, coordination, and direction by President Sadat resulted in clear, realistic, limited political objectives. Sadat's brilliant statesmanship was then instrumental in translating his political objectives into clear, feasible, limited military objectives.<sup>37</sup> The military stalemate at the end of the conflict did not negate the fact that Egypt's successful attack across the Suez Canal forced the world to pay attention to the situation in the Middle East and took an active role in encouraging a peace agreement that benefited both sides. No longer could Israel unilaterally and militarily impose an "informal peace." The risk of Egyptian defeat, a very real threat considering that Israeli forces ended up only 40 miles from Cairo, was outweighed by the benefits of a negotiated peace. Paraphrasing Kissinger, quoted at the beginning of this paper, Sadat used his "vision" to get beyond the limited means resulting from his "nation's experience," weighed "the rewards of success against the penalties of failure," and employed a successful strategy during the single opportunity or "one guess" that he was permitted. Going against the will of both superpowers, opposing an enemy with a superior military, and against the backdrop of a poor historical record of achievement, Egypt had accomplished its ends by meticulously developing a strategy that accommodated its limited means.

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<sup>37</sup> Kissinger, Henry, Years of Upheaval, Little, Brown, and Company, New York, NY., 1982, p. 459-460.

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