STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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DECEPTION IN RAMADAN WAR, OCTOBER 1973

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Deception has been employed throughout the history of warfare, and many successful commanders have found it to be one of their most effective weapons. It is so vital that some commentators have elevated it the status of a principle of war. It is a key principle as it enables the attacking force not only to catch the enemy unawares and thus retain the initiative for a longer period; but it also multiplies the effect of force and saves casualties, time, effort and resources. Strategic deception can only succeed if it is encouraged and supported by the top political and military leadership. Using the Ramadan War as a case study, this paper will illustrate how that most powerful principle of war "Deception and Surprise" was planned, and executed using the tenets of military deception. This paper highlights the importance of this significant factor giving recommendations to be applied for future warfare.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iii

DECEPTION IN RAMADAN WAR, OCTOBER 1973 1

BACKGROUND 2

THE ROOTS OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT 2

THE FIRST ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, 1948-1949 3

THE SECOND ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, 1956: 4

THE THIRD ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, 1967 4

THE FOURTH ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, 1973: 5

1. THE PHASE OF DEFIANCE 5
2. THE PHASE OF ACTIVE DEFENSE 5
3. THE PHASE OF WAR OF ATTRITION 6
4. THE PHASE OF NO WAR, NO PEACE 6

THE RAMADAN WAR 6

PLANNING FOR RAMADAN WAR 8

THE AIM OF THE OPERATION: 8

THE PROBLEMS: 8

PLANNING FOR DECEPTION 10

THE NEED FOR SURPRISE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF DECEPTION FOR THE RAMADAN WAR 10

THE PLAN 11

PRINCIPLES OF DECEPTION AND THE RAMADAN WAR 11

PRINCIPLES OF DECEPTION: 11

OBJECTIVE 12
CENTRALIZED CONTROL/STAFF COORDINATION 12
PREPARATION AND INTEGRATION 14
CREDIBILITY 16
CAMOUFLAGE 17
CORROBORATION 18
FLEXIBILITY: 19
TIMING 20
SECURITY: 22
THE RESULT OF RAMADAN WAR 23
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 25
RECOMMENDATIONS 26
ENDNOTES 31
BIBLIOGRAPHY 35

DECEPTION IN RAMADAN WAR, OCTOBER 1973

"As I did stand my watch upon the hill, I looked toward Birnam, and anon, me thought the wood began to move."

Shakespeare (From Macbeth)

Deception is defined as those measures designed to mislead the enemy by manipulation. Distortion or falsification of evidence to induce him to react in a manner prejudicial to his interests.

Deception has been employed throughout the history of warfare, and many successful commanders have found it to be one of their most effective weapons.

Indeed so vital is the role-played by deception that some commentators have elevated it to the status of a principal of war. It is a key principal, as it enables the attacking force not only to catch the enemy unaware and thus retain the initiative for a longer period; but also it multiplies the effect of force and saves casualties, time, effort and resources.

Deception is a means of achieving surprise, which in turn is a means of facilitating the achievement of victory at a lower cost. Deception and surprise are therefore inseparable. The famous Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu claimed as far back as 500 BC that: "all warfare is based on deception." [1]

Strategic deception can only succeed if it is encouraged and supported by the top political and military leadership. Although they must strongly support the systematic use of deception, they should not try to directly control it or intervene in its planning, management or execution. It can only be planned and executed by experts who give it their undivided attention. All deception

plans should prepare the average professional commander to fully and correctly exploit the effects achieved by deception and surprise.[2]

The average military professional commander shows little interest in deception, and is often weary of its use. The only way to change his attitude is through teaching about the successful use of deception by using detailed historical case studies.[3]

Deception in Ramadan War, October 1973 (known to the Israelis as Yom Kippur War) is one of the most valuable and comprehensive examples in modern history, especially because that surprise was accomplished in the open desert and deceived the most updated intelligence system at that time.

Using the Ramadan War as a case study, this paper will illustrate how that most powerful principle of war, deception and surprise was planned and executed using the tenets of military deception. In order to study this case properly and to achieve the main objective of this paper, we must first review the general background of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

BACKGROUND

"...History is the tactics of the past and tactics are the history of the future..."

Gen. Hassan El-Badry
Egyptian Strategic Expert

THE ROOTS OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The roots of the conflict, which has engulfed the Middle East (ME) for most of the period since World War II (WWII), include: [4]

1. The Diaspora of the Jews after the Roman subjugation of rebellious Palestine in the 1st century AD.

2. The Crusaders' conquest of Jerusalem in 1099.
3. The Zionist Movement beginning late in the 19th century.
4. The Balfour Declaration of 1917.
5. The Allies' denial of Arab expectation in the Versailles Treaty.
6. The Nazi efforts to exterminate the Jews of Europe during WWII.

The years since 1945 have been marked by the principal events of four periods of overt or formal international hostilities: [5]

1. The First Arab- Israeli War, 1948-1949.
2. The Second Arab-Israeli War, 1956.
3. The Third Arab-Israeli War, 1967.
4. The Fourth Arab-Israeli War, 1973.

THE FIRST ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, 1948-1949:

The nineteenth century Zionist movements of Eastern Europe shared objectives with many other nationalists of the time, but they did not then possess a land they could call their own.[6] In 1917, Lord Belfour issued his declaration in which was his promise of a national home for the Jews as a response to their help during World War I (WWI). Since that time a conflict broke out between the Arabs and the Jews. Following WWII, the British passed the Palestine problem to the United Nations (UN), who partitioned it into separate Arab and Jewish states. The inequitable distribution of lands and resources provoked the Palestinian Arabs to war, but they were no match for the well-organized force of Jewish WWII veterans. The remnants of Arab

lands were annexed by bordering Arab states, which also came to suffer the destabilizing effects of over one million Arab refugees.[7]

This territory had been under British mandate, which expired on May 14, 1948, and Israel formally came into existence. Within hours a war ensued between Israel and the neighboring Arab states. During the course of war, with some outside assistance, the Israelis created an army that would successfully achieve its goals. At the end of the war they had actually acquired slightly more territory than granted in the original UN agreement.[8]

THE SECOND ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, 1956:

The years followed the armistice declared in 1949 were characterized by tension in the ME.[9]

On July 18, 1956 the United States (US) withdrew promised aids from Egypt for the Aswan Dam project, which reflected the American unhappiness over increasingly friendly relations of Egypt with the Soviet Union. By the end of the month Gamal Abdoul-Nasser, the Egyptian president, announced nationalization of the Suez Canal. He announced canal revenues would be used for the dam's construction. Britain and France raised the issue in the UN Security Council and started secret plans for military action against Egypt.[10] In coordination with Anglo-French airdrop and amphibious assault at Port Said (north of the Suez Canal (SC)), the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) struck an opening blow with a paratroop drop deep into the Sinai.

The invasion didn't last for a long time because of the brave resistance of the Egyptians in Port Said and because of Soviet warning to cease hostilities with Egypt.

THE THIRD ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, 1967

From 1957 to 1966 tension remained high. In May 1967 Nasser ordered the UN Emergency Force monitoring the 1956 cease-fire lines to withdraw. He then announced a

blockade of the Straits of Tiran to all Israeli shipping. This action was followed by the mobilization of Egyptian, Syrian and other Arab forces. The Israelis responded with a devastating surprise attack.

Early in the morning of June 5, 1967 the Israeli Air Force (IAF) stormed into Egyptian airspace, struck practically every Egyptian airfield and virtually wiped out the Egyptian Air Force.[11] Taking advantage of complete air superiority, the IDF then drove deep into Arab territory with classic blitzkrieg operations. In six days the IDF destroyed much of the Arab coalition force and occupied the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank of the Jordan River and the Golan Heights in Syria.[12]

THE FOURTH ARAB-ISRAELI WAR, 1973:

The period from June 1967 to October 1973 was characterized by various Arab attempts to pass from the darkness of defeat into the daylight of victory. The Egyptian Armed Forces were determined to reconstruct their strength and fighting capacity, and they accomplished it in a little less than six years. The record of the six years preceding the Ramadan War 1973 can be divided into four main phases:

1. The Phase of Defiance:

It followed the defeat of June 1967 and lasted until August. The main objective of the Egyptian armed forces during this period was to maintain a calm attitude at first and subsequently to provide favorable conditions for reconstruction while clearing away the ruins as rapidly as possible and preparing for the defense of the Suez Canal front.

2. The Phase of Active Defense

It begun in September 1968 and lasted until February the conflict during this period was characterized by protracted and intense exchanges of fire. This certainly contributed to limiting

the freedom of movement of the Israeli troops on maneuvers or reconnaissance, besides inflicting heavy losses on both the Israeli men and their equipment. To avoid the losses, they began to establish a strong fortified line along the eastern bank of the Canal, the so-called Bar-lev Line.

3. The Phase of War of Attrition

Commenced on March 8, 1969 and continued until Egypt accepted the Rogers initiative in August 1970. During this period a series of limited successful attacks were made on Israeli positions across the Canal by day and night. The aim of this phase was to reduce the Israeli military capabilities and raise the morale of the Egyptian forces.

4. The Phase of No War, No Peace

In August 1970, a cease-fire was imposed as a result of the Rogers Initiative, and the Arab guns remained silent until they roared once more on October 6, 1973. During this period, Egypt entered into a new phase of its history, working silently and patiently, planning and preparing for the battle to recover dignity and self-respect, and that was what happened in the Ramadan War of 1973.[13]

THE RAMADAN WAR.

Saturday, October 6, 1973: the time – the hour of mid-day meal; the place – the banks of the Suez Canal near the disused railway bridge at El-Firdan. A group of Egyptian soldiers, some in soft caps, some without any headgear, strolled along the sandbank eating oranges, untidily scattering peels on the clean white slopes. A little further inland a water truck had broken down and was being pushed along the road by a group of sweating tired men.

An Israeli observer atop one of the Bar-Lev strong points on the East bank could have been surveying this scene. It was much the same as occurred every day: not one Egyptian within view was wearing a steel helmet. Behind his own position on the East bank, Israeli soldiers were

kicking a football about on a sandy field; downstairs, in the living quarters of the "fortress", was in progress for the more religious, an observance of "Yom Kippur".[14]

Suddenly, at 1405 hours, 4,000 guns, rocket launchers, and mortars opened up all along the Suez Canal on the Egyptian front. This artillery barrage was supported by strikes from over 300 aircraft. Fifteen minutes later, 8,000 troops in 1,000 rubber boats were crossing the Suez Canal and the first fortress on the Bar-Lev line was captured by elements of the Second Field Army at 1500 hours exactly. Many others fell soon afterwards.

Simultaneously the engineers with their water cannons were breaking down the sand ramparts on the eastern bank of the Canal and in 4.5 hours had breached it in 80 places. At 1710 units of the Second Division North of Ismailia took the first officer prisoners. By 1930 hours the first formation of the two Egyptian Armies were established on the East bank along a front of 170 kilometers.

Eighty thousand men in 12 waves had penetrated Sinai to a depth of three to four kilometers and were well dug in inside the Bar-Lev fortified area. The victory in the Ramadan War was achieved with hard labor, sweat and blood after a long struggle. And such a successful and brilliant military action would not have been achieved without a well-designed and clever plan.[15]

PLANNING FOR RAMADAN WAR

"The Egyptian Forces crossing of Suez Canal in front of the superior Israeli Forces can be considered as a remarkable element in modern war, which will change military strategy..."

Secretary of the US Army

THE AIM OF THE OPERATION:

The Egyptian political aim of the operation, was to destroy the main enemy ground formation in the Western Sinai and to seize objectives of strategic importance in order to create a favorable situation for the liberation of all occupied territories by political pressure or – if this failed – by subsequent military action.[16]

THE PROBLEMS:

To achieve the aim of the operation, the Egyptian planners were faced by the following problems: [17]

1. **The Suez Canal:** The Suez Canal is a unique water obstacle 170 kilometers in length, with an average width of 200 meters and a depth of about 18 meters. Its sides are covered with layers of cement and iron, and the water level varied with the tidal flow, which changes direction at six-hour intervals.

2. **The Sand Barrier:** The sand barrier on the East bank, a result of dredging, was increased by Israeli engineers to a height of up to 30 meters.

3. **Bar-Lev Line and the Fortified Defense Area:** The Israelis had established a defensive area to a depth of 35 kilometers to the East of the Canal. The so-called Bar-Lev line represented the most forward part of it and consisted of 31 strong points, each a complex multi-layered fortification consisting of several floors, and containing several reinforced concrete bunkers with

all round fine positions. Wire entanglements and mine fields surrounded each strong point and extended to a depth of 800 meters.

4. **Napalm:** Some points were equipped with napalm tanks giving the ability to cover the Canal locally with fuel, which would produce a sheet of flames one meter in height and raise the temperature of the water to a boiling point.

5. **The Assault:** It was impossible to assault the Suez Canal and the Bar-Lev line except from the front. This is contrary to the traditional method of attacking fortified areas.

6. **The Initial Bridgehead:** The phase of the battle after the initial bridgehead was achieved would be critical, since the attacking infantry soldiers would have to fight enemy tanks for no less than six hours before the Egyptian tanks and heavy weapons could cross the Canal.

7. **The Israeli Defensive Plan:** The Israeli concept of defense was based on the following:

   a. Making maximum use of the Suez Canal and Bar-Lev Line for defeating or delaying Crossing troops.

   b. Moving armored forces from positions in depth to dislodge any footholds, which the Egyptians might secure.

   c. Organizing counterattacks on any established bridgeheads with armored forces closely supported by the Air Force.

8. **The Israeli Mobilization:** The Israeli military economic system was based on a policy of quickly switching manpower from the industrial to the military requirements. For this purpose a meticulously detailed, lightning mobilization plan – reportedly the most efficient of any armed forces in the world – had been devised by the Israeli general staff. For that reason the GHQ in Cairo assessed that in the event of a crossing of the Suez Canal, the Israeli reaction could take two forms:

a. The Israeli high command could still adhere to its 48-hour mobilization plan and Launch its deliberate counteroffensive after that period.

b. They could be panicked into abandoning their carefully worked out mobilization schemes and commit their reserves early.[18]

9. **The Israeli Air Strike:** The experience of the 1967 war had proved that the Israeli strategy to meet any sudden confrontation with the Arabs was centered on a pre-emptive air strike.[19] Because of the problems and difficulties, which faced the Egyptian planners, it was important to achieve deception and surprise as the main means of solving and overcoming these problems.

PLANNING FOR DECEPTION

"The mere fact that we start an attack at all will be the most important element of surprise."

General Abd El-Munim Riad
Egyptian COS after June 1967

THE NEED FOR SURPRISE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF DECEPTION FOR THE RAMADAN WAR

Military textbooks emphasize that surprise is a key principle in planning an offensive; it enables the attacking force not only to catch the enemy unaware and thus gain the initiative for a longer period but also to save casualties, particularly when assaulting prepared defenses such as Bar-Lev line. In the present case, however, the Arabs had an even greater necessity for achieving complete surprise.

The Egyptian appreciation regarding the achievement of surprise went beyond the mere requirement of surprise regarding timing. The surprise must be so great as to throw the Israeli response mechanism out of gear.[20]

In order, therefore, that their intentions – if not their preparations – be kept from the Israelis, the Arabs set about unfolding a well thought-out plan of deception to go hand-in-hand with their security measures.[21]

THE PLAN

From the military point of view, the plan was to deceive Israel as to the real intention of launching an offensive operation and to conceal its timing, the direction of the main blows and the size of the participating force.[22]

In fact the deception plan in Ramadan War was very accurate and neat. It followed cleverly all the tenets or principles of the deception element exactly as mentioned in most of the military studies. Within the following pages of this paper – for the first time in any studies – we shall illustrate how far these principles were achieved in the Ramadan War.

PRINCIPLES OF DECEPTION AND THE RAMADAN WAR

"Among the more perplexing aspects of the Arab surprise attack on Israel on Yom Kippur in October 1973 was the affair of May 1973..."

Israeli BG Yoel Ben-Porat[23]

PRINCIPLES OF DECEPTION:

The principles of deception are mentioned and described in many military studies and doctrines. From the Western and American point of view these principles are: objective

centralized control/staff coordination, preparation, integration, credibility, corroboration, flexibility, timeliness and security.[24] In the following paragraphs we shall explain how these principles were achieved in Ramadan War.

OBJECTIVE:

Deception must have a clearly defined objective. The objective of deception in the Ramadan War was:

1. To deceive the enemy as to the possibility of the use of the armed forces in any assault operation.
2. To maintain the concept of the offensive operation in complete secrecy.
3. To conceal the timing of the beginning of the war.[25]

CENTRALIZED CONTROL/STAFF COORDINATION

Deception in Ramadan War is considered a good example for how this principle could be achieved.

1. The Egyptian President Sadat believed it would be necessary to establish a second front at the opening of the war, which would require the collaboration of Syria and Jordan. In January 1973 a joint military command was established between Egypt and Syria.[26] In August, Jordan agreed to support the planned military operation code – named Operation Badr. Diplomatic efforts succeeded in having Syria agree with the objectives of the planned attack – recovering the territories lost in 1967.[27]

2. The planning for deception started with only 14 officers (eight Egyptians and six Syrians), on August 22, 1973 in Alexandria. They were, the Egyptian Minister of War, the Syrian Minister of Defense, the chiefs of Staff, the Directors of Operations, the Directors of Intelligence and the Commanders of the Navy, Air Force and Air Defense; (in Syria the last two

appointments were held by one officer) in addition, the Chief of Staff of the Federal Operational General Staff.

3. In the first three days of September 1973, the commanders of the two armies, which were to attack across the Canal, joined the planners.

4. On October 2, 1973, the heads of all service departments were informed during a meeting with President Sadat with the war council. Some of those present in that meeting of course knew almost all of the plan; the rest were aware that a countdown had started, though they did not know how or where hostilities would begin.[28]

5. On the same day, October 2, 1973, there was a meeting of the National Security Council, which included, in addition to the president himself, the two vice presidents, two assistants to the president, the vice prime ministers, the Minister of War, the directors of general army military intelligence. The President explained that it might be necessary to break the cease-fire with Israel.

6. On October 3, 1973 General Ahmed Ismaiel, the Egyptian Minister of War, flew to Damascus. There he met in conference with the Syrian Minister of Defense. They agreed upon all outstanding questions related to Operation "Badr", the code name of Ramadan War.[29]

7. Division commanders were not given the order for Operation "Badr" until 3 October; platoon commanders and their men were not informed until six hours before the attack commenced.[30]

8. Coordination with civil and public affairs (ministers of information, foreign affairs and defense) to prepare for deception, also coordination with Syria took place in order to launch the operation at the same time.

9. Following the example of Montgomery in Alamen, studies of the deception plan had begun at the same time as, and covered all fields, military, diplomatic and informational.

PREPARATION AND INTEGRATION

1. Generally the preparation for the Ramadan War, was integrated with the deception plan. It included the following:

a. Study of the Israeli theory and concept of defense.

b. Putting the country on a war footing.

c. Setting the scene politically for the battle.

d. Preparing the Egyptian Armed Forces for war.

e. Preparing the theatre of operations.

f. Planning for the offensive operation including the deception plan.

2. The Israelis did not expect the modern weapons and new tactics which the Egyptians used and prepared in the Ramadan War, for example:

a. The modern anti-tank weapons used by the Egyptians in incredible quantities had a horrifying effect on the Israeli tank charges that had been so successful in 1967. One brigade in the Southern section of Sinai began a counterattack at 1600 with approximately 100 tanks, by the next morning only 23 remained.[31]

b. The Egyptians had another surprise for the Israelis. Not only were the air defense umbrellas extremely dense, but also it contained two weapons, the SAM-6 and SAM-7, that the Israeli pilots had not faced before.[32]

c. The use of water pressure from water cannons to open gaps through the sand barrier was a great surprise to the Israelis.

d. There was no main effort – the Egyptians' plan called for an attack all along the canal. They believed that this would enhance the element of surprise and delay the Israeli response.[33]

3. The deception plan was to be achieved by inducing Israel into believing the Egyptian forces were merely perfecting their defense preparations and raising their fighting efficiency through normal maneuvers.

4. Before October 1973, the defenses on the West Bank were improved, the sandbank was raised and a series of ramparts were constructed above the sandbank itself. Over the days the impression was given that the Egyptians were busy strengthening these positions for defensive purposes only. Also this sand rampart helped to conceal the concentration of troops and the preparation for the crossing.

5. In fact the build up along the Suez Canal started immediately after 1967 war, when the Egyptians began to build fortifications along the Canal.

6. During the fall maneuvers, the Egyptians were careful to confuse the issue. Ammunition was not sent via ammunition trucks because it had already moved up by rail at the time of May. Moreover, the ammunition itself was concealed in underground storage sites, so that its exact amount could not be determined.

7. The Egyptians used the opportunity provided by the annual maneuvers to mask the preparation necessary for war. Guns, heavy equipment, other items were deployed forward and masterfully camouflaged under sand colored netting or buried. Troops were moved into assault positions. For example, each day brigade size formations would move east to the Canal during daylight and return in the evening. What the IDF did not know was that only one battalion from

each brigade actually returned; the others took up concealed positions along the Canal.[34] Special bridging equipment was moved in crates to hide its identity.

8. The assembling of the troops was done over a period of four months by moving units in small elements and gradually accumulating strength near the front. The major elements were shifted to the front three weeks before the attack under the pretense of undertaking engineering preparations.[35]

9. Transportation of special equipment which would make the Egyptians' intentions obvious, was delayed: water cannons to be used for blasting Israeli sand ramparts and some bridging equipment was sent to the Canal at the last possible moment.

10. As part of the deception plan it was decided that the final disposition of the troops should be made by pretending to prepare for the annual fall maneuvers under the code name Liberation 23.

11. The plan also included a well-practiced mobilization of reserves at regular intervals in a way that would allow the greatest part of the reserves to be ready and standing by for action at the Zero hour.[36]

12. Finally, the plan included preparing the troops in order to surprise Israel by the level of their training and the new weapons they had obtained.

CREDIBILITY

1. The deception plan was designed to lie on Western and Israeli perceptions that the Egyptians would be unable to keep any secrets and that their equipment was not sufficiently prepared for war.

2. The Egyptians and Syrians succeeded in convincing Israel that the intensive military activity in Egypt to the West of the Suez Canal between May and October 1973 was a series of training maneuvers in preparation for an annual major exercise.

3. During May, August and late September the Egyptians mobilized three times. On the first two occasions the Israelis responded by mobilizing in their turn at the cost of some 10 million dollars for the May mobilization alone. It is perhaps not surprising that a "cry wolf syndrome" developed and opinions in Israel became split. The September Egyptian mobilization took place under cover of annual maneuvers and seemed to have finished on 5 October, when large numbers of Egyptian soldiers went home on leave by public transport through the center of Cairo at midday.[37]

4. To add to the deception it was decided to demobilize 20,000 soldiers' 48 hours prior to the initiation of operations, that making sure that this operation would be observed by Israeli intelligence.[38]

5. Egypt and Syria succeeded in playing on perceptions that they were unable to go to war because their Soviet equipment was deteriorating (even the Daily Telegraph published an article on this).

CAMOUFLAGE

The camouflage was very simple and neat. It was carried out at all levels as follows:

a. Special units known as "Lazy Squads" were detailed to sit on the Canal bank and fish, dangle their feet in the water, play football and swim in the Canal.[39]

b. Soldiers were forbidden to put on their helmets.

c. Officers who had been invited to parties and attended them.

d. Life continued as usual, whatever activities they undertook, if discerned by the Israelis, must appear as routine repetition of previous practice – the usual non-warlike postures.[40]

CORROBORATION

1. The deception plan called for spreading misinformation as well as for action within different elements of power. It was an overwhelming success and misled foreign intelligence service bodies including the CIA, as well as Israeli intelligence.[41]

2. The Egyptians pretended that they were developing some sort of diplomatic solution through the UN and the Non-Allied Nations Conference, and that the build-up of troops was merely sable rattling. While the press and radio were encouraged to play up the concern of Egypt and Syria over the search for a peaceful solution to the Middle East (ME) conflict, and to refer with disapproval to the belligerent speeches and actions of the Palestinian Fedayin (Commandos).[42]

3. Press articles frequently described friction with the Soviet Advisers, which led to the well-publicized air evacuation back to the Soviet Union just before 6 October.

4. The tour of President Sadat – before the war – to Saudi Arabian Quatar and some other countries was to a large extent part of the elaborate deception plan, to give the impression that the President, like everyone else in Egypt, was simply going about his normal business.

5. Political activities and an active misinformation campaign were also utilized to further strengthen the Israeli perception that war is not imminent. President Sadat informed a European foreign minister of his confidential plans to visit the UN in October knowing that his confidant would inform the Israelis.[43]

6. Other newspapers announced that Sadat would make an important speech on October 16, (to give the impression that nothing might happen before that date).

7. In September 1973, Egyptian Foreign Minister Zayat (who was not kept informed about the Egyptian intentions) was sent to Washington, D.C. to rekindle the U.S. role as a mediator and

"give peace another chance..." and was scheduled to meet Mr. Kissinger on October 5 to discuss a political solution.[44]

8. In September the Egyptian newspaper "Al-Ahram" carried a story that the Army was drawing up a list of officers who wished to perform the winter (Haj) pilgrimage to Mecca.[45]

9. The Egyptian newspapers also announced the visit of the Romanian Defense Minister to Cairo during the first half of October.[46]

10. Additionally, the Egyptians had begun spreading rumors long before the war about their low combat readiness due to the shortages of spare parts and low maintenance levels in some of their units. That was written even in the British newspapers.[47]

11. Another minor – but unplanned coincidence – was that at about this time an American company signed an agreement to build an oil pipeline at Adabiyah on the Suez gulf, which would be within the same area of hostilities. This was taken as a further indication that Egypt was expecting a long period of peace.

FLEXIBILITY:

1. The deception plan was based on taking advantage of the enemy's reactions. The armed forces were made to look as if defensively deployed rather than prepared for offensive operations, in case some of the deception plan activities struck the Israelis as actual and operational rather than routine. While preparations continued, defensive lines in depth were built to meet any sudden Israeli attacks.[48]

2. When the High Command went to "Center number 10"(the operational headquarters), the walls were covered with the maps of "Liberation 23"(The maps of the annual maneuver). And it was then a simple and flexible matter to switch the troops from "Liberation 23" to their position to launch "Badr" the codename of the real assault.

TIMELINESS

1. Among the principal factors that contributed to strategic surprise was the selection of the timing for the offensive. This process included the selection of the most suitable month of the year, the most convenient day of the month, and the best hour of the day for launching the attack.[49]

2. **The Month**: The month of October was chosen because of the following considerations:

   a. Israel would be preoccupied with the general elections to be held on October 28.

   b. The Israeli calendar was marked with several religious festivals (such as the Yom Kippur, the Day of the Jewish New Year).

   c. October coincided with the month of Ramadan with its deep effect upon the Egyptian Armed Forces. The Israelis would not expect an offensive during the Muslim time of religious fasting.

   d. The nights were long enough to provide the 12 hours of darkness, which the crossing plan required.

   e. It was the last month before the winter snow in Syria and the weather conditions were perfect for mounting operations.

   f. It was about the earliest time at which the Armed Forces could guarantee to be fully prepared in the use of their new equipment.

   g. This month also suited the naval operations considering the air and sea conditions.[50]

3. **The Day:** The sixth day of the month was selected because of the following:

   a. It coincided with the day of Kippur (and also Saturday), when activities in Israel would be at a standstill.

   b. The moon was full from sunset until it set at midnight. This allowed sufficient

moonlight for the construction of bridges and ferries. Thereafter darkness would cover their use.

c. The tidal characteristics of the Canal were most suitable. The difference between ebb and tide levels were the minimum, which facilitated crossing and bridging operations over the Canal.

d. Any date after this would have involved a full moon and a greater quantity of water in the Canal.[51]

4. **The Hour:** 1400 hours was chosen as the time for H hour (allowed 3.5 hours of day light before the last light) for the following reasons:

a. It permitted the assault crossing of the Canal and the capture of the Bar-Lev line before darkness.

b. The Egyptians had some hours of daylight for the crossing followed by six hours of moonlight, during which the bridging of the Canal was completed, and a further six hours of total darkness during which the armors were brought across.

c. There was time for two waves of air strikes during daylight.

d. There was sufficient time before darkness to bring forward engineer equipment from its assembly areas to the Canal and to breach the sand barrier with water pumps.

e. It suited the Egyptians' intentions to drop airborne forces in the rear of the Israelis just before nightfall.

f. The daylight hours also gave an opportunity to the Arab artillery to direct its fire accurately.

g. The Egyptians would be attacking out of a lowering sun with obvious disadvantage to the Israelis who would have the setting sun in their eyes.

h. It conformed to the requirements of the first phase of the Syrian attack on the Golan Heights.

i. It would give Israel no time to concentrate its air force during daylight and would not be able to retaliate until the morning of the second day.[52]

SECURITY:

1. The operational security measures taken by the Egyptians were extremely effective.[53] The planning disguised as routine strategic planning was confined to the conference rooms of the general headquarters.

2. The room in which the 14 officers met had been checked and rechecked for any possibility of bugging. No electronic devices of any sort were allowed. No notes were to be taken except by one officer – the Egyptian Director of Operations, who kept the minutes in pencil and subsequently made two copies only for the Egyptian and Syrian presidents. When they had left the room, none of the officers were allowed to communicate with one another by writing or by telephone, only by word of mouth.

3. In the several command posts of the Egyptian armed forces the final touches were applied prior to the initiation of the operation. Maps and documents for the ongoing maneuvers were removed. Locked safes were opened and the real maps and documents were unfolded.[54]

4. At the outset of the planning stage the pattern was mixed in a way that would insure absolute secrecy. The "successive planning" method was chosen so that requirements for action gradually were shifted from one level to a lower level in accordance with a fixed time scheme. Planning on all levels was confined to a certain limited group of staff officers. No officers outside this group were allowed to handle the plan documents.[55]

5. At first the secret was preserved because only two people shared it – President Sadat and General Ismaiel, the Minister of Defense. However, as the preparations progressed, more and more individuals were included. Orders had to be drafted carefully with mission paragraphs being in different forms and at some levels within the framework of different formation exercise instructions.

6. Almost all orders were issued less than 48 hours beforehand and some pilots received orders as they got into their cockpits. Some troops in the 3rd Field Army had only 15 minutes warning.

7. As a lieutenant, commanding the Mortar Company of an Infantry Battalion in El-Quantara South of Port-Said, I was informed about the operation only at 1200 hours on the 10th day of Ramadan (6 October 1973) when our Commander called the officers for a meeting saying:

> *"Gentlemen, be prepared, today may be we shall have our breakfast (for Muslims breakfast in the holy month of Ramadan is at the time of sunset) on Bar-Lev Line or in paradise. The fire preparation for the war will start at 1405...Al-Hamdo-L-Allah (thanks God)!"*

THE RESULTS OF RAMADAN WAR

> *"The Bar-Lev Line proved itself a piece of Gryere Swiss cheese, having more holes than cheese itself..."*
>
> *Dayan, Minister of Israeli Defense*
> *During Ramadan War*

As General Ismail noted, the Ramadan War had several results of which the most important are:

1. It led to a total Arab unity, never before achieved.
2. It confirmed national unity in a way never experienced before in Egypt.
3. It restored confidence to the Egyptian Armed Forces and so restored the Egyptian people's faith in their Army.

4. It put an end to the myth of the invincible Israeli Army.
5. It changed military strategy all over the world. Military staffs of the major powers are studying and analyzing the Ramadan War. Some countries have stopped producing weapons that the war proved were outdated.
6. It substantially modified world military equilibrium.
7. It animated the dormant Middle East crisis, leading the whole world, East and West, to inquire about the Palestinian people. [56]

Besides (from my own point of view):

8. It led to a tremendous victory of the Egyptians and Arabs, as well as to the liberation of entire territories of Sinai which was occupied after the 1967 war.
9. That victory was the starting point for Sadat's peace initiative in 1976 and the peace agreements between Egypt and Israel in "Camp David." From my point of view that is considered a new international philosophy for how to solve armed conflict.
10. Also it is considered the main reason for the peace movements taking place now between the Arabs and Israel.
11. On the other hand it restored the Arabic and international respect to Egypt and its leadership which had collapsed after the 1967 war.
12. The Ramadan War was one of the main reasons behind the reevaluation of the U.S. strategy towards the ME, which later led to strong relations with Egypt.
13. It proved that the Egyptian soldier is still a brave and bold soldier as he has been since ancient history. Prophet Mohamed stated about the Egyptian soldier: "He is the best soldier on the globe."

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"Strategic diversion and the element of surprise are still possible if they are well reared, despite all listening and photographic devices..."

Anwar El-Sadat,Former President of Egypt

The National Security Strategy should perform the national interests of the Nation. One of the main national interests of any nation is to protect and defend its borders against foreign aggressions. To successfully execute this objective, the leadership of the state should perfectly assess the ends, ways and means through accurate evaluation to the enemy, theatre of operations, capabilities, intentions, timing and any other problems.

Ramadan War (October 1973) was a good example for the Egyptian process in evaluating every single point in their situation. They skillfully understood how far their ends could be and what were the ways and means to reach it. The suffering of six years after their defeat in 1967 was the spark of their success.

Because of the "no war – no peace" situation after August 1970 the case was frozen. The Egyptians decided to solve the problem in their own way. Their goal was to cross the Suez Canal until a limited depth in the eastern bank and seize decisive objectives in order to create a favorable environment for a peaceful solution. At that time the only way to reach these ends was a well-planned successful assault to the Suez Canal. Consequently the only means to launch such a successful operation should be a well-prepared armed force.

In cooperation with the Syrians, the Egyptian planners faced many difficult problems. They tried to solve most of it. But still the element of surprise was essential to ensure their success and to overcome all those problems.

During the Ramadan War, deception proved itself one of the most effective principles of war and can be considered the foremost one. The Egyptians and Syrians succeeded in achieving a brilliant deception plan, in which all principles of deception were accomplished in a very integrative, balanced and comprehensive way.

The deception plan, the operational security, the qualitative improvements in Egypt's forces since 1967, the advanced weapons and the cohesive Egyptian/Syrian strategy, all these factors certainly contributed to Israeli confusion and defeat. On the other hand, the Israelis did not believe that the Arabs were able to attack depending on themselves, they did not consider the Arabs might hold a different definition of victory. This hubris and inflexibility of the Israelis created self-deception and a false sense of security.

A final word is that the Ramadan War was different from the first three rounds in many aspects. The first one in 1948 was after the establishment of Israel. In fact it was not a deeply felt serious operation. In 1956 the British and French supported the Israelis. In 1967 their pre-emptive strike against the Egyptian Air Force gave them the superiority of the skies and they held the initiative. But this time, during the Ramadan War, it was different as it is considered the first real examination for the Egyptian soldier and his real first confrontation face to face with the Israeli soldier. This time came as a complete surprise and a tremendous victory for Egypt and the Arabs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The deception plan in the Ramadan War was the main factor of victory and it is therefore very important that especially strategic leaders should study it. It is also worthy of special consideration for war in central Europe and some other countries because of the many rivers and water obstacles, which occur in it.

2. Like the operational plan, the deception plan should be preceded by a detailed appreciation of factors effecting execution.

3. Special significance should be given to the factor of surprise.

Principles of Deception

In order to successfully achieve the deception plan, we should perform all the principles of deception for which I recommend the following:

1. The objective of the deception plan should correspond to the aim of the operational plan as well as to the political moves (Ends).

2. The fewer planners for deception, the more successful it is to accomplish the principle of centralized control.

3. There should be accurate coordination between all the authorities of the nation(s) involved in planning and to all levels, but not to the point that this may ruin the secrecy of planning.

4. The preparations for deception should be made carefully that the real intentions would not be indicated to the enemy.

5. Credibility can be achieved if we succeed to attract the attention of the enemy to opposite intentions.

6. We should make use of all the resources – outside and inside the country – to provide the enemy with false information, thus achieving the principle of corroboration.

7. Flexibility should be considered during the preparation of deception.

8. To surprise the enemy, timing (d-day, h-hour) should be carefully selected according to all factors which might affect the plan.

9. For security reasons special care should be given to the secrecy of the planning. There should be a minimum number of planners, which can be gradually increased.

In order to integrate the principles of deception, I recommend considering the following principles as one factor (one integrative element):

1. Centralized control, staff coordination and security.
2. Credibility and corroboration.
3. Preparation and flexibility.

I also recommend adding the following principles:

1. **Simplicity:** The deception plan should be very simple to be easily controlled and secured.

2. **Originality:** Activities in the plan better not be a repetition of previous plans. Unexpected and new ideas are required.

3. **Integration:** The correspondence and integration of carrying out all principles and activities.

4. **Comprehensiveness:** The plan is to include all principles of all levels (strategic, operational and tactical), all elements of power, all sectors, etc. (As many operations as possible should move in the same direction.)

To avoid a sudden attack from an enemy, I recommend planning an anti-deception plan based on the following principles:

1. **Prediction:** By studying the current political, economic, military and social situation, we can predict the possible threats to the nation in the future.

2. **Suspicion:** We should be suspicious of any movements or changes regarding our enemy, because it could be directed against us.

3. **Investigation:** The role of intelligence is important to provide us permanent information about any activities and intentions of our enemy.

4. **Warning:** In case of discovering any offensive intentions of our enemy, we should immediately warn all the authorities in the country, especially the armed forces, as to respond in suitable time.

5. **Response:** As soon as the warning is issued, we have to respond with great care and never ignore any warning.

6. **Readiness:** To respond at the perfect time, the entire nation, especially the armed forces must be always ready to face any aggression.

7. **Initiative:** According to the situation, it is better to hold initiative before any action from the enemy.

8. **Flexibility:** To hold initiative from the enemy. All the elements of the nation's power, including the armed forces, should be able to modify its efforts and plans to execute their response.

9. **Mobilization:** A well-planned mobilization plan is essential to perform readiness, initiative, flexibility and a good response.

10. **Reserves:** Maintaining appropriate reserves to face any sudden attack.

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