STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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THE RAMADAN WAR: END OF ILLUSION

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ABSTRACT

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This strategy research paper focuses the Ramadan War, October 1973, as a turning point in the Middle East with profound strategic consequences for Egypt and the region and worthy of study by all military professionals. The strategic importance of the operation is addressed through a study of the history of Arab-Israeli conflict, the innovations in strategic and operational art, and the long term consequences from the Egyptian perspective. It reflects how initiative (strategic, operational, and tactical), innovation, surprise at all levels, mastery of new technology, and military competency resulted in battlefield success. Egypt's success, in turn, resulted in a new appreciation and respect for Egyptian arms and put in motion the events that resulted in the Camp David Accords, the Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel, and the return of the Sinai to Egypt—a clear strategic victory.

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In order to know what will happen it is necessary
To find out what happened before..."

(Nicole Machiavelli)

PROLOGUE :

Jewish attempts at "integration" into various European societies were undermined by both racial discrimination and the spread of nationalism throughout Europe. A more practical solution, some Jewish thinkers believed, was the creation of a Jewish state, which could be brought about by returning the Jewish people to the land of their forefathers.

In the Zionist conference held in 1897, the Zionist idea was crystallized [i] . It took the form of a world political movement, which greatly exaggerated what it termed "The Jewish Problem" which it sought to solve by establishing a Jewish State in Palestine and gathering therein the Jews from all parts of the World and particularly from the European countries which could no longer tolerate them .

In such a state, Jewish immigrants would be trained to till the soil and undertake other activities which would bring them more closely to the land in which they would be living and thus develop within them what was termed Jewish nationalism as a means for releasing Zionist ambition .

Arab countries at that time were suffering from underdevelopment and foreign rule . The Arab East groaned under the yoke of the Ottoman Sultan ,North Africa was a prey to the exploiting forces of Imperialism, French, British, Italian and Spanish. Every part of the Arab homeland was struggling against foreign domination.[ii]

Between the end of the 18th century and the last quarter of the 19th century, societies such as the "Friends of Zion" proliferated. Piecemeal migration began, assisted by various more or less organized movements. Most of members of the Jewish community in Palestine until the very last years of the 19th century were indigenous Palestinians and Ottoman subjects, or had migrated there individually in the hope of worshipping and, eventually, dying in the Holy Land. The movement which began at the end of the century, however, was entirely different: it sought to colonies the land and set up an "independent Jewish society".[iii]

The Jews who had been born and raised in Palestine, and whose families had lived there for centuries, were concentrated in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safad and Tabariya. As for the newly arrived Jews, who came to colonies and stay, they established agricultural settlements .These early settlers were assisted by wealthy

coreligionists such as the Baron Edmond de Rothschild, who made large donations toward the creation of settlements in Palestine.

The following phase started with the immigration of a group of "pioneers", as the Zionists chose to call them. This group was described as the Aliyah,[iv] a Hebrew word meaning ascent, which the Zionists used to refer to migration and the "return" to Israel. This generation described its migration to and settlement in Palestine with such phrases as "the plough and the sword" the colonization and defense of the land.

For 30 years, these migrants settled in Palestine, teaching the original inhabitants the true meaning of such catchphrases. The sword was used liberally as Zionist political activity matured.

The "second Aliyah" turned to labour and defense:[v] "labour" meant the agricultural colonization of Arab land, while "defense" meant transferring Arab land to Zionist possession by force. David Ben Gurion was one of the pioneers of the "labour and defense" school of occupation. During his first year in Palestine, he organized the first Jewish workers' conference, which resolved to form a "Federation of Jewish Workers" capable of unifying Zionist operations in Palestine. Jewish migrants were taught the importance of violence and supplied with weapons in the hope that they would undertake the "Jewish defense of Jewish lands.

The idea of creating an "Armed Zionist Guard"[vi] was nothing new. It had been put forth by the leaders of the Zionist labour movement in Eastern Europe at the end of the 19th century. This movement sought to organize Jewish "self-defense units" in the urban ghettoes of Russia and some eastern European countries. Isaac Ben Rafi initiated this idea in Russia, and took it with him when he migrated to Palestine. There he met Ben Gurion, and the two men began to work toward the creation of the armed Zionist guard, supplying the laborers on the settlements with weapons.

During the summer of 1917, British policy underwent a sea change, especially toward the armed gangs of Zionists. That year, of course, was the year of the Balfour Declaration.[vii]

The change in British policy was triggered by many factors. Among these was the entry of the United States into the war on the side of the Allies in April 1917, at a time when Zionist efforts had succeeded in convincing US officials of the need to create a Jewish regiment.

In July 1917, Britain reached an agreement with Russia, thereby securing for itself the right to recruit the 25,000 Russian Jews eligible for the draft, at a time when the military situation in Europe did not permit the transfer of troops from the western to the Middle East front.[viii]

By 1937, the meaning of the "independent Jewish state" had become clear. The Zionists regarded the recommendations of the Royal Commission, approved by the British, as the beginning of a crucial phase, which would lead to the "reconstruction of the Jewish state". There was never any question of relinquishing the use of terrorist tactics in achieving this aim, however. The Arabs, on the other hand, faced with Zionist ambitions and imperialist policies, found no response but armed struggle. On the other

hand the Arabs saw that there was no path before them except armed struggle in the face of Zionist ambitions and against imperialist policies in Palestine.[ix]

After the summer of 1940, when Ben Gurion failed to convince Britain of the need to create a Jewish army and a weapons factory in Palestine, he turned to the US for help in creating a Jewish military force. The shift of allegiance to the US was based in large part on Ben Gurion's belief that Britain would emerge from the war too weakened to play an effective role in furthering Zionist plans.

The Haganah, Irgun and Stern gangs launched a guerrilla war against the British in response to an Anglo-American committee's recommendation, in April 1946, that the country remain under British mandate. World War II, at any rate, had brought about a more belligerent and aggressive turn in Zionist policy. The presence of German forces in Egypt caused the Zionist leaders to realize that Palestine, too, could be invaded. When the "question of Palestine" question was put to the UN early in 1947, Zionist military preparations had reached their peak. By the time the Arabs came to grips with the situation, the Zionists had drawn up a clear strategy, involving the creation of supply lines, the defense of settlements, guerrilla operations, and the use of far-flung settlements as outposts from which to launch new attacks. Irgun and Stern were responsible for massacring and terrorizing the Arabs, causing them to flee en masse.

On 29 November 1947 the United Nation General Assembly voted 33:31 (with 10 abstaining and one absent) to partition the territory of Palestine west of the River Jordan there to establish a Jewish state and Arab state, the tragedy of the Middle East had began .[x]

ENDNOTES

[i] Galal Nassar Armed and dangers, Al-Ahram October 1998, NO, 398 .Egypt, Cairo.P., 1-6

[ii] DR. Sayed Nofal Arab Policy in opposing the 0bjectives of the Zionism and Israel, (League of Arab States; Cairo. June 1963). P. 5.

[iii] Ibid., Galal Nassar Armed and dangers P.,1-6

[iv] Ibid., P., 1-6

[v] Edward N. Luttwak /Daniel Horowitz The Israeli Army 1948-1973,(Abt Books, Cambridge, MA) P., 8

[vi] Ibid., Galal Nassar Armed and dangers

[vii] Roy K . Flint, Peter W. Kozumplik, Thomas J. Waraksa The Arab – Israeli Wars, The Chinese Civil War and The Korean War, (The West Point Military History Series, Avery Publishing Group, Inc, 1987) P., 3.

[viii] Ibid., Galal Nassar Armed and dangers P.,1-6

[ix] Ibid., P.,1-6

[x] U. N. Resolution NO. 181 (The partition of the Palestine into Arab and Jewish states with an international trusteeship for Jerusalem.) The General Assembly, 29 November 1947.

THE RAMADAN WAR: END OF ILLUSION
BACKGROUND

"The 1973 war between The Israelis and Arabs can be considered a watershed in American foreign policy in the Middle East "[1]

"Ray Maghroori"
University of California

THE ARAB-ISRAEL WARS:

The years since 1947 have been marked by the principal events of four periods of formal international hostilities :

The first Arab-Israeli War,1948-1949 .

The second Arab-Israeli War, 1956.

The third Arab-Israeli War, 1967 .

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.[2] In 1917, Lord Belfour the British Secretary issued a declaration, which contained a promise for a national homeland for Jews as a reward for their assistance during World War I. Following the Second World War, the British ceded control of Palestine to the United Nations (UN), which allowed the partitioning of the area into separate Arab and Jewish states. Within hours after the end of the British Mandate, a war ensued between Israel and the neighboring Arab states. During the course of war, with some outside assistance, the Israelis fielded an army that would successfully achieve its goals. At the end of the war they had actually acquired more territory than was granted in the original UN agreement.[3]

THE SECOND ARAB-ISRAELI WAR 1956

The years following the armistice of 1949 were characterized by political and military tensions.[4] On July 18, 1956 the United States withdrew its promised aid to Egypt for the Aswan Dam project, a reflection of the American unease over increasingly friendly relations of Egypt with the Soviet Union. By the end of July, President Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal. He stated that revenues from the Canal would be used for the construction of the dam. Britain and France raised the Canal nationalization and revenue issue in the UN Security Council and initiated plans for military action against Egypt.[5] In coordination with the Anglo-French assaults at Port Said (north of the Suez Canal), the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) struck an opening blow with a paratroop insertion deep into the Sinai

peninsula. . President Eisenhower denied the fruits of aggressions to the Israelis, because, according to his own words, "He wanted to meet his creator with a clear conscience"[6]

The invasion was not successful due to the brave resistance of the Egyptians in Port Said as well as U.S.A and Soviet warnings to the combatants to cease hostilities with Egypt and withdraw from the occupied territory.

THE THIRD ARAB-ISRAELI WAR 1967:

From 1957 to 1966 tensions remained high. In May 1967, President Nasser ordered the UN Emergency Force monitoring the 1956 cease-fire lines to be withdrawn. He then announced a blockade of the Straits of Tiran to all Israeli shipping. This action was followed by the military mobilization of Egyptians, Syrian and other Arab forces. The Israelis responded to this threatening situation with a devastating surprise attack. Early in the morning of June 5, 1967 the Israeli Air Forces stormed into Egyptian airspace, struck practically every Egyptian airfield and virtually wiped out the Egyptian Air Force.[7] Taking advantage of complete air superiority, the IDF then drove deep into Arab territory with classical 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.[8]

The Fourth Arab-Israel War 1973 (The Ramadan War):

The period from June 1967 to October 1973 was characterized by various Arab attempts to redress the imbalance and earn a respectable place in the comity of nations. How did the valiant forces of Egypt and Syria achieve this sacred task is a subject of great interest to all the contemporary armies of the world. An attempt has been made in this paper to present how the victory was achieved against overwhelming odds .

PREPARATIONS FOR WAR :

PRELUDE TO WAR

At the conclusion of 1967 Israeli campaign in the Sinai, the Egyptian Armed Forces emerged from a painful trial. They had been pushed into an unequal battle without the slightest chance of winning. We had defeated ourselves and yielded to the enemy an easy victory by the sixth day, which he did not rightfully deserve. Israel's French-equipped air force wiped out the air power and was the chief instrument in the destruction of the Arab forces. Land under Israel's jurisdiction after the 1967 conquest was about four times the size of the area of its 1949 armistice holdings. The defeat had the most far-reaching effects on the Arab States Armed Forces. A painful lesson was learned; all Arabs decided that such a disastrous setback would not befall them ever again.

The October War, which commenced on the sixth of October 1973, had its origins at least six years earlier. The victory achieved by the Arab Armed Forces was not the fruit of that day alone, nor was it a chance victory. This victory was achieved with hard labor, sweat, and blood after a long and arduous struggle. The record of the six years preceding the October (Ramadan) War can be divided into four main stages:

DEFIANCE AND PERSISTENCE (JUNE/1967-AUGUST/1968):

The main objective of the Egyptian Armed Forces during this period was to remain calm and work towards reconstruction and clearing ruins as rapidly as possible. The Armed Forces were also to prepare for the defense of the Suez Canal. Despite the cease-fire, the Egyptian Armed Forces, with negligible resources in men and equipment, were involved in a number of military actions. The first was repelling the Israeli assault to occupy Port Fuad near the entrance to the Canal on July 1, 1967. On July 14, Egyptian aircraft launched a strike against enemy positions, hitting artillery, armored, and mechanized troops. The Egyptian Navy also destroyed one-half of the Israeli naval fleet (the Elat) on October 21, 1967.

ACTIVE DEFENSE (SEPTEMBER/1968-FEBRUARY/1969):

The conflict during this period was characterized by protracted and intense exchange of fire. This limited the freedom of movement of the Israeli troops on maneuvers and reconnaissance, and inflicted heavy losses on the Israelis. 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. Despite heavy losses in equipment and personnel, Israelis succeeded in completing this line of defense, relying on air superiority. This was facilitated to an extent because the Egyptians had stopped the use of artillery because the enemy was retaliating against the civilian population in the cities and villages along the Canal.[9]

WAR OF ATTRITION (MARCH/1969-AUGUST/1970):

The war of attrition continued from March /1969 to August/1970, when Egypt accepted the Roger's initiative[10]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 was to reduce the Israeli military capabilities and raise the morale of the Egyptian Forces. During this stage, Israeli attacks on civilian targets failed to shake the confidence of the Egyptians in the Armed Forces ability to protect the lives and property of the people. Among these cowardly acts were the bombing of a primary school full of children in the village of Bahr- el- Baqar and a civilian factory at Abu Zaabal. Egyptian antiaircraft crews succeeded in shooting down twenty-one Israeli aircraft during July/1970.

CEASE FIRE "NO WAR, NO PEACE" (AUGUST/1970-OCTOBER/1973):

A cease-fire was imposed as a result of the Roger's Initiative, and the Arab guns remained silent until they roared once again 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 self-respect, and that was what happened in the Ramadan War of 1973.[11]

All elements of national power prepared themselves for the upcoming war, a battle of destiny, through moral and spiritual conditioning, rebuilding self-confidence and economic preparations, whereby the Armed Forces requirements were provided and their combat capabilities upgraded. In developing the organizational structure of the armed forces, consideration was given to strategic and tactical balance. Despite Israeli strikes on antiaircraft missile bases in Egypt, Egyptian engineers, antiaircraft personnel, and civilian workers continued their construction and support efforts under the most difficult conditions, with many of them losing their lives in the process.[12]

DECISION AND CONCEPT

"Now the time has come for a decision ....the has come for a shock ...."[13]

"Anwar el-Sadate "
April 1973

The Crossing Plan: Based on thorough studies and war games covering various aspects of battle, a crossing plan was evolved. This included mobilization of the forces, evaluation of detailed operational plans, likely reactions by the Israelis and our own counter actions and above all intensive training of the Armed Forces in battle like conditions. High level and close coordination was carried out by the Egyptian and Syrian Armed Forces, thereby allowing the war to start simultaneously on both Fronts.[14]

THE DECISION TO CROSS THE CANAL:

The final decision was made in November 1972 when Egypt's political and military leaders reached consensus that Egypt could never move forward from the stagnated state of "no war- no peace", without recourse to use of the instrument of military power. It was considered a last resort to persuade Israel of the futility of continuing aggression, occupying Arab territories by force, and ignoring the rights of the Palestinians. There were two courses of action open to the Egyptian Military Command: either return to the war of attrition or launch a limited war. Extensive discussions led to the conclusion that the War of Attrition had proved its futility and any attempt on Egypt's part to adopt a strategy of attrition would certainly be met with stronger Israeli reaction. This meant that Egypt was facing a no win situation.

It was therefore considered necessary to implement the limited war option. This in all likelihood would tip the status quo in favor of the Arab World, by putting the Israelis in a position of weakness in the final negotiations towards achieving an ever-lasting peace in the region and a just solution of the Palestinian problem. It was decided that Egypt had to deliver a strong blow against Israel, while at the same time taking all the necessary safeguards against likely Israeli reactions.

The military objective was to defeat Israeli Armed Forces deployed in the Sinai and the Syrian Plateau and to seize strategic land that would pave the way for the complete liberation of the occupied territories in order to impose a just and peaceful solution to the problem. On the basis of this clear-cut objective, the Egyptian General Command worked out the detailed modalities of the plan with the Syrian Armed Forces.

Egypt was to deliver a carefully planned assault across the Suez Canal to achieve its mission, while at the same time, Syria was to launch an offensive to penetrate enemy defenses in the Golan Heights, destroy enemy concentrations there, and reach the Jordan River and the shores of Lake Tiberias. Accordingly, on October 5,1973 former President Sadat gave the decision for the crossing to proceed. He

envisioned three main tasks, put an end to military stalemate by violating the existing cease-fire; inflict the gravest possible losses on Israel, in terms of personnel, armor and equipment; and finally work for the liberation of the occupied territories in successive phases, depending on the degree of success achieved. [15] This was political war to regain the lost territories, achieve Israeli recognition of Egyptian power, and attain peace in the region and not to destroy state of Israel. A secondary matter was to convince Israel and the world that Israel's military establishment was not invincible and its military achievements could not alone impose peace. Also, that Israel's natural or artificial obstacles would not provide security for the country.

PLANNING FOR THE WAR :

As a part of the deception plan, it was announced the 1973 strategic exercise would begin October 1 and last the expected seven days. Over the next four years our offensive capabilities steadily grew, as our planning became more realistic. The gulf between planning and military capabilities, enormous in 1968, shrank with each year's exercise until, in October 1973 when exercise became reality, plan and capability were one .The problems, which faced the Egyptian planners to achieve their aim, were:[16]

- Crossing the Suez Canal.
- The Sand Barrier.
- Bar-Lev Line and the Fortified Defense Area.
- The Fuel Oil Pipes (Napalm).
- The Assault of the Bar-Lev Line .
- Initial Bridgehead .
- Israeli Defense of the Suez Canal.
- Israeli Mobilization .

HOW SURPRISE WAS ACHIEVED :

The outcome of October 1973 Campaign hinged on achieving complete surprise at all levels. It was essential that Israel should not suspect Egyptian Armed Forces were preparing for an assault across the Suez Canal. This was the most fundamental problem preoccupying the Egyptian General Command. The detailed plan of strategic deception in Egypt and Syria involved all levels of the Governments. Its aim was to deceive the enemy as to the possibility of the offensive by of our armed forces, while maintaining complete secrecy, and to conceal the timing of attack. To lull the enemy into complacency, the deception plan included all preparations for defensive operations, whereas the staging of troops for the offensive was conducted over a period of four months. Included in the operations plan was how to preposition key components of crossing equipment along the front. The plan called for the mobilization of reserves at

regular intervals in a way that would allow having the greatest part of the reserves ready and standing by for action at the zero hour for the offensive.

The criteria for selecting the time of the offensive included the most suitable month of the year, the most convenient day, and the best possible hour for launching the attack. [17] The month of October was chosen because Israel would be preoccupied with the general elections, scheduled for October 28. October coincided with the month of Ramadan and the Israelis would not expect an offensive during the Muslim Holy month. The October nights were long enough to provide roughly 12 hours of darkness, covering the movement of Egyptian forces. It was also the last month before the winter snow in Syria was expected. Essentially this month was the earliest time at which the Armed Forces could guarantee to be fully prepared. The sixth day of month was selected because it coincided with the day of Yom Kippur (Saturday), when activities in Israel would be at a standstill; the moon was full from sunset until it set at midnight. This allowed sufficient moonlight for the construction of bridges and ferries to use them in the darkness. It was determined that the tidal characteristics of the Canal would be most suitable at this time.[18]1400 hours was chosen as time for H hour, permitting the crossing of the Canal and assault of the Bar-Lev line before darkness. There were five hours of daylight allotted for the crossing, followed by six hours of moonlight, during which the bridging of the Canal was completed, followed by six hours of total darkness during which the tanks and other armored vehicles were to be brought across the canal. The assault schedule included two waves of air strikes during daylight hours. The daylight activities included bringing forward engineer equipment to breach the sand barrier with water pumps, and the airdrop of airborne forces to the rear of the Israeli defensive zone just before nightfall. Conducting offensive operations at this time would provide us the initial tactical benefit of attacking out of lowering sun with obvious disadvantage to the Israelis who would have the setting sun in their eyes.

This plan also supported the requirements of the first phase of the Syrian attack on the Golan Heights, and 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.[19] Secret preparations and plans were 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.

CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS

FIRST PHASE: SMASHING THE MYTH

On D-day, Oct 6 the Egyptian Armed Forces launched the strategic offensive in cooperation with the Syrian Forces comprising two strategic thrusts, one in Sinai and the other in the Golan Heights.[20] The strategic offensive was preceded by extensive operational deployment of the Egyptian Armed Forces,

which was concealed by deceptive measures taken at the highest level. These measures were so successful that the attackers achieved full strategic surprise. Two hundred and fifty Egyptian planes participated in the initial strike conducted at 1405 hours. They headed for carefully selected targets: three air bases and airfields, ten Hawk SAM missile sites, major command posts, and electronic jamming and monitoring centers. They were to strike at a number of radar stations, two long-range artillery positions, three administrative areas, and a fortified strongpoint east of Port Fuad. At the same time Egyptian artillery units opened fire all along the Suez Canal. More than 2,000 artillery pieces and one tactical surface-to-surface rocket brigade participated in this preliminary bombardment. The artillery continued its fire preparation for fifty-three minutes, hitting the Bar Lev Line and its strong points, tank concentration areas, and command posts.

Two thousand guns-including many tank guns deployed on the rampart west of the canal began shelling enemy concrete pillboxes on the banks of the canal. Under cover of this dense fire, Ranger groups and tank hunting detachments crossed the Suez Canal to plant mines in tank platforms, paralyze tank action by ambushes, and prevent Israeli armored units from interfering with Egyptian troops crossing the Suez Canal. At 1420 hours the first waves of five infantry divisions and the Garrison of Port Said started crossing the Suez Canal, using approximately 1,000 rubber assault rafts. A few minutes later, eight thousand soldiers reached the eastern bank and began climbing the Israeli rampart thus successfully seizing the Bar-Lev Line. Within 6 hours, more than 80,000 Egyptian infantry troops had crossed the canal, on a front of 170 kilometers. Within 24 hours four additional infantry and armored divisions occupied a 5- kilometer depth zone east of Suez Canal. The first echelon formations of the Second and Third Egyptian armies.

Two field armies (the five infantry assault divisions) enlarged their assigned bridgeheads. They succeeded in repelling and destroying enemy counter attacks. By the end of October 9, the bridgeheads of the divisions were unified so that they were continuous on each army front to a depth of ten to twelve kilometers. Moreover, all approaches leading to the bridgeheads from the east were under control of Egyptian Army.

The first echelons of the second and third field armies accomplished their assigned mission on schedule despite all difficulties and obstacles. The crossing of Suez Canal and the assault of the Bar Lev line, as well as the occupation and firm control of the bridgeheads were a fine manifestation of the combined arms battle. In this every arm accomplished its mission according to a plan that would require the coordination of the highest order.

SECOND PHASE: OPERATIONAL PAUSE AND BRIEF ANALYSIS OF BATTLE :

The forces conducted an operational pause (October 10 - 13), to reinforce the occupied lines, ensuring the security of the army's bridgeheads, and consolidating the crossing sites over the Suez Canal. The pause had several objectives that served the Egyptian offensive such as, to ensure the security, stability, and consolidation of the captured bridgeheads, which could be used as a firm base on developing the offensive eastward. During this pause, there were many enemy counterattacks against the bridgeheads. The enemy carried out successive air attacks against the forces and bridges, using great numbers of aircraft. The enemy was able to generate all those efforts because of the flow of arms that poured out of the American arsenal and were directly unloaded at El Arish Airfield, starting on the tenth of October.

To carry out air defense of the bridgeheads it was necessary to destroy the greatest possible number of enemy aircraft, and to protect own forces through use of air defense assets. In addition it was necessary to achieve a strategic balance within the theater of operations by forming the second echelons for the field armies and the general command reserves west of the Suez Canal. Additionally reorganizing the forces in the bridgehead areas and establishing the required logistical and technical support was needed to develop the attack eastward.[21]

It appeared from the course of battle in the first stage of the strategic offensive that the main effort of the enemy had concentrated on stopping the attack of the Syrian Forces. There were several reasons for this, the most obvious being the fact that the fighting there was close to Israeli territories and directly threatened the Israeli interior. Israel concentrated its main effort in the North pushing a substantial part of its operational and strategic reserves toward the Syrian front. It was also clear to the Egyptian Command that the enemy would be content with the stabilization of the Egyptian front temporarily until the Syrian threat was eliminated, after which he would shift the main effort toward the Egyptian front. This was obvious by the decrease in enemy counterattacks on the Egyptian front.

To foil this plan, the Commander-in-Chief decided to compel the enemy to shift efforts toward Sinai to lessen the pressure on the Syrian forces.[22] It was decided that the Second and Third armies should attack eastward with their forces at the same time clinging to the bridgeheads with the original forces that had been there since the beginning of the crossing, that is, the five-infantry divisions. The plan had many risks, the most serious of the which was the fact that the attacking forces would leave the protected area covered by antiaircraft defense missiles stationed west of the canal. They would be exposed to enemy air attacks, whose density and violence had increased since October 10, due to the arrival of American reinforcements for Israel. It was also necessary to hold firm to the bridgeheads on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal without weakening the main forces stationed there or west of the canal. For these forces

guaranteed the preservation of the operational and strategic balance of the armed forces during this critical stage of the battle.

THIRD PHASE: EASTWARD DEVELOPMENT OF OPERATIONS AND ISRAELI COUNTER STROKE :

At 0615 hours on the fourteenth of October under the cover of the air force and the artillery fire, Egyptian armored and mechanized detachments started the attack. Despite the stiff resistance, the Egyptian forces managed to penetrate into enemy positions for a distance varying between twelve to fifteen kilometers, inflicting heavy losses and even occupying some positions. By the end of the day the Egyptian stratagem paid off, as the enemy's attention and main strength shifted toward the Egyptian front, releasing pressure on the Syrian front. The Egyptian General Command estimated that the attack eastward had served its purpose and issued orders for the strike forces to return to the bridgeheads for reorganization.

On the same day our air forces waged their most successful battles, and also attacked enemy troops that opposed our attacking forces. The Air Defense Forces continued to provide efficient air cover for the land forces and air bases in the face of a concentrated enemy air effort against the Egyptian front. The Navy continued to carry out its assigned tasks of bombing enemy positions and anchorage's south of Sinai. Submarines and destroyers continued to secure our positions and cut off enemy naval lines of communications. During the four-day period between October 15 to 19 more than four armored brigades consisting of 400 to 450 tanks were sent to the northern end of the Bitter lakes. Finally the Israeli counter-attacks succeeded in pushing small forces across the lake and to the abandoned Diversior airfield. From October 19 to 21, Israel troops could not succeed in any other counter-attack, on the western bank of the Canal, while our forces succeeded in destroying many enemy tanks in the process .

FOURTH PHASE: POST CEASE FIRE HOSTILITIES:

Egyptian Armed Forces besieged the enemy forces that had succeeded in crossing the canal and destroyed elements that had approached Ismailia, aiming at occupying the city. Egyptian Armed Forces, in cooperation with local defense elements succeeded in surrounding the enemy troops in a narrow sector of the Bitter Lakes. Egyptian forces were ready to deliver the final blow and began violent attacks on both sectors along the Sinai front, until the UN Security Council issued its cease fire resolution at 18:50 time October 22, 1973. The cease fire resolution provided for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories to the June 4,1967 borders. This was agreed to and complied with by Egypt and Israel on the same day and by Syria on October 24,1973. The enemy accepted the cease-fire resolution because of staggering losses.

BRINK OF DEFEAT

"The counter attack was actually insignificant. It was designed for the television cameras" [23]

"M.Bouver"

A French general

"Head of the French Institute for Strategic Studies"

There was a deliberate attempt to snatch away victory from the Arabs and play down the Egyptians' successes. To achieve this, the enemy continued to press in the direction of Ismailia to seize it and project it as a political and military victory of some sort, but Egyptian soldiers fought with full determination and denied success to the enemy. During the twenty-first and twenty-second of October, the enemy continued its attempt to infiltrate southward (in the rear of the Third Army), but to no avail.[24] At 1852 hours on the twenty-second of October the cease-fire came into effect. The Egyptian forces in the bridgeheads east of the canal held their positions, Egyptian forces west of the canal occupied the second defense zone with Ismailia well under their control. They had successfully encircled the enemy forces on the western bank of the canal and north of the Bitter Lakes.

Advancing under the Protection of the Resolution: Despite the cease-fire, small enemy groups continued to pour to the South and West, bypassing Egyptian resistance and trying to spread out over the largest possible area, positioning soldiers where they had not been when the initial cease fire went into effect. The Israeli objective was to get behind our forces to sever our lines of supply and disrupt communications. Active combat operations stopped with Israel's announcement of acceptance of the second cease-fire. Although limited fighting continued in the southern sector of the Suez Canal front up to 1123 hours on October 28, when the United Nations Emergency Forces (UNEF) began to arrive at points overlooking Suez City to separate the belligerents. The fighting died for a time. At this time the Israeli Command decided to undertake a dangerous operation,[25] to turn the tide of war in favor of Israel. To this end they wanted to exploit the gap between the two Egyptian Armies and secure cities of Ismailia or Suez on the West Bank with a view to diverting attention from the setback that the Israeli army had suffered.

In order to achieve the above, Israelis started to deploy small forces to the south over the mountain trails and roads, avoiding any clashes with Egyptian forces. During October 23 and 24, the enemy forces continued to disperse to the south toward Suez City and the main communications and supply route linking with Cairo. During October 25, the Israeli command continued to strengthen its troops west of the canal and to mobilize major forces to attack the small pockets of Egyptian resistance that were intermixed with its forces. Early in the morning on October 28 the enemy tried again to move

into the city of Suez, but this attempt failed. In this manner the Israeli forces were able to expand their pocket, west of the canal under the protection of the cease fire resolution. This way they were able to increase their territorial gains by more than double than what they had occupied when the cease-fire went into effect on October 22.

At 1123 hours the advance parties of the UNEF began to arrive, and they took up their positions between the opposing forces on the outskirts of the city at 1230 hours on October 28. This action, however, put Israeli forces in a very vulnerable position.

After the resolution: The situation of the Israeli troops in the enclave was potentially disastrous. The Israeli command had, in fact, mobilized seven full brigades in the enclave, according to Haim Bar Lev, the previous Chief of the General Staff. They could easily be captured by a concentrated attack of the Egyptian forces when new infantry, armored, and artillery forces were mobilized to complete the blockade around this flimsy pocket. The position of these troops became more critical due to long lines of communication to their bases in Israel, passing between the Second and the Third armies, and the unfavorable tactical situation west of the canal.

The situation of the Israeli troops on the whole Egyptian front, not just in the pocket, was odd. Fearing that Egyptian pressure would be brought to bear upon them and to protect the approaches to their positions, the Israeli command had reinforced the troops in the enclave to the point that they had reached the strength of seven full brigades. Five other brigades had the mission of holding open the gap at Deversoir, the entrance to the enclave. This was in addition to ten brigades facing the bridgeheads of the Second and Third armies and the strategic reserve that Israel had continued to hold mobilized and ready, in complete contradiction to its military theories or what its national economy could sustain. Israel therefore had about twenty-five to thirty fully mobilized brigades in the Sinai.[26]

The Israeli forces were unable to destroy the Egyptian operational and strategic reserves west of the canal, and those reserves continued to surround the Israeli forces and to prevent them from advancing to the west, south, or north. To force the Egyptian command through confusing it strategically or through upsetting the strategic balance to pull back forces in significant numbers from the bridgeheads in the east. The Israelis could not seize any major cities in the canal area (Ismailia or Suez), and did not have the resources to encircle or destroy or even to threaten the elements of the Second and Third Armies. During more than thirteen days of bloody fighting, the Israeli forces were unable to recover vital portions of the Suez Canal except for a small part of the eastern shore about ten kilometers long. The foregoing shows clearly that the Israeli forces failed to achieve any strategic success west of the canal, although they did have some tactical successes, particularly after the issuance and abuse of the first UN cease-fire resolution. The strategic conditions were clearly unfavorable for Israel as its large forces (six or seven brigades) were boxed in a limited area, surrounded by either natural or artificial barriers or by Egyptians

troops, which could have been divided easily into small parts and destroyed. In addition, the Israeli forces faced difficulties of supply, evacuation, communication, and the daily attrition of men and materiel.[27]

On December 11,1973 Kissinger came to Egypt and Sadat told him "I am going to liquidate the Israeli Deversoir pocket. What will be the American attitude?"

"I know you're ready for it; I knew it before I came to see you" Kissinger answered. "I asked the Pentagon for a few aerial photographs of the battlefield and received a full report. You can actually wipe out that the pocket. You must know, however, that if you do this the Pentagon will strike at you."

"The Pentagon will strike at you," he reiterated "The Pentagon will strike you for one reason: Soviet weapons have once before defeated U.S. weapons and, in accordance with our global strategy, we can't allow it to happen again."[28]

"If you attempt to liquidate the Israeli pocket, the Pentagon will strike at you because this is U.S. established policy. Besides, the Pentagon wants to avenge the defeat of its weapons in October".[29]

Then the "war of the generals" began in Israel, and charges began to be hurled. Everyone learned the truth about that gamble and how much Israel had lost. Most military analysts agree that the battle of the Israeli pocket west of the canal was, in essence, nothing more than a Zionist propaganda campaign. The most accurate label that has been given to it is " the television battle"[30]

THE OCTOBER GENERATION

The phrase "the October generation" was coined by President Sadat on the occasion of appointing Hosni Mubarak, the commander of the Air Force during the October War, as his vice-president. It refers to the generation of Egyptians who experienced defeat in 1967 and who assumed the task of nurturing Egypt back to health and preparing it for the war of October 1973. As we cast our minds back 28 years, we can only wonder how the devastating defeat of 1967 was transformed, within only six years and three months, to the victory of 1973.

After 1967 many analysts predicted it would take two generations for the Arabs to recover from their military catastrophe. Others were more pessimistic, suggesting that recovery from the shock of defeat would occupy a century. Such pessimism was not unfounded. Following the defeat the Arabs lost much of their international political standing. The shock plunged Arab societies into profound political and social crisis, a result of the loss of confidence in their political and military leaders. The enemy had occupied a swath of Arab territory four times the size of Palestine and, in Egypt, enemy forces had barricaded themselves behind two of the most formidable barriers in the history of warfare: the Suez Canal and the Bar Lev line.

The October generation, however, refused to bow to such predictions. They were determined to recover every inch of occupied Sinai. Initiative, self-confidence, creativity, openness to the age, attention to detail and hard work were the cornerstones of their approach to the challenge before them. These self-same principles would later form the articles of the charter of the October generation, led by President Hosni Mubarak, in its battle for peace and its struggle to equip Egypt for the 21st century .

Rebuilding self-confidence after the Six Day War was the most formidable challenge, particularly in light of the propaganda spread by Western and Israeli media. "The Egyptian soldier," they suggested, "was unable to comprehend the arts of modern warfare." The October generation worked between June 1967 and October 1973 to restore morale. This period, which saw the battles of Ras Al-Ish and the sinking of an Israeli destroyer in Eilat, gave a healthy, if surprising, injection of self-assurance. Already, at this early phase, the fact that a large naval destroyer was sunk by a single missile launched from a small craft caused ripples in the usually staid world of military strategists. Then came the phases of deterrence (September '68-February '69) and the War of Attrition (March 1969-August 1970), during which Egyptian special forces infiltrated enemy lines and inflicted a steady stream of losses in material and personnel. In August 1970, a cease-fire was concluded, ushering the phase of no war-no peace. During this period (August 1970-October 1973) many people, failing to realize the significance of the intensive program of military training and planning that was underway, gave way to despair.

It was during this period that the metal of the October generation began to shine. In over 300 maneuvers, replicating the conditions in the canal's zone, they perfected the strategies that would be

employed on 6 October. In addition, our armed forces built the world's first integrated air defense system. They conceived of new methods for combat, a new operational logistic. They installed an extensive artillery stockade to provide cover during the crossing. Our air force was restructured from top to bottom, its personnel trained to unprecedented levels of performance.

Initiative and surprise were the key elements of our strategy in the October War, thereby turning the tables on Israel, which in the three previous wars had exploited these elements in order to capitalize on its technological edge and put the Arabs on the defensive. Learning from experience, the October generation was intent on waging an offensive war in which, for once, we would set the agenda and force the enemy into a prolonged engagement that it would be unable to sustain. This spirit of initiative and maintaining the offensive continues to manifest itself in our battle for peace and development.

The other major challenge facing the October generation was technological, though obviously it would not be with modern technology alone that we would win the war. Rather, our offensive had to bring into play a comprehensive operational conception that would capitalize on our available technology within a cohesive armaments network honed towards the tactical and logistical objectives of battle. That Egyptian soldiers did enter the war with new weapons was part of the element of surprise. That we put into effect a highly coordinated and finely-tuned operation drawing on our combined offensive and defensive forces; on our infantry, artillery and aircraft; on approaches from the land, sea and air, was part of the miracle of our victory.

Numerous commentators have paid homage to this aspect of the October War. The Observer wrote: "A year or two ago, Israel appeared to have a big lead in the race for military technology. The Egyptians' from their experience in the War of Attrition in 1969 had come to realize the importance of technology in combat, and now, after the battles of October 1973, it appears that they have caught up with Israel and passed it in the field of missile and electronics technology." The Guardian wrote: "The Israeli's confidence in their technological advantage over the Arabs in the field of armaments has crashed like a plane in the face of the remarkable success of the Egyptian's use of anti-aircraft technology and tanks."

Even the Israelis had to admit Egypt's military prowess during the war. Reporting Moshe Dayan, Israeli Defense Minister during October War : " The war has shown that we were no stronger than the Egyptians. The halo of supremacy and the political and military premise that Israel is stronger than the Arabs; that they would be defeated should they dare to start war did not hold true. It was theory that it would take them the whole night to erect bridges, which we could prevent, using our armored vehicles. But it turned out that it was not easy to prevent them. Our exercise to send tanks to the battle front was very costly. We have never expected that[31]." Reporting Israeli General Ishio Javitch " I should admit that the Arabs achieved a very large part of their objectives. They proved capable of surmounting the fear barrier; got

into war and fought efficiently. They also proved capable of forcing their way into the Suez Canal barrier. To our great sorrow, they snatched the canal out of our grips with the force of arms .[32]"

The war bequeathed to us a generation of fighters and of engineers, of officers and of soldiers who left an indelible mark on the creative use of modern technology in ways that had never been contemplated in the countries that produced this technology.

The October War marked a turning point in the history of the Middle East conflict, heralding the transition from the battle for liberation to the battle for peace. But its implications go much deeper. The spirit that motivated the October generation has come to guide our drive in all realms of political, social and economic activity and to inspire our dreams for development and progress.

A most important outcome of the October war was that it paved the way for achieving a peace based on justice. Accordingly, Egypt launched its efforts for peace until the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Accord was signed on March 26, 1979. On May 26, 1979, the first phase of Israeli withdrawal was completed on May 25, 1982.The issue of Taba was resolved through arbitration of International Arbitration Tribunal on September 29, 1988, adjudging Taba as a purely Egyptian territory.

TOTAL WORD DOUNT: 7,962

ENDNOTES

[1] Ray Maghroori, Stephen M. Gorman The Yom Kippur War: A Case Study in Crisis, Decision-Making in American Foreign Policy,(University Press of America, Inc. 1981) P., 1

[2] Hassan El- Badri, Taha El- Maagdoub and Mohammed Dia El-Dein, The Ramadan War 1973 (Dunnloring, Virginia: T.N.Dupuy Associat,Inc.,1978) p.,6

[3] Chaim Herzog The Arab-Israeli Wars , War and Peace in the Middle East,(Random House New York 1982) P.,17-107

[4] Ray Maghroori The Yom Kippur War: A Case Study ,P.,8-9

[5] Ernest R. Dupy and Trevor N. Dupy, The Encyclopedia of Military History (New York: Harper and Row, 1986) , p. 1227

[6] El - Badri, The Ramadan War 1973 : p.4

[7] Ibid., p. 1231

[8] Joseph F. Dunford, 1973 War: Deception and surprise (research paper, Politics 219, Fall 1991) p., 4-5

[9] El- Badri, The Ramadan War 1973 : p.9

[10] The Roger's initiative is a reference to the U.S. initiative of 1970 which attempted to achieve an Israeli withdrawal from the east bank of the Canal to 20 miles in the Sinai, and to allow Egypt to reopen the Suez Canal for navigation, but Israel refused to accept it.

[11] El - Badri, The Ramadan War 1973 : p.10-13

[12] Ibid. p.14

[13] Anwar el-Sadat In Search of Identity: (New York: Harper and Row, 1978) , p.,12

[14] El- Badri, The Ramadan War 1973 p. 15

[15] Ibid., p. i7

[16] Ibid., p. 35-37

[17] El-Badri, The Ramadan War, 1973, p. 47

[18] Ibid., p. 49

[19] Ibid., p.50

[20] Arab-Israeli War, October 1973: Case study, 1988. Army War College (U.S.), Dept. of military Strategy, p.41-42

[21] El- Badri, The Ramadan War 1973 p. 50-70

[22] Yom Kippur War: conflict resolution through combat 1979. Jarjura, Sana, p 65-66

[23] Anwar el-Sadat In Search of Identity: P.,267

[24] Ibid., p. 68

[25] The Ramadan War, 1973, El- Badry, p.116

[26] Ibid., P.,124-134

[27] Lt.General Saad El-Shazly, The Crossing of the Suez: (American Mideast Research ,San Francisco, California October, 1980) P.,86-87

[28] Anwar el-Sadat In Search of Identity: P.,268-269

[29] Ibid., P.,269

[30] The Ramadan War, 1973, El- Badry, p.109-113

[31] October War in eyes of contemporary witnesses , Ministry of Information, SIS. Press House, Cairo, Egypt. P.7

[32] Ibid., P12

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