

#### **1973** The October War

## Myth and Fact

- Israel surprised
- Israel knew of Egyptian mobilization
- Traumatic event
- Watershed moment
  - 1-4 ratio (family member)
  - Charles Liebman, (July 1993).
    <u>"The Myth of Deleat: The Memory of the Yom Kippur war in Israeli Society" Middle Eastern Studies</u> 29 (3): 411.



- 1967 Arab-Israeli War: unfulfilled dreams
  - Six Days Of War: June 1967 and the making of the Middle East (2001) Michal Oren
  - Six Days: How the 1967 war shaped the Middle East (2005) Jeremy Bowen
- Domestic politics: U.S., Israel, Arab states
  - All State Department documents related to the crisis
  - Letters from David Ben-Gurion on the Six-Day War @ Shapell Manuscript Foundation
- U.S.- Soviet proxy war(s)
  - realism

#### 1967

#### Jerusalem united

Invincibility of Israeli armed forces

Further resentment of Arab nations



- Israel's failure to detect the war plans in Cairo and Damascus was due to a combination of intelligence breakdown and political misperception.
- The roots of the Israeli psyche which led to the October 1973 surprise can be traced to a large extent to their victory in the 1967 Six Day War.
- Rhetoric coming from Arab capitals did not help to alter Israeli's perception of isolation and rejection in the Middle East.

If Israel thought strategically in terms of defending herself from an absolute war aimed at her destruction, President Sadat planed with his Syrian allies a much more limited war in order to shake Israeli complacency and intransigence.

- Israel's lack of trust in her neighboring countries was epitomized by the unfortunate saying of the powerful Defense Minister Moshe Dayan
  - "Better Sharm el-Sheikh without peace than peace without Sharm el-Sheikh."
- This best explains why the advances by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1971 to negotiate full peace with Israel, in return for the complete withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, were met with suspicion and were rejected by Israel.
- The October War was the response to this status quo which was unacceptable to the Arab world.

- Since the humiliation of the Six Day War, "There was a devastating feeling of crisis and defeat," explains Egyptian author and journalist Gamal El-Ghitani.
- Four months after taking power, Sadat had offered the Israelis a peace deal if they would withdraw from Sinai. Golda Meir, the then Israeli prime minister, rebuffed the offer.
  - buffer-zone

#### Buffer-zone(s)

National Security based on defensible borders



- So, left to contemplate a war, Sadat found an ally. Syrian President Hafez al-Assad had come to power through a coup d'etat in 1970, and he too had a point to prove to his people.
- Hisham Jaber, the director of the Middle East Studies Centre in Beirut, explains: "Hafez al-Assad was the defence minister during the 1967 defeat, and was held mainly accountable .... So, since al-Assad came to power in Syria, he started to absolve himself of the 1967 defeat, and to prepare the Syrian army for the next battle."
  - <u>http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2013/10/</u> <u>timeline-war-october-201310684341831534.html</u>

- Sadat and Mubarak, Meir and Sharon, Nixon and Kissinger, Brezhnev and Dobyrnin.
- It was a vicious war between Arab and Jew
  - neoclassical realism
- Israel almost unleashed her nuclear arsenal
- Superpowers were on a course of nuclear escalation.
  - neorealism
- Peace fraught with delicate tensions, disputed borders, and a legacy of further bloodshed.

#### Timeline

- 6 October Egypt and Syria invade Israel
  - archival evidence show extent of war
- Holiest day of Jewish year
- Soviet weapons
- U.S. airlift
- Israel rallied; won the military conflict
- 22 October; 25 October ceasefire agreements



Israeli soldiers plug their ears as they fire shells from a French-made 155mm Horwitzer gun on Oct. 17, 1973 at the Syrian front lines on the Syrian Golan Heights, two weeks after the beginning of the Yom Kippur War 06 October 1973. (AFP)

Armaments

#### The War

- Massive and successful Egyptian crossing the Suez Canal. After crossing the 1967 cease-fire lines, Egyptian forces advanced into the Sinai Peninsula.
  - After three days, Israel had mobilized most of its forces and managed to halt the Egyptian offensive, settling into a stalemate.
- The Syrians coordinated their attack on the Golan Heights to coincide with the Egyptian offensive and initially made threatening gains into Israeli-held territory.
  - Within three days, Israeli forces had managed to push the Syrians back to the pre-war ceasefire lines.

#### The war

- Israel then launched a four-day counter-offensive deep into Syria.
  - Within a week, Israeli artillery began to shell the outskirts of Damascus.
- As Egyptian president Anwar Sadat began to worry about the integrity of his major ally, he believed that capturing two strategic passes located deeper in the Sinai would make his position stronger during the negotiations. He therefore ordered the Egyptians to go back on the offensive, but the attack was quickly repulsed.
- The Israelis then counterattacked at the seam between the two Egyptian armies, crossed the Suez Canal into Egypt, and began slowly advancing southward and westward towards Suez in over a week of heavy fighting that inflicted heavy casualties on both sides.









#### U.S. starts airlift of war supplies to Israel

WASHINGTON. - The U.S. has been as airlift of military bars sive airlift of military bars sources to Israel to the Arnola arrived in the Mildle East, indicat from unsettling the military bars account of the Mildle East introd in the Mildle East, indicat the Administration became for the Administration became for the State Department's chief that a Soviet atriff resulptiving form the Standown Robert Mc. The state Department's chief that a Soviet atriff resulptiving for the State Department's chief that a Soviet atriff resulptiving for the State Department's chief that a Soviet atriff resulptiving for the State Department's chief that a Soviet atriff resulptiving for the State Department's chief that a Soviet atriff resulptiving for the State Department's chief that a Soviet atriff resulptiving for the State Department's chief that a Soviet atriff resulptiving for the State Department's chief that a Soviet atriff resulptiving for the State Department's chief that a Soviet atriff resulptiving for the State Department's chief that a Soviet atriff resulptiving for the State Department's chief the said the Russians have delivered the state Department's chief the said privately the U.S. The farme of the State Department's the state announcement the state Department's chief the State State State State the announcement the state Department's the State the announcement the state Department's the State State State State State the announcement the state Department's the State State State State the announcement the state Department of both num-ters of the State the announcement the announcement the state Department of both num-ters of the State State

#### OLDA MEIR'S MEMOIRS

ALL the events upon which I Y to touched, none is so hard for to write about as the war of tober, 1973, the Yom Kippur ar. But it happened, and so it longs here — not as a military count, because that I leave nt, because that I leave others, but as a near-disaster lightmare that I myself ex nced and which will always with me. I found myself in on of ultimate rest oneihil at a time when the State faced

at a time when the State faced e greatest threat it had known. The war began on October 6, it when I think about it now my lind goes back to May, when we ceived information about the inforcement of Syrian and gyptian troops on the borders. ur intelligence people thought was most unlikely that war ould break out but nometheless ould break out, but nonetheless e decided to treat the matter riously. At that time. I went to H.Q. myself. Both the linister of Defence (Moshe ayan) and the Chief-of-Staff, avid Elazar, who is known roughout the country by his okname, "Dado," briefed me toroughly on the armed forces' at of preparedness, and I was usly. At that time, I went to situation on the agenda for Sun-

day's Cabinet meeting. On Thursday, as usual, I went to Tel Aviv. In fact, it was a tainant, both armed forces' ate of preparedness, and I was nowinced that the army was sady for any contingency — ven for full-scale war. Also my ind was put at rest about the uestion of a sufficiently early arning. Then, for whatever arming. Then, for whatever to Tel Aviv. In fact, it was a short week in any case, because Yom Kippur (the Day of Atome-ment) was to begin on Friday evening and most people in Israel were taking a long weekend.

weekend. I suppose that by now; thanks in part to the war, even non-Jews who had never heard of Yom Kippur before know that this is the most solemn and the most sacred of all the days in the Jewish calendar. Belleving Jews totally abstaining from eason, the tension relaxed. In September we started to eive information about a uild-up of Syrian troops on the olan Heights, and on the 13th of at month an air battle took ace which ended in the down-Jews, totally abstaining from food, drink and work, spend r of 13 Syrian MIGs. Despite this, our intelligence Yom Kippur (which, like all Jewish holidays and the Sabbath ple were very reassuring. continued Syrian reinforceitself, begins in the evening of

s continued syntan reinforce-nt of troops was caused, they lained, by the Syrians' fear t we would attack. On Wednesday morning, Oc-er 3, after further evidence of clan activity. I met with one day and ends in the evening of of the next) in the synagogue, praying and atoning for sins that they may have committed in the course of the past year. In Israel it is a day on which ce of ctivity, I met with

The nightmare of Yom Kippur

attended by the Chief-of-Staff and the Head of Intelligence. We heard all the reports again, in-cluding the one that concerned the rushed - and to me still inexplicable — departure of the Russian families from Syria. But again, no one seemed very alarmed.

tion poluring mind my office uses one little detail had taken root in my mind, and I couldn't shake myself free of it. I asked the Minister of Defence, the Chiefo-GStaff and the Head of Intelligence whether they thought this piece of infor-mation was very important. No, it hadn't in any way changed that we would get adeguate warm-ing of any real trouble, and anyway, sufficient rein-forcements were being sent to the fronts to carry out any holding operation that might be Nevertheless, I decided to

ourselves. I also said that we should get they were wrong? If there were in touch with the Americans so

all, they weren't just ordinar soldiers. They were all high experienced generals, men wi had fought and led other men spectacularly victorious battle Was I perhaps taiking myse into something? I could answer my own questions. Today I know what I shou have done. I should have ove come my hesitations. That F day morning I should have listened to the warnings of m own heart and ordered a call-u For me that fact cannot at never will be erased, and the can be no consolation can be no consolation anything that anyone else has say or in all of the commo rationalisations with which colleagues have tried to con

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may still reached th

It doesn't matter what lo It doesn't matter what log dicated. It matters only that who was so accustomed to ma ing decisions — and who d make them throughout the w — failed to make that one des sion. I shall live with that ter ble knowledge for the rest of n life. I shall never again be t person I was before the Yo Kippur War. Then, however, I sat in the ' fice, thinking and agonising un I just couldn't ait there any mo and I went home.

I just couldn't sit there any me and I went home. Once or twice the children dog barked, but otherwise it w a typically silent Yom Kipp night. I lay awake for hours, u able to sleep. Eventually I mu have dozed off. Then, at about have dozed off. Then, af abou a.m., the phone next to my b rang. It was my milita secretary. Information had be received that the Egyptians a the Syrians would launch a jo attack on Israel "late in t afternoon. There was no doubt any mo. I told Lior to ask Dayan, Dac Allon and Galili to be in my fice before 7 a.m. On the wthere, I caught sight of an c man going to synapogue, I

man going to synagogue.

Although reassured by the Minister of done. I should have overcome my hesita-Defence, the Chief of Staff and the Head tions and listened to the warnings of my of Intelligence at a meeting on October own heart and ordered a call-up." 5, 1973, that Israel was in no danger of Instead, she went home, to be awakened a joint Syrian-Egyptian attack, Golda at 4 a.m. on Yom Kippur with news that Meir was still terrified of war breaking the Egyptians and Syrians would launch

out. "Today, I know what I should have an attack "late in the afternoon."

reminded me of what had happened prior to the Six Day War, and I didn't like it at all. Why the haste? What did those Russian families know that we didn't know? Was it possible that

they were being evacuated? In all the welter of information pouring into my office that one little detail had taken root in

required. But I was worried. What if







#### Nuclear Confrontation

- The Yom Kippur War seriously damaged U.S.-Soviet relations including President Richard Nixon's much publicized policy of detente.
- The Syrians were driven back, with Israeli troops seizing the strategically important Golan Heights. Egyptian forces retreating back through the Sinai Desert, were surrounded and cut off by the Israeli army. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, together with his Soviet counterparts, eventually arranged shaky cease-fire.
- When Israel would not give up its siege of the Egyptian troops the Soviets threatened to take unilateral action to rescue them.
- Tempers flared both in Washington and Moscow; U.S. military forces went to a Stage 3 alert (Stage 5 is the launch of nuclear attacks).

- Both the United States and the Soviet Union initiated massive resupply efforts to their respective allies during the war (11,14.10)
- U.S.-Soviet Union nuclear forces on alert
  - first time since Cuban Missile Crisis

• Inside the Kremlin During the Yom Kippur War (1995) Victor Israelyan

• OPEC oil embargo







#### Outcome

- Egypt (Sadat) achieves objective
- Syria defeated
- UN Res.340 (October 22 cease-fire line)
- U.S.-Soviet detente 'bruised not broken'

#### Outcome

- Ceasefire
  - Egyptian-Israeli peace
  - Superpower balance in Middle East

#### Outcome

- No war left the Israeli society more traumatized and in search of leadership and guidance than the October War
  - resignation of Golda Meir = Yitzhak Rabin
- Israel was caught by complete surprise, the lead up to this became known is as the "fiasco".
- The war shattered the perceptions of the Israeli decision making elite regarding their neighbors' intentions and capabilities, and led to question of how to best guarantee the long term security of the country.
- Israeli society lost its confidence in her leadership, and this loss would eventually end the dominance of the Labor party in Israeli politics.
  - Likud electoral victory 1977

#### Legacy

 Asaf Siniver (2013). <u>The Yom Kippur War: Politics</u>, <u>Legacy</u>, <u>Diplomacy</u>. Oxford University Press. p. 6. "For most Egyptians the war is remembered as an unquestionable victory-militarily as well as politically...(p.6) The fact that the war ended with Israeli troops stationed in the outskirts of Cairo and in complete encirclement of the Egyptian third army has not dampened the jubilant commemoration of the war in Egypt....(p.11) Ultimately, the conflict provided a military victory for Israel, but it is remembered as "the earthquake" or "the blunder""

#### Legacy

- P.R. Kumaraswamy (11 January 2013). <u>Revisiting the Yom</u> <u>Kippur War</u>. Routledge. "Yom kippur war...its final outcome was, without doubt, a military victory...(p. 185)
- William B. Quandt (2005). <u>Peace Process: American</u> <u>Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967</u>. University of California Press. "it was of prime importance that the fighting should be ended...when all parties could still emerge from the conflict with their vital interests and self esteem intact..the airlift" (p. 112.)... "the Soviets must see that the united states could deliver more than they could"... "the U.S. would not permit the destruction of the 3rd army corps." (p. 123)

#### Legacy

- William B. Quandt (1977). <u>Decade of Decisions:</u> <u>American Policy Toward the Arab–Israeli Conflict,</u> <u>1967–1976</u>. "Kissinger and Nixon consistently warned Israel that she must not be responsible for initiating a Middle east war" (p. 169).
  - set stage for two milestones:
    - 1975 reassessment
    - 1982 Lebanon War

#### Outcome for U.S.-Israel

- Airlift cemented shift from 2nd to 1st role of military hardware provider
- Kissinger-Nixon-Meir played both domestic and f.p. roles
  - Kissinger begins peak of influence (1973-75)
- U.S. publicly no longer seen as neutral mediator
  - U.S. confirmed as strategic partner to Israel since 1967







#### Recommendation

- The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter That Transformed the Middle East (2013) Abraham Rabinovich
- 1973 The Road to War (2013) Yigal Kipnis
- Duel For The Golan The 100-Hour Battle That Saved Israel (1987) Jeffrey Asher