



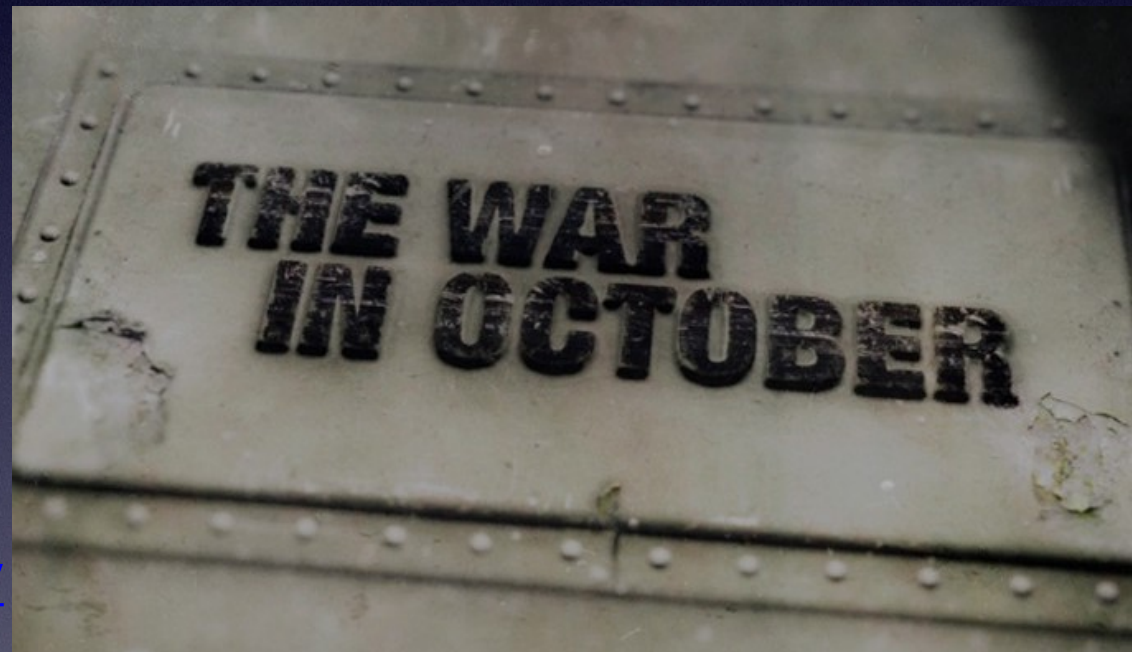
1973

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). ["The Myth of Defeat: The Memory of the Yom Kippur war in Israeli Society"](#) *Middle Eastern Studies* 29 (3): 411.





# Background

- 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





# Background

- 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 planned with his Syrian allies a much more limited war in order to shake Israeli complacency and intransigence.



# Background

- 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.



# Background

- 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





# Background

- 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.”
- <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2013/10/timeline-war-october-201310684341831534.html>



# Background

- Sadat and Mubarak, Meir and Sharon, Nixon and Kissinger, Brezhnev and Dobrynin.
- 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

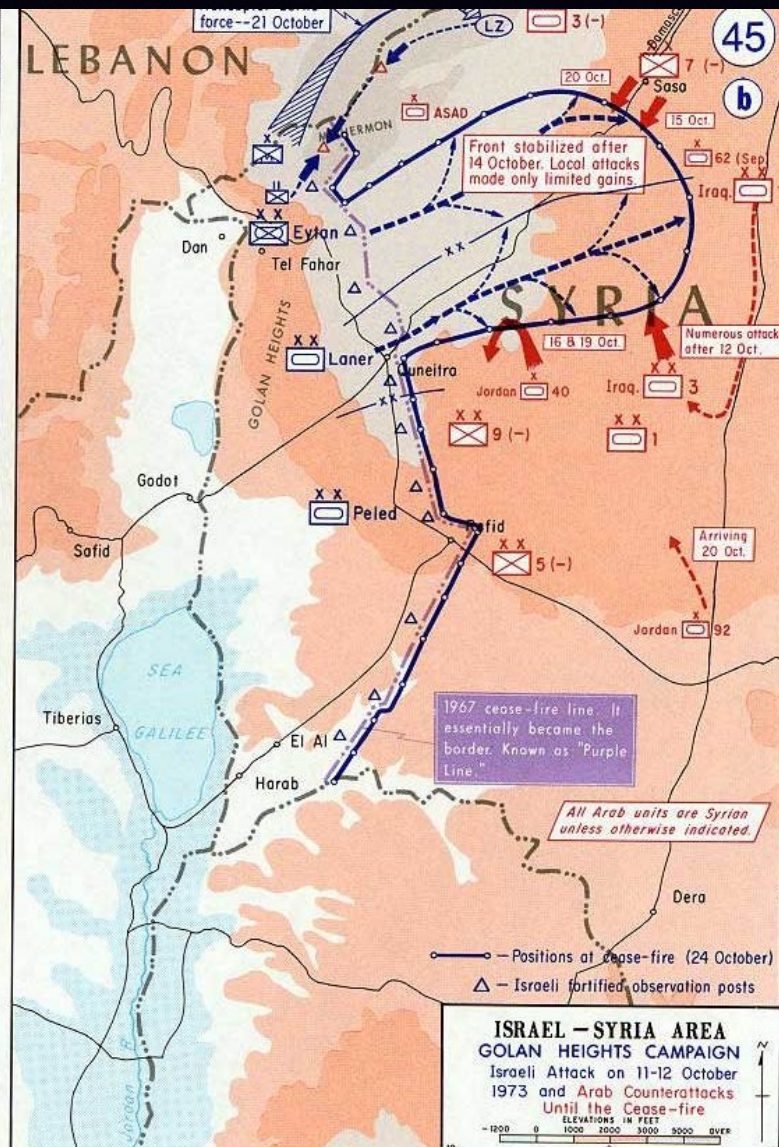
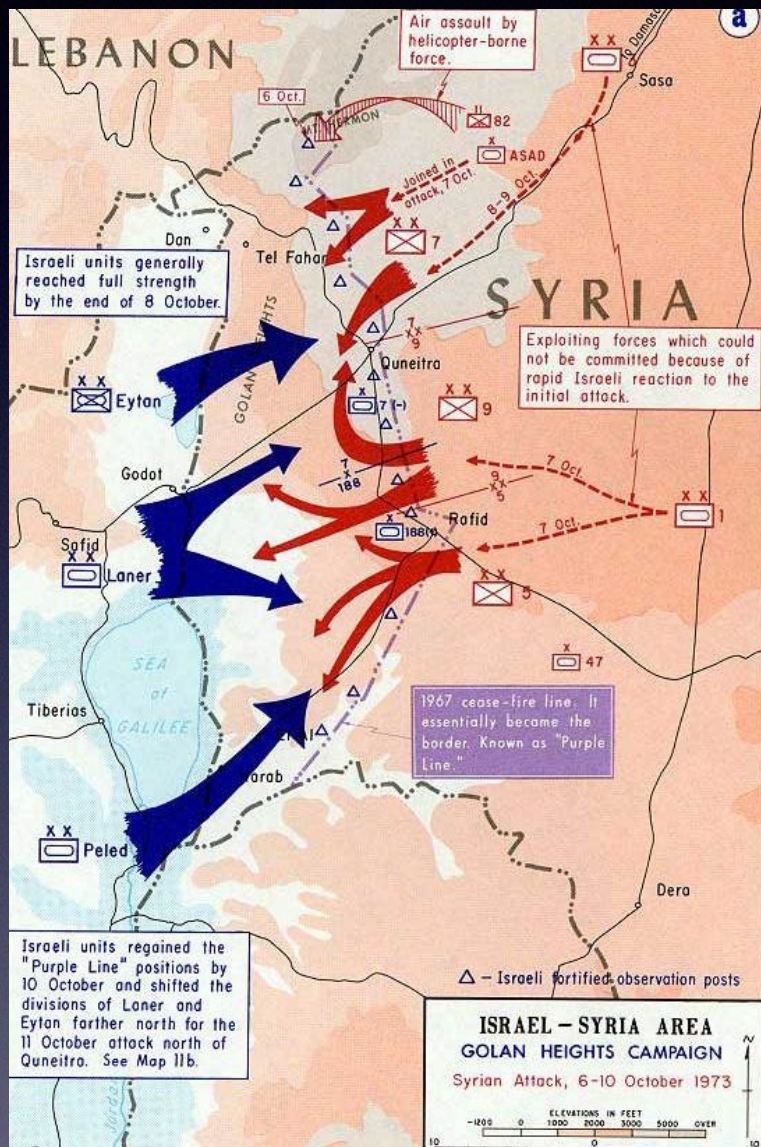
- Massive and successful Egyptian crossing the Suez Canal. After crossing the 1967 cease-fire lines, Egyptian forces advanced into the Sinai Peninsula .
- After three days, Israel had mobilized most of its forces and managed to halt the Egyptian offensive, settling into a stalemate.
- The Syrians coordinated 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 [61][62] in over a week of heavy fighting that inflicted heavy casualties on both sides.





## OPPOSING FORCES ON THE EVE OF THE WAR

ISRAEL		ENEMY
358		998
FIGHTER JETS		FIGHTER JETS
2100		4350
TANKS		TANKS
37		137
NAVAL VESSELS		NAVAL VESSELS





that of a peace maker in the area." where we can build a of military intervention. Nixon had a 20-minute meeting with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

# THE JERUSALEM POST

SECOND EDITION

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1973 • TISHREE 29, 5734 • RAMADHAN 29, 1393 • VOL. XLIII, No. 13018\* Price: 65 Ag.

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

WASHINGTON. — The U.S. has begun an airlift of military supplies to Israel to prevent a "massive airlift" by the Soviet Union from unsettling the military balance in the area, the State Department announced yesterday.

The State Department's chief spokesman on the Middle East crisis, Ambassador Robert McChesney, said the U.S. had learned that a Soviet airlift resupplying Egypt and Syria had increased from the standpoint of both numbers of flights and tonnage delivered to replace Arab military hardware for Israel had arrived in the Middle East, indicating the U.S. airlift began soon after the Administration became convinced that the Russians were not merely continuing but greatly increasing their airlift to the Arabs. He said the Russians have delivered about 4,000 tons of equipment in 280 flights to the Egyptians and Syrians since last Wednesday.

Officials said privately the U.S. airlift began about 30 hours before the announcement was described by the Defence Department yesterday as so big that U.S. civilian airlines have been pressed into service. Deputy Defence Secretary William Clements met with airline officials to decide if more planes would be available if needed.

Meanwhile, Defence Secretary James Schlesinger said in an interview on Capitol Hill that the airlift is a "significant resupply effort." Asked about reports that the

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### GOLDA MEIR'S MEMOIRS

ALL the events upon which I have touched, none is so hard for me to write about as the war of October, 1973, the Yom Kippur war. But it happened, and so it hangs here — not as a military account, because that I leave others, but as a near-disaster, nightmare that I myself experienced and which will always with me. I found myself in a position of ultimate responsibility at a time when the State faced the greatest threat it had known.

The war began on October 6, at when I think about it now my mind goes back to May, when we received information about the reinforcement of Syrian and Egyptian troops on the borders. Our intelligence people thought was most unlikely that war would break out, but nonetheless we decided to treat the matter seriously. At that time, I went to H.Q. myself. Both the Minister of Defence (Moshe Dayan) and the Chief-of-Staff, David Elazar, who is known throughout the country by his nickname, "Dado," briefed me thoroughly on the armed forces' state of preparedness, and I was convinced that the army was ready for any contingency — even for full-scale war. Also my mind was put at rest about the question of a sufficiently early warning. Then, for whatever reason, the tension relaxed.

In September we started to receive information about a build-up of Syrian troops on the Golan Heights, and on the 13th of that month an air battle took place which ended in the downing of 13 Syrian MIGs.

Despite this, our intelligence people were very reassuring. The continued Syrian reinforcement of troops was caused, they explained, by the Syrians' fear that we would attack.

On Wednesday morning, October 3, after further evidence of Syrian activity, I met with

## The nightmare of Yom Kippur

Although reassured by the Minister of Defence, the Chief of Staff and the Head of Intelligence at a meeting on October 5, 1973, that Israel was in no danger of a joint Syrian-Egyptian attack, Golda Meir was still terrified of war breaking out. "Today, I know what I should have

done. I should have overcome my hesitations and listened to the warnings of my own heart and ordered a call-up." Instead, she went home, to be awakened at 4 a.m. on Yom Kippur with news that the Egyptians and Syrians would launch an attack "late in the afternoon."

situation on the agenda for Sunday's Cabinet meeting.

On Thursday, as usual, I went to Tel Aviv. In fact, it was a short week in any case, because Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) was to begin on Friday evening and most people in Israel were taking a long 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. Believing Jews, totally abstaining from food, drink and work, spend Yom Kippur (which, like all Jewish holidays and the Sabbath itself, begins in the evening of one day and ends in the evening 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

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 my mind, and I couldn't shake myself free of it.

I asked the Minister of Defence, the Chief-of-Staff and the Head of Intelligence whether they thought this piece of information was very important. No, it hadn't in any way changed their assessment. I was assured that we would get adequate warning of any real trouble, and anyway, sufficient reinforcements were being sent to the fronts to carry out any holding operation that might be required.

But I was worried. What if they were wrong? If there were

attended by the Chief-of-Staff and the Head of Intelligence. We heard all the reports again, including 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.

Nevertheless, I decided to speak my mind. "Look," I said, "I have a terrible feeling that this has all happened before. It reminds me of 1967, when we were accused of massing troops against Syria, which is exactly what the Arab Press is saying now. And I think that it all means something." As a result, although as a rule a Cabinet decision is required for a full-scale call-up, that Friday we passed a resolution that if necessary the Minister of Defence and I could do so by ourselves.

I also said that we should get in touch with the Americans so

all, they weren't just ordinary soldiers. They were all high experienced generals, men who had fought and led other men in spectacularly victorious battles. Was I perhaps talking myself into something? I couldn't answer my own questions.

Today I know what I should have done. I should have overcome my hesitations. That Friday morning I should have listened to the warnings of my own heart and ordered a call-up. For me that fact cannot be erased, and there can be no consolation for anything that anyone else has said or in all of the common-sense rationalisations with which my colleagues have tried to comfort me.

It doesn't matter what logic dictated. It matters only that who was so accustomed to making decisions — and who to make them throughout the war — failed to make that one decision. I shall live with that terrible knowledge for the rest of my life. I shall never again be that person I was before the Yom Kippur War.

Then, however, I sat in the office, thinking and agonising until I just couldn't sit there any more and I went home.

Once or twice the children's dog barked, but otherwise it was a typically silent Yom Kippur night. I lay awake for hours, unable to sleep. Eventually I managed to doze off. Then, at about 4 a.m., the phone next to my bed rang. It was my militia secretary. Information had been received that the Egyptians and the Syrians would launch a joint attack on Israel "late in the afternoon."

There was no doubt any more. I told Lior to ask Dayan, Dac Alion and Galili to be in my office before 7 a.m. On the way there, I caught sight of an old man going to synagogue, I







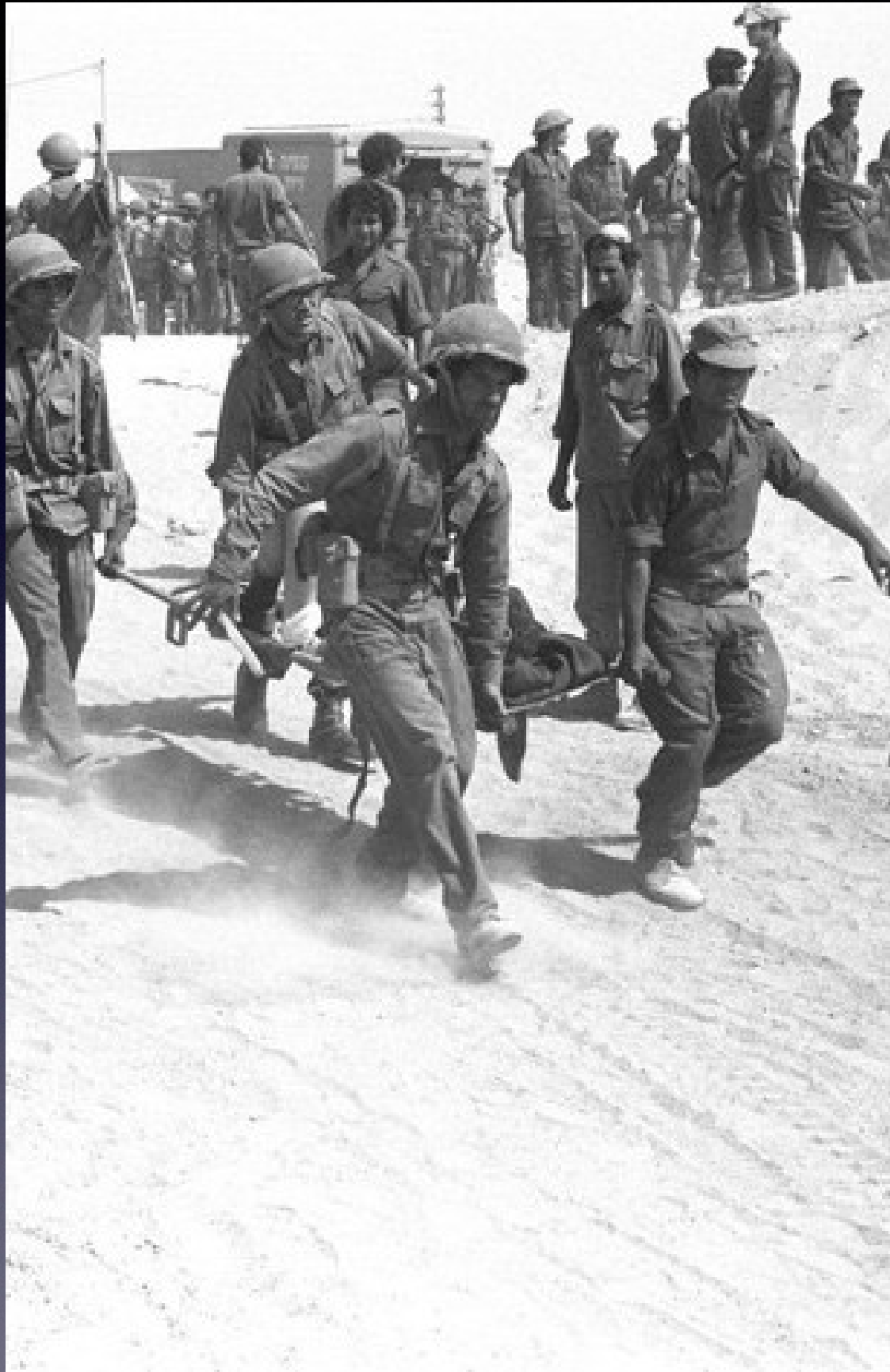
# Nuclear Confrontation

- 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 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). [\*The Yom Kippur War: Politics, Legacy, Diplomacy\*](#). 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). [\*Revisiting the Yom Kippur War\*](#). Routledge. “Yom kippur war...its final outcome was, without doubt, a military victory...(p. 185)
- William B. Quandt (2005). [\*Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967\*](#). 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

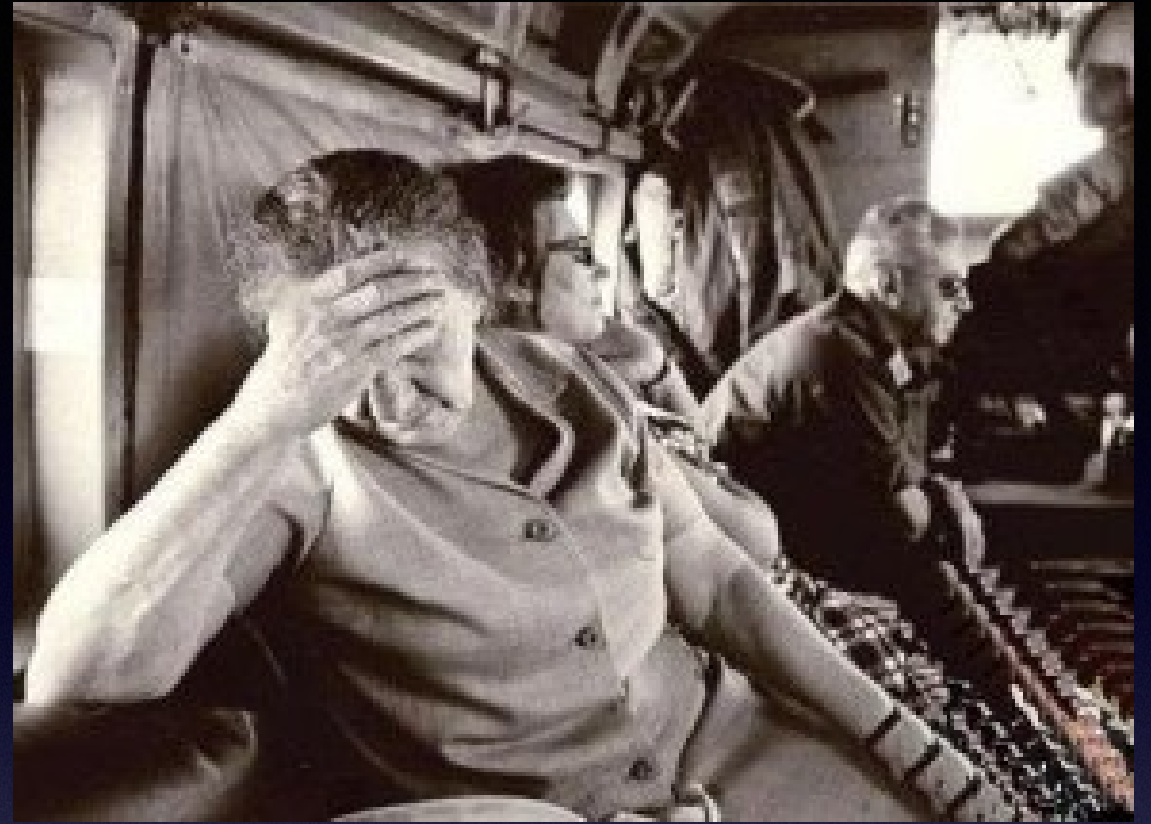
- William B. Quandt (1977). *Decade of Decisions: American Policy Toward the Arab–Israeli Conflict, 1967–1976*. “Kissinger and Nixon consistently warned Israel that she must not be responsible for initiating a Middle east war” (p. 169).
  - set stage for two milestones:
    - 1975 reassessment
    -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