

# OVERCOMING THE EFFECTS OF A SURPRISE ATTACK

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
General Studies

by

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>		
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<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 12-06-2020		<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> Master's Thesis		<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b> AUG 2019 – JUN 2020	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b>  Overcoming the Effects of a Surprise Attack			<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b>		
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b>  Viljar Laaneste			<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b>		
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301			<b>8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER</b>		
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b>			<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b>		
			<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b>		
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>					
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> The strategic surprise is an elusive phenomenon of war; it cannot be ruled out as an option, no matter how good the warning systems are. Some states are even more vulnerable than others due to size, geopolitical location, and hostile neighbors. If surprise happens, states use all their instruments of national power to counter and overcome the effects. The study observes multiple case studies, including successes and failures, after 1945, where a nation was able to overcome the effects of surprise attack. The thesis answers the question what are the key factors that help a nation to overcome the effects of surprise attack initiated suddenly by another nation or a force? The study uses diplomatic, information, military, economic, and leadership (DIME-L) instruments of national power to analyze case studies. This research study will use a qualitative approach using several case studies to compare how the usage of elements of national power helped or did not help a nation to overcome the effects of surprise attack. The study applies how results could be used in the case of Estonia.					
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Strategic Surprise, Instruments of National Power, Security Situation and Threats in Estonia, 1950 South Korea, 1956 Egypt Suez Crisis, 1967 Six Day War, 1973 Yom Kippur War, 2008 South Ossetia War, 2014 Occupation of Crimea					
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b>	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b>
<b>a. REPORT</b> (U)	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b> (U)	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b> (U)	(U)	214	<b>19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)</b>

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

OVERCOMING THE EFFECTS OF SURPRISE ATTACK, by Viljar Laaneste, 214 pages.

The strategic surprise is an elusive phenomenon of war; it cannot be ruled out as an option, no matter how good the warning systems are. Some states are even more vulnerable than others due to size, geopolitical location, and hostile neighbors. If surprise happens, states use all their instruments of national power to counter and overcome the effects.

The study observes multiple case studies, including successes and failures, after 1945, where a nation was able to overcome the effects of surprise attack. The thesis answers the question what are the key factors that help a nation to overcome the effects of surprise attack initiated suddenly by another nation or a force? The study uses diplomatic, information, military, economic, and leadership (DIME-L) instruments of national power to analyze case studies.

This research study will use a qualitative approach using several case studies to compare how the usage of elements of national power helped or did not help a nation to overcome the effects of surprise attack. The study applies how results could be used in the case of Estonia.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank my thesis committee members for their time and patience. I would especially like to thank Dr. Dale Spurlin for his guidance in helping to shape the methodology, procedures, and formatting of this work. His guidance has proven invaluable with the research, editing, and completion of the thesis.

Secondly, the Command and General Staff College Combined Arms Research Library in Fort Leavenworth was an invaluable source of materials and helped immensely to write this paper. In addition, the Combined Arms Research Library personnel and Debbie from Scribbr editing helped to grammatically correct the work as the author is not a native language speaker.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for allowing me the time to conduct the research and write the thesis. The hundreds of hours invested in this work came at a cost to time that could have been spent with them or completing other tasks. Their patience and understanding has allowed me the opportunity to complete my work.

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## ACRONYMS

A2/AD	Anti-Access/Arial Denial
ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
ATGM	Anti-Tank Guided Missile
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DIME	Diplomatic Informational Military Economical
DoD	United States Department of Defense
DOTMPLF-P	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Personnel, Leadership, Facilities, Policies
EU	European Union
JP	Joint Publication
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
RAND	Research and Development
RT	Russia Today
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE DANGER OF STRATEGIC SURPRISE

#### Overview

Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected.

—Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

In the modern world, Sun Tzu's quote is understood as a path to achieve surprise. Surprise is an essential principle of war. Among the armed forces that list surprise as a primary principle for waging wars are those of the United States, Russia, and Great Britain. The factor of surprise is important because it increases the aggressing side's chances for military success because the other side is unable to utilize the full potential of its military and other capabilities.<sup>1</sup> As a result, all aggressors seek to find ways to achieve surprise, and all defenders look for ways to mitigate that threat.

There are numerous methods and levels where and how an offensive side aspires towards the surprise effect, some of which will be briefly explained later in this thesis. In the interest of focusing on the thesis statement, it is necessary to acknowledge the simple fact that surprise is inevitable.<sup>2</sup> Colin Grey, from the U.S. War College lists seven factors

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<sup>1</sup> Uzi Arad, "Intelligence Management as Risk Management: The Case of Surprise Attack," in *Managing Strategic Surprise*, ed. Paul Bracken, Ian Bremmer, and David Gordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 43.

<sup>2</sup> The author admits that there are, in fact, two different schools, one that states surprise is inevitable and another that says it is avoidable. As this thesis focuses on effects after the surprise attack, no further details for the other school will be provided. For further professional reading, turn to authors who consider it is unavoidable (Richard Betts, Michal Handel, Daniel Byman, Amnon Sella, and H. A DeWeerd) and avoidable (Ariel Levite, J. M Arnold, and Brian Green).

why surprise is a reality to consider. From this list, three are relevant in the context of this thesis:

1. No matter how well the intelligence organization is built, it only has small importance for the reduction in risks.

2. “The surprise effect, not surprise itself, is the challenge.” Mr. Grey continues, “Surprise, by definition, is in the hands of our enemies who are attempting to paralyze the dialectic of war. We cannot aspire to be surprise-proof. We can, however, aim to be proofed against many, perhaps most, of the malign effects of surprise.” Simply stated, even though surprise itself is unavoidable, the possible effects of it are manageable.

3. The geopolitical background is extremely relevant because all surprises are the products of the specific political situation.<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. Department of Defense report from 2008 reached a similar conclusion, further emphasizing that surprise sometimes happens not because there is not enough information but rather because there is too much information. This situation distracts the decision-makers, who then make wrong or untimely decisions.<sup>4</sup> Knowing that surprise is inevitable, the question emerges, is it likely as well?

The simple answer is yes, primarily because of the advantage that surprise will provide: a force multiplier to the attacker. If one were to go in depth and observe the

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<sup>3</sup> Colin S. Grey, *Transformation and Strategic Surprise* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), vi-viii.

<sup>4</sup> Defense Science Board Report, *Capability Surprise Volume 1: Main Report*, 2008, <https://dsb.cto.mil/reports/2000s/ADA506396.pdf>.

factors that increase the likelihood of strategic surprise, the following will surface. James Wirtz claims in his essay, *Theory of Surprise*, that the likelihood is increased if:

1. It is the only way due to the capability difference between antagonists. An example would be Al-Qaida attacking the United States in 2001.
2. Surprise establishes conditions where zero or minimal resistance is present. It would be the case of states that rely on mobilization like Israel in 1967 and 1973.
3. It creates a so-called “silver bullet” effect where there is an expectation that the attacker’s objectives could be reached with one single blow.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, an interesting side of the surprise phenomenon is that “surprise is an event that takes place in the mind of a commander.”<sup>6</sup> This fact alone, which touches the psychological spectrum of war, is an argument that confirms the likelihood of its probability. Therefore, this thesis takes the position that surprise can happen and that almost all nations can suffer a surprise if they have a confrontation with another state.

Besides the idea that any nation could be surprised, some states are more vulnerable than others. To illustrate, if Australia had hostile relations with an adversary, that adversary would find it rather difficult to launch a surprise conventional military attack against Australia due to its geographic location, size, national policy, economic relations, and allied relations. It does not mean unconventional surprise could not happen.

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<sup>5</sup> James Wirtz, “Theory of Surprise,” in *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence Essays in Honor of Michael I. Handel*, ed. Richard K. Betts and Thomas G. Mahnken (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 102-108.

<sup>6</sup> Stefan T. Possony, Jerry E. Pournelle, and Francis X. Kane, *The Strategy of Technology* (Studio City: WebWrights, 1997), ch. 5.

A technological or doctrinal<sup>7</sup> attack could happen to the strongest of the states; 9/11 being an unfortunate but realistic example. Still, it would be questionable if this attack would pose an existential threat to a large country. The situation is much more complicated if two hostile states do not have a geographical separation and there is a significant difference in capabilities. For example, Russia, in the last decade, has revealed in Georgia and Ukraine that a conventional strategic surprise is an option on the table and an actual threat to all of its neighbors.

One more relevant concept must be understood in the interest of this thesis. Surprise will not happen in only the military domain. All instruments of national power—diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME)—will be included to achieve it. A nation seeking to surprise will use all of its instruments of national power to support the achievement of its objectives. The same applies for the defending side, which uses all of the DIME elements in service of the struggle to counter the offense. Therefore, although the visible side of surprise is often military activity, it is still closely related to the other DIME elements. To restate, if there is an antagonist with hostile intent, this side is likely searching for ways to execute surprise. Additionally, if considerable differences in capabilities exist, the situation becomes more dangerous for the potential victim. That leads us to the thesis problem.

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<sup>7</sup> All militaries have doctrines and concepts they use in preparing for the next conflict. If the enemy will now use an unexpected approach to attack, the doctrinal attack has occurred. An example would be the way the German army surprised in the Second World War with the so-called “blitzkrieg” doctrine.

## Problem Statement

In the domain of international relations, if there is a belligerent who has hostile intentions and will, it is almost certain that this state tries to achieve its objective through surprise because of the advantages that come with it. Surprise will be even more likely if there are favoring factors for surprise to meet the attacker's objectives, such as opportunity and means of surprise. Therefore, it is impossible to eliminate surprise as a possible scenario. This idea is supported by historical examples demonstrating that sometimes even with the existence of early warnings and hundreds of other indicators, leaders tend not to believe that attack will happen. That makes surprise somehow a paradoxical factor that continually threatens nations and states.

Stating that *surprise will happen*, the author is not negative, but is moving the reader closer to the idea that an event of surprise cannot be ignored, no matter how accurate the warning systems. That will also be the premise for this thesis—the surprise attack has happened, and all the tools to provide early warning have failed, or the decision-makers have simply not wanted to trust pre-warning information. The likelihood of surprise will grow if there are factors that aid the antagonist in its objective to pursue surprise, such as size difference and proximity of states. That makes surprise and factors that accompany dimensions specifically vital to small countries with larger and hostile neighbors. Naturally, in the history of warfare, there have been many successful surprises as well as many failures. Hannibal crossing the Alps, D-Day landings during the Second World War, and, more recently, the Yom Kippur War in 1973 are some of the most famous examples. History also reveals that, in most of the cases, if the surprise effect was achieved, the adversary was successful in its intent.

Nevertheless, there have been instances when a nation or state, even though surprised, was still able to overcome it. This fact alone is an important research subject, as it will provide important insights for all possible future surprise victims, making them better prepared. What made them successful in overcoming surprise? Was there a specific activity, decision, or process? Was it related to military action, or was it tied to some other element of national power? Or was it perhaps a mix of all of them?

The problem is that after suffering a surprise attack, some state actions will achieve success, and other activities will lead to eventual failure. To be better prepared, it is important to know what activities will lead to success or determine failure when a surprise attack has occurred. This will result in an understanding of what could be done to successfully overcome the effects of surprise attack. This is especially relevant in situations where surprise is assessed to have higher probability, which seems likely in the case of the Baltic States.

The purpose of this study is to find ways to counter the effects of surprise attack after it has happened and therefore help possible future victims of surprise attack prepare to overcome its effects.

#### Primary Research Question

What are the key factors that help a nation overcome the effects of a surprise attack initiated suddenly by another nation or force?

#### Secondary Research Question

As explained in the problem statement, the power that enables one to overcome surprise might originate from multiple sources. It could be related to diplomatic relations

of the state or to the informational domain, where the correct messages point foreign and internal audiences in the direction that helps provide leverage to counter the event. Obviously, military resistance can and usually will play a role in countering the attack. Nevertheless, a counter-response can also be related to the economic factors that guarantee the state its sovereign status. Since surprise rests in the minds of leaders, there could be elements of leadership that affect a state's response to surprise attack. Therefore, to answer the primary research question, this thesis seeks to find the answers to the following questions:

1. What diplomatic factors help a nation overcome the effects of surprise attack?
2. What informational factors help a nation overcome the effects of surprise attack?
3. What military factors help a nation overcome the effects of surprise attack?
4. What economic factors help a nation overcome the effects of surprise attack?
5. What is the role of leadership when countering surprise?

An additional research question relates to a small state northeast of Europe, which, due to its location and geopolitical situation in the region, could suffer a surprise attack. Therefore, it is the author's wish to understand what Estonia should learn and do in case it is suddenly attacked.

### Assumptions

The thesis sets the premise that a strategic surprise attack has happened, and the enemy was able to execute deception and surprise plans, leading to strategic surprise for a victim nation. Another assumption is that not only the military but all possible instruments of national power will be used by a defender to overcome the effects of

surprise. The final expectation is that, as the result of this work and its selection of case studies that focused on fairly recent events, the result can be used to make predictions for possible future events.

### Definitions

Strategy is “a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.”<sup>8</sup> An extensive amount of literature relates to a surprise and its definition. This also means that various research studies have defined the construct in multiple ways. Although the main focus for this thesis is overcoming the effects of surprise and not establishing new definitions for surprise, the author highlights a few of the definitions. One of the most-cited authors on the subject of surprise is Barton Whaley, who defines surprise as an “instance where a sudden military action by one antagonist has not been predicted, much less anticipated, by its intended victim.”<sup>9</sup> Additionally, Mark Kneis’ the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) monograph aggregated multiple sourced definitions regarding surprise and concluded that, “Surprise is the effects of unexpected military actions.”<sup>10</sup> Both are well-suited definitions for surprise in general as well as “tactical surprise.”

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<sup>8</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 15 February 2016), 223.

<sup>9</sup> Barton Whaley, *Stratagem* (Boston: Artech House, 2007), 82.

<sup>10</sup> Mark J. Kneis II, “The Surprise Hypothesis” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2003), 16.

To define strategic surprise is much more difficult because it covers multiple levels and domains of war. Furthermore, it is deeply connected with human psychology, which adds further levels of depth to this concept. Although the purpose of this thesis is not to add value to the definition of strategic surprise, the author will use the definition from Mart Sirel, an Estonian officer who studied strategic surprise in his 2008 master thesis. According to M. Sirel, strategic surprise is an “unexpected action planned and executed by the antagonist in technological, tactical, operational, or state level with the intention to break the will of the opponent, neutralize defenders’ capabilities, or gain a significant advantage in order to achieve its objectives.”<sup>11</sup>

Another challenge, where a multiplicity of opinions exists, relates to the question of what exactly are the instruments of national power? This ambiguous concept is not clearly defined and agreed upon. Not to be lost in extensive explanations, only the U.S. War College definition will be provided. According to Dr. David Jablonsky from the U.S. War College, “The national power is contextual in that it can be evaluated only in terms of all the power elements and only in relation to another player or players and the situation in which power is being exercised.”<sup>12</sup> He divides national power into elements and instruments. The elements can be natural—such as geography, population, and natural resources—or social—such as economic, military, political, psychological, and informational. Each element comprises a variety of subcategories. Combined elements

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<sup>11</sup> Mart Sirel, “Strategic Surprise in the Art of War: Content, Causes and Effects” (Master’s Thesis, Estonian Military Academy, Tartu, Estonia, 2010), 14.

<sup>12</sup> David Jablonsky, *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy: National Power*, ed. Joseph R. Cerami. (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2001), 88.

form so-called instruments the government can use to achieve its national interest. Those instruments are not clearly defined; their use is dependent on the situation.<sup>13</sup> For example, the U.S. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms or JP 1-02 uses diplomatic, information, military, economy, or the DIME to express instruments of national power.<sup>14</sup> Again, any of those instruments cannot be viewed in isolation but as a sum of interlinked relationships with other elements.

Strategic surprise and instruments of national power are further detailed in the next chapter of this thesis.

### Scope

The thesis uses case-study research methodology, comparing similar cases involving surprise attacks to find similarities and differences in what led to success and what did not. To narrow the scope of the paper within limits of time and extent, the content is restricted to six case studies.

The study covers events that happened after 1945 when the United Nations, as a foundation of current international relations, was formed. The study's results aim to be as current and applicable to today's events as possible. The author believes that, since 1945, international relationships, the military, and the global economy have not experienced extreme and drastic changes. Therefore, the ways in which surprise happens and how surprise is countered are basically the same, and only elements such as the informational aspect or advances in technology affect it.

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<sup>13</sup> Jablonsky, 87-102.

<sup>14</sup> CJCS, JP 1-02, I-12.

### Limitations

In order to allow this publication to be available to the widest audiences, this study is limited to unclassified, open sources. As a qualitative study limited to the available sources and data, the generalizability of the study's outcomes is dependent on the context of future potential incidents in relation to those of the case studies within this paper.

The qualitative research for this study relies on multiple case studies. Because it is qualitative in nature, the study observes, accumulates, and generalizes data that is available from past case studies; therefore, projecting into the future will partly depend on the interpretation of the cases by the reader. The study attempts to determine similarities and differences and speculate on how those findings could occur again in similar situations; however, the generalizability of the results across all cases is limited by the actual cases studied.

### Delimitations

The first delimitation is that the thesis focuses on the effects on strategic surprise and how to overcome them. Even though surprise in tactical and operational levels is an important component of warfighting, these levels are beyond the purview of this study. Additionally, research about tactical and operational surprise would significantly extend this study and place the focus purely on the military domain. Therefore, to achieve overarching results, strategic surprise has been taken as a foundation for the thesis.

Second, the paper is focused on actions that take place after the surprise has happened. The study does not attempt to answer the question of what a state could do to specifically prevent a strategic surprise or to build more warning time before its

execution. It focuses primarily on the question of what happens after the attack and what actions or factors makes overcoming the strategic surprise more likely. Again, if pre-surprise activities were included, the scope would be out of the reach of this thesis.

Because the author is using the thesis to help Estonia in the event of a possible surprise attack, the paper specifically searches examples that would be similar to the situation in which Estonia finds itself. For example, size comparison and Russia as an actor are explored in some case studies. This way, the author was able to draw more accurate conclusions relevant to the Baltic States.

The thesis uses six case studies involving strategic surprise that were taken from the time after the Second World War. If the hostilities were conducted before World War II, the case was excluded from the list. Additionally, although the Inchon landing in Korea during 1953 classifies as surprise, by all aspects it was not strategic. Therefore, this example was not included in the case-study list.

### Significance of the Study

In the present geopolitical situation, some predictions have been made about where surprise is more likely. Mark Cancian's research indicates that currently, the nations most vulnerable to surprise attacks are the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. He stated that although those countries are the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members, "they are particularly vulnerable because they are militarily weak, geographically exposed, and internally divided by ethnic tensions. In its close proximity, Russia is regularly conducting large-scale military exercises that could

be used to cover a surprise attack.”<sup>15</sup> In 2016, a RAND Corporation study concluded that Russian forces could overrun Estonia and Latvia within 36 to 60 hours.<sup>16</sup> If this is true, then Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania need to understand the options they have to counter this threat. One way is to learn from history where countering the success or suffering the failure have been effective or have led to destruction. This might become a useful tool to build better prevention systems or plans, or, in the time of crisis, help focus on advantageous actions.

### Summary

Chapter 1 presents arguments about why strategic surprise is a relevant subject in the modern world. The author states that even in a modern, technology-driven world, surprise could happen within the strongest states due to its nature of addressing human weaknesses. To make the topic more understandable to readers, the author defines strategy, surprise, and elements of national power. The chapter reveals that for some states, their geographic and geopolitical location makes them more vulnerable to surprise than others. The chapter includes the limitation set forth for the work, establishing a clear strategic viewpoint and focus on the question of how to counter the effects of surprise. Last, the study is done from the lens of a small nation-state. The following chapter provides a more detailed overview of the subject of surprise and the instruments of

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<sup>15</sup> Mark F. Cancian, “Coping with Surprise in Great Power Conflicts,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, accessed April 16, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/coping-surprise-great-power-conflicts>.

<sup>16</sup> David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. 2016).

national power as well as an explanation about writings related to the methodology used in the thesis.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Overview

This chapter presents the literature overview. To answer the primary research question, “What are the key factors that help a nation overcome the effects of a surprise attack initiated suddenly by another nation or force?” the author conducted a wide literature review focusing on surprise and DIME instruments. The chapter’s organization begins with describing surprise in general, followed by a section committed to each of the secondary research questions. The purpose is to find suitable outputs to use to examine case studies later in this thesis. An additional literature was used specific for each case study and can be found in Chapter 4.

#### Strategic Surprise

To better understand the topic and the context of the problem, it is necessary to understand, in depth, strategic surprise and how it differs from tactical surprise. Barton Whaley’s approach indicates that strategic surprise is different from tactical surprise by “the degree to which military action influences the targeted state mobilization, deployments, or grand strategy.” He elaborates on this notion by explaining that “in general, tactical surprise grades into strategic surprise in that region of the tactical-strategic scale where the locus of command shifts from the narrow zone of battle with its field commanders to directly involve other regions and higher military or political

leaders.”<sup>17</sup> In essence, strategic surprise is a brainchild of modern times. According to Handel, the surprise has always been possible at the tactical level; its possibility at the strategic level is a product of the 20th century.<sup>18</sup> This obviously relates to advancements in technology. For the first time, armed forces were able to move great distances at high speeds, beginning with the introduction of the steam and combustion engines. For example, Carl von Clausewitz did not consider strategic surprise as a problem. “While the wish to achieve surprise is common and, indeed, indispensable, and while it is true that it will never be completely ineffective, it is equally true that by its very nature surprise can rarely be outstandingly successful,” wrote Clausewitz. “It would be a mistake, therefore, to regard surprise as a key element of success in war.”<sup>19</sup> In his time (the early 19th century), the armies’ advance took weeks and months; therefore, it is understandable why he did not consider strategic surprise to be realistic.

Surprise is a complex phenomenon happening in all levels of war; it comes in many variations. Several respected researchers have observed surprise and have added depth to this notion. In the 20th century, J.F.C. Fuller saw surprise as an important principle of war that had distinguishable characters in all levels of war. Fuller also recognized a moral and material aspect of surprise, noting that moral surprise is the ultimate form. He added that moral surprise would be lost when the enemy learns the

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<sup>17</sup> Whaley, 82.

<sup>18</sup> Michael I. Handel, “Intelligence and the Problem of Strategic Surprise,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 7, no. 3 (1984): 231.

<sup>19</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 198.

attackers' intentions; nevertheless, if the attacker has material supremacy, he can continue to exploit his success.<sup>20</sup> Another British author, B.H. Liddell Hart, acknowledged surprise as an important element of strategy. He saw surprise as inherently tied to the movement, which was eventually a foundation block for military strategy.<sup>21</sup> Richard Simpkin connected an attacker's actions with the decision-reaction cycle and claimed that by using surprise, an attacker could commit up to 40 percent fewer forces.<sup>22</sup> Barton Whaley listed different variations of surprise. "Intention, time, place, force, method, and technology" were listed with a special emphasis that, in most cases, surprise will consist of more than one of those variations.<sup>23</sup> As demonstrated by many researchers, surprise is like a chameleon,<sup>24</sup> coming in many forms, making it an extremely dangerous element of war.

Surprise produces significant effects in the psychological and physical domains of the defender. B.H. Liddell Hart says that surprise causes "the dislocation of the enemy's psychological and physical balance."<sup>25</sup> Clausewitz stated that if surprise "is achieved in grand scale, it confuses the enemy and lowers his morale;" he continues by noting that

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<sup>20</sup> John Frederick Charles Fuller, *The Foundation of the Science of War* (Fort Leavenworth: CGSC Press, 1993), 271-279.

<sup>21</sup> B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), 323.

<sup>22</sup> Richard E. Simpkin, *Race to the Swift, Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare* (New York: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1985), 181.

<sup>23</sup> Whaley, 112-113.

<sup>24</sup> Clausewitz, 198.

<sup>25</sup> Hart, 25.

this will “multiply the results” of the attacker.<sup>26</sup> It is necessary to note that surprise has significant effects on the moral side of resistance; consequently, psychological aspects are important when the countering of surprise is under examination. Psychological pressure has its effects on soldiers, command systems, and general populations, all of which can affect the outcome of success or failure. This makes a surprise attack relevant not only against the military domain but also against the people and the government, significantly influencing the instruments of national power and their effectiveness.

### Diplomatic Elements of Countering Surprise

Diplomacy is a vital tool that governments utilize to protect national interests. Reed Fendrick states that in its “purest, most original form, diplomacy is the official means by which one state formally relates to other states.”<sup>27</sup> As an instrument of national power, the former U.S. ambassador in Lithuania, Deborah McCarthy, defined tools for diplomacy as “reconnaissance, communication, negotiation, foreign assistance, and bases overseas.” In her explanation, reconnaissance is knowing and understanding the foreign landscape, history, language, and people, but it is also about building and maintaining relationships and trust. The second tool, communication, carries with itself the values and interest of the nation, all means of communication, and the way that nation-states communicate their national interest to other international players. Additionally, it is tied

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<sup>26</sup> Clausewitz, 198.

<sup>27</sup> Reed J. Fendrick, “Diplomacy as an Instrument of National Power,” in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, vol. 1, *Theory of War and Strategy*, ed. J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2008), 173.

to the idea of avoiding miscommunication. The third tool, negotiations, is connected to building coalitions and alliances as well as reaching agreements to deploy troops or send disaster relief. The fourth tool, foreign assistance, is related to all types of help to allies in many forms. The last tool, bases, is related to the physical locations of embassies where diplomats are operating to achieve the interests of the nation.<sup>28</sup> When surprise happens, these tools will be used in the interest of the state. Reed Fendrick stated, “When conflict erupts, the diplomacy continues during that period focusing on post-war planning, cost and burden-sharing, and international organization endorsement (or at least non-condemnation) of military actions.”<sup>29</sup>

It is possible to argue that in the event of surprise attack, from this list of five, reconnaissance and bases overseas are of secondary importance as they do not have a direct impact on the ability to overcome immediate effects. They play quite a major role in preventing and avoiding surprise attacks, but as this thesis set the premise that surprise has already happened, the author has excluded reconnaissance and bases overseas from the diplomatic elements list in the framework of this paper. On the other hand, communication, negotiations, and foreign assistance could have a significant impact on countering a surprise attack while it is ongoing. Therefore, the author uses those three selected elements to examine the case studies to evaluate the impact of diplomacy instruments in overcoming the effects of surprise. In the interest of clarity, the following

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<sup>28</sup> Deborah McCarthy, “Diplomacy as Instrument of National Power” (Lecture, U.S. Army War College National Security Seminar, Carlisle, PA, June 27, 2019), accessed October 13, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63S6stXvcT8>.

<sup>29</sup> Fendrick, 174.

questions, which are based on diplomatic elements, are asked in every case study with the intention to examine the effectiveness of the diplomatic instrument of national power:

1. Was a diplomatic message communicated directly after the surprise attack, and did it have any immediate effect on countering the attack?

2. Were any treaties or agreements in effect at the time of the surprise attack, and were they used to mitigate the effects of surprise?

3. Was any foreign assistance available, and what was the effect of this aid in countering the attack?

### Information Elements of Countering Surprise

Besides diplomacy, and as with all the instruments of power, deeply interconnected with others is the informational instrument of national power. Information is bluntly defined as “obtained knowledge.”<sup>30</sup> Craig W. Mastapeter, in his Naval Postgraduate School thesis, states that the informational instrument of power “is the use of information and ideas to advance the interests and achieve the objectives of the nation.”<sup>31</sup> As the means of sharing and obtaining information has changed drastically over the past few decades, so has the form of the informational instrument changed from simple to more complex. Still, historically, the information is observed from the perspective of ideology, strategic communication, and intelligence gathering, having two

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<sup>30</sup> Merriam-Webster, “Information,” accessed October 14, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/information>.

<sup>31</sup> Craig W. Mastapeter. “The Instruments of National Power: Achieving the Strategic Advantage in a Changing World” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2008), 217.

fairly well-defined audiences: internal and external audiences.<sup>32</sup> If diplomacy focuses on formal external communication, then in the context of informational instruments, it is more vaguely concerned with the public appearance of the state for the foreign audience.

To review the informational instrument of power, it is a system of gathering, processing, and producing information to spread it in an acceptable form to government and to internal and external audiences, using all communication means available. All of this is designed to influence perceptions and achieve public or external governmental support.

When the informational instrument is used to achieve internal support, the main objectives are to strengthen support for the government and to build higher morale and pro-state attitudes among citizens. The psychological and moral factors are important, as they have a significant impact on countering surprise. While these factors are considered intangible, Clausewitz described them as “the spirit and other moral qualities of an army, a general or a government, the temper of the population of the theater of war, the moral effects of victory or defeat—all these vary greatly.” Clausewitz stated that he considered the morale in his works as “incomplete” due to its complexity as a phenomenon.<sup>33</sup> More modern authors have opened up the topic in more depth. David Jablonsky explains that, “The psychological element of national power consists of national will and morale, national character, and degree of national integration.” He continues by pointing out that

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<sup>32</sup> Robert D. Worley, *Orchestrating the Instruments of Power: A Critical Examination of the U.S. National Security System* (Lincoln: Potomac Books, an imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 228-229.

<sup>33</sup> Clausewitz, 184-185.

the psychological element is the factor that enables less capable and superficially weaker sides to be successful against opponents with larger military and economic power. The psychology of large groups of people is oriented and guided by the use of information to mold the perception of masses in favor of the government.<sup>34</sup>

When information is used to align national cognitive thinking, then it is done to increase the will of the people to oppose possible threats. Timothy Jacobsen defines national will in his SAMS monograph as “the collective degree of political and popular support for national policies, foreign and domestic.” He used the following constructs to assess the will: perceived legitimacy, threats and interests, perceived cost-benefits, media impact, and political rhetoric.<sup>35</sup> For this thesis, the author makes an assumption that if the surprise happens, legitimacy, perceived threats and interest, and costs are not questionable to the defending side because the idea of being under attack is a powerful motivator. On the other hand, the media impact and political rhetoric are factors that affect the eventual will to resist among soldiers and the population at large.

The national character is described as the notion that every nation has specific, distinguishable ways of life and behaviors that will have an impact on personal characteristics.<sup>36</sup> In the context of this thesis, the author then would have to accept the idea that some nations fight better because of their national character. However, history

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<sup>34</sup> Jablonsky, 97.

<sup>35</sup> Timothy S. Jacobsen, “Hearts & Minds That Matter Most: Maintaining American National Will” (Master’s Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2008), 5.

<sup>36</sup> Alex Inkeles, *National Character: A Psycho-Social Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2017), ch. 1.

demonstrates that some nations, considered bad fighters in one century, have proved to have remarkable skills in other wars. Accepting this difference is something that the author will not do in this paper; therefore, the impact of national character is not observed in this paper.

In light of how the information instrument can be exploited in countering strategic surprise, the following themes emerge. By definition, surprise is not expected; therefore, the informational tool must first re-establish situational understanding: what, where, how, and why. In this, military intelligence and reconnaissance assets are vital, but the informational picture is built using all means available, such as press releases, internet posts, and foreign connections. In the second- and third-order messaging through all means available to internal and external audiences, information will be used to unite internal and foreign support. To understand how the informational instrument affected the overcoming of surprise, the author observes case studies using the following questions:

1. Was situational awareness established quickly; if not, why not?
2. Was a message communicated to an internal audience that supported overcoming surprise?
3. Was a message communicated to an external audience that supported overcoming surprise?
4. Was national support behind the leadership when the attack occurred? Did it have an impact if there was little support or no support at all?

## Military Elements of Countering Surprise

The military instrument is arguably “the most important instrument available to a nation-state.”<sup>37</sup> Historically, a number of famous philosophers have demonstrated how military might and a state’s existence are interconnected. Some examples, such as Sun Tzu’s belief that war “is of vital importance to the state”<sup>38</sup> or Clausewitz’s “War is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means,”<sup>39</sup> are well-known. These statements indicate the importance of the military instrument of national power. Although the author has stated earlier in this thesis that there are many forms of surprise, surprise still comes mainly in the form of military action. The best way to counter hostile military activity is to commit defensive military force, making military elements vital when countering surprise. Thus, military success and failure are of significant importance in this thesis and in countering a surprise attack in general.

To better understand the military instrument, it is necessary to understand what it consists of. Patrick Morgan, from *Contemporary Security Policy Journal*, argued that the source of military power comes from its capabilities and the possible deterrence effects

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<sup>37</sup> John F. Troxell, “Military Power and the Use of Force,” in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy: Military Power and the Use of Force*, ed. J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr. (Carlisle, PA: Department of National Strategy and Security, U.S. Army War College, 2006), 209.

<sup>38</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Leicester: Allandale Online Publishing 2000), 4.

<sup>39</sup> Clausewitz, 87.

that those capabilities bring.<sup>40</sup> Capability is defined by JP 1-02 as “the ability to complete a task or execute a course of action under specified conditions and level of performance.”<sup>41</sup> Needless to say, the specified conditions and level of performance are not something concrete; rather, they are quite intangible constructs. *The U.S. General Accounting Office report to the Committee of Armed Services* points out that “military capability is a difficult concept to qualify and measure.”<sup>42</sup> The same report divides military capability into subcategories of readiness, sustainability, modernization, and force structure, also pointing out that all four should be assessed simultaneously to understand the overall capability. The report defines those constructs as:

1. “Force structure is a number, size, and composition of units that make up the force.”
2. “Modernization is the qualitative technical capabilities of weapon systems and equipment.”
3. “Force readiness is the ability of the force, units, weapon systems, or equipment to deliver the outputs for which they were designed. It is measured in terms of manning, equipping, the ability of the force to mobilize, deploy, and training the force and the delays.”

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<sup>40</sup> Patrick M. Morgan, “The State of Deterrence in International Politics Today,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 33, no. 1 (2012): 88.

<sup>41</sup> CJCS, JP 1-02, 2.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Measures of Military Capability: A Discussion of Their Merits, Limitations, and Interrelationships*, 1985, <https://www.gao.gov/products/NSIAD-85-75>, 1-11.

4. “Sustainability is the staying power of our forces and our ability to resupply engaged forces during combat operations.”<sup>43</sup>

In more recent approaches to assessing the military power, the Heritage Foundation assesses, for example, U.S. military power by applying the index for “capability, capacity, and readiness.” It also points out that:

Military effectiveness is as much an art as it is a science. Specific military capabilities represented in weapons, platforms, and military units can be used individually to some effect. Practitioners of war, however, have learned that combining the tools of war in various ways and orchestrating their tactical employment in series or simultaneously can dramatically amplify the effectiveness of the force that is committed to battle.<sup>44</sup>

The modern U.S. Army understands this as the DOTMLPF-P (doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, policy) concept, where all capabilities have links to material, training, and leadership domains, which make them complete systems.

However, the physical components are not the only ones that make capability. David Jablonsky of the Strategic Studies Institute points out that, “Military power is more than just the aggregation of personnel, equipment, and weaponry. Leadership, morale, and discipline also remain vital factors of military power.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore, military capability is a sum of physical and cognitive aspects.

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<sup>43</sup> GAO, *Measures of Military Capability*, 1-11.

<sup>44</sup> The Heritage Foundation, “Introduction: An Assessment of U.S. Military Power,” accessed October 17, 2019, <https://www.heritage.org/military-strength/assessment-us-military-power>.

<sup>45</sup> Jablonsky, 87.

Military activity, as the form “policy by other means,”<sup>46</sup> provides four ways to use armed forces in the interest of politics, according to Troxell: defeat the enemy, coerce the adversary, reassure the allies, and dissuade potential competitors.<sup>47</sup> In the framework of this thesis, the first option is relevant, as with the event of surprise the other ways have failed. To defeat the enemy, the defender requires readiness, capabilities that help to counter the enemy’s actions, and the moral strength to oppose the attacker. In which portions and forms the named elements must exist is likely to be situation-dependent, and Chapter 4 addresses those questions using data gathered from case studies.

Nevertheless, the question arises: How does one measure this intangible capability in light of countering the surprise attack, especially when simply counting tanks and planes is not enough? For the purpose of this thesis, the author used a relatively straightforward approach. The most logical way to measure success in the case of a surprise attack would be a simple question: Was the enemy’s attack repelled and its plans interrupted, or was the antagonist successful in achieving military objectives? To understand the reasons why military action against the attacker succeeded or failed, the author asked the following questions when observing the case studies later in the thesis.

1. Was the enemy able to significantly reduce the capabilities of the defender? If not, why not?

2. Was the military plan of the defender to defeat a surprise attack effective? If not, why not?

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<sup>46</sup> Clausewitz, 87.

<sup>47</sup> Troxell, 219-223.

3. Did specific military capabilities have an effect on overcoming surprise? If so, what were they?

4. When surprise occurred, were the military units able to resist the attack? If not, why not?

### Economic Elements of Countering Surprise

The economy is another tool that serves a state's interest. States build their economic power through the exploitation of raw resources, the transformation of those resources into finished products, the provision of services inside and outside of the state, and the use of internal and global trade. Economic power is also used in the service of national security. Clayton K.S. Chun argues that, "Without the capacity to produce, finance, or support key national security activities, a nation would have a limited ability to protect its domestic and international interests." He also points out that because of the importance of the economy in the modern world, the first choice in the global struggle for power is not a military instrument.<sup>48</sup> This is a significant historical shift; for centuries, the military created conditions for economic expansion. Clayton also argues that today, an economy can be both a means and a way to achieve national objectives as well as an end. The most widely known uses of economic power to force one's will are embargoes, blockades, and sanctions.<sup>49</sup> What is common among all of these offensive tools is that

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<sup>48</sup> Clayton K.S. Chun, "Economics: A Key Element of National Power," in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, vol. 1, *Theory of War and Strategy*, ed. J. Boone Bartholomees Jr. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2012), 205.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 206-210.

achieving results might take significant time.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, it is possible to argue that in the light of a surprise attack, the role of an economic tool is not primary but secondary. For that reason, the author poses only one question when observing the case studies from the perspective of the economy:

1. Was economic leverage in the hand of the defender? If yes, was it used, and to what effect?

### Leadership's Role When Countering a Surprise Attack

When countering a surprise attack, the actions of leaders are extremely important. It is the one factor that combines all instruments and exploits their potential in the interests of the state. Although not traditionally considered as an instrument of power, a state's leadership plays an important role in how a crisis is managed. Peter G. Northouse defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal."<sup>51</sup> In a nation-state, leadership is executed through governance of the state. Merriam-Webster defines government as "the organization, machinery, or agency through which a political unit exercises authority and performs functions and which is usually classified according to the distribution of power within it."<sup>52</sup> Although many forms of leadership and government exist, both the process and the

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<sup>50</sup> Katerina Oskarsson and Jeff Giese, "The Effectiveness of DIMEFIL Instruments of Power in the Gray Zone," *NATO ACT Open Publications* 1, no. 2 (2017): 1-15.

<sup>51</sup> Peter Guy Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2019), 5.

<sup>52</sup> Merriam-Webster, "Government," accessed November 21, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/government>.

institution aim for common goals. Those goals include establishing objectives, dividing resources, using instruments of power to achieve those objectives, and executing everyday governance of the state. With this in mind, the author posed the following question to understand leadership roles when countering a surprise attack.

1. Did the national leadership act decisively, establishing clear intent and a plan of action when the attack occurred?

Craig Nation states that, “Eventually, the ultimate measure of national power is the outcome of the performance.”<sup>53</sup> In the case of countering a surprise attack, it is either overcoming the effects or losing the situation to the adversary’s favor.

#### Estonia as a Target of Surprise Attack

In the previous chapter, the author pointed that some states are possibly more vulnerable to surprise than others. One of those states, according to studies by the RAND Corporation and Mark Cancian, is Estonia.<sup>54</sup> Although it is possible to argue that all of the Baltic States, including Latvia and Lithuania, are in a similarly vulnerable position, the author, due to his personal insight, uses the example of Estonia.

From the DIME perspective, several areas of concern could be observed when comparing Estonia with the Russian Federation. From a diplomatic perspective, Estonia has many fewer options to communicate its message to an internal audience and to a wider foreign audience. Russia is a permanent member of the United Nations Security

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<sup>53</sup> R. Craig Nation, “National Power,” in *The U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, vol. 1, *Theory of War and Strategy*, ed. J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, June 2012), 147.

<sup>54</sup> Cancian.

Council and a leader of several unilaterally minded states, all of which could be used to establish leverage against Estonia. Estonia's advantages include membership in NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the European Union. Being a member of both organizations, if nothing else, helps to build deterrence and demands extreme conditions for Russians to begin any hostile venture.

The informational instrument does not put Estonia in a favorable position. The country's national and private media channels are small, not comparable with giants such as Russia Today (RT) or the Russian News Agency (TASS). Several large Western news agencies have offices in Moscow, not in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. In a time of conflict, the Russian narrative is likely to be communicated more quickly, as it is more easily accessible for global news channels and has the ability to influence broad audiences. An additional disadvantage for Estonia is the Russian minority in Estonia, whose mindset could be manipulated to support Russia, and therefore presents opportunities for offensive interference under a legally vague agenda.

Influenced largely by information, the psychological dimension of nation is difficult to measure or assess, as it is primarily condition-based. On one hand, Estonian society is aware of the Russian threat, aided by negative historical memories throughout the centuries. Still, a relatively significant Russian minority in Estonia remains a concern, and the danger of a divide in the society is there.<sup>55</sup> This was painfully exposed in 2007 during the so-called Bronze Night unrest events. The state is working to address these

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<sup>55</sup> Benjamin Cooper, "Changes in Estonian Defense Policy Following Episodes of Russian Aggression," *Inquiries Journal* 10, no. 10 (2018): 1-1, <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=1745>.

issues, but it will take time.<sup>56</sup> For example, in recent years, Estonia has begun to build a so-called *Integrated National Defense Concept* that declares defense of the state as a responsibility shared by all state institutions and all people.<sup>57</sup> Paradoxically, the success or failure of these policies can be determined only after a conflict erupts.

Mildly stated, the military situation in Estonia is difficult. Although Estonia is a member of NATO, there is always a threat that allied support arrives with a time delay, giving an adversary multiple military advantages. In addition to size and capability differences, several conditions favor the Russian armed forces. They include the following:

1. Distance: From the nearest Russian division lodging area,<sup>58</sup> there are fewer than 40 km to the Estonian border without any relevant geographical obstacles. It is possible to reach Tallinn with tracked vehicles, if there is no opposition, within 12 hours. During the August Coup of 1991, the 76th Russian Airborne Division proved that.<sup>59</sup> The proximity of large training areas such as the Strugi Krasnye training area enables the

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<sup>56</sup> Juhan Kivirähk, “Ülevaade venekeelse elanikkonna lõimumisest ning riigikaitse alaste arvamusuuringute tulemustest,” International Centre for Defence and Security, December 2014, [https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/Juhan\\_Kivirahk\\_-\\_Ulevaade\\_venekeelse\\_elanikkonna\\_loimumisest\\_ning\\_riigikaitse\\_alaste\\_arvamusuuringute\\_tulemustest.pdf](https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/Juhan_Kivirahk_-_Ulevaade_venekeelse_elanikkonna_loimumisest_ning_riigikaitse_alaste_arvamusuuringute_tulemustest.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Defense, “Defense Policy,” April 2, 2018, [https://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article\\_files/national\\_security\\_concept\\_2017.pdf](https://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/national_security_concept_2017.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Global Security, “76th Airborne Division,” accessed February 20, 2020, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/76-abn.htm>.

<sup>59</sup> Rein Taagepera, *Estonia: Return to Independence* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1993), 201.

import of large military formations to the region under the agenda of a training exercise. This is done regularly in the Russian Western Military District during the times of the Zapad series exercises.<sup>60</sup>

2. Direction: Due to Estonia's geography being almost peninsula-like, an antagonist can exploit sea and airborne landings to increase confusion and create multiple dilemmas for defenders. The Russian Baltic Sea fleet and air force operate regularly on a route from St. Petersburg to Kaliningrad, sometimes "accidentally" crossing the Estonian border.<sup>61</sup> The geographical location makes sending any type of help or assistance rather difficult, as the possible anti-access, area-denial (A2/AD) might be in effect.

3. Readiness: The Estonian Defense Forces rely on mobilization to build up their military strength and capabilities. Although some units exhibit professional readiness, the vast majority of fighting capability comes from reserve units. This is a deliberate choice of the state's defense policy that seeks to build credible deterrence and simultaneously balance available resources and threats.<sup>62</sup> However, Estonia's small size limits what can be realistically afforded and maintained. This creates a constant dilemma for decision-

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<sup>60</sup> Kaupo Rosin, "Security Policy Developments in Relation to Russia 2017," *EDF Yearbook 2017* (2018): 9-18.

<sup>61</sup> Liis Velsker, "Graafik: Vene Lennukite Rikkumised Eesti Õhuruumis Viimase Kümne Aasta Jooksul," *Postimees*, November 4, 2016, <https://www.postimees.ee/3897081/graafik-vene-lennukite-rikkumised-eesti-ohuruumis-viimase-kumne-aasta-jooksul>.

<sup>62</sup> Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Defence, *National Security Concept 2017*, 2017, <https://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/en/objectives-activities/defence-policy>.

makers: Three are required, but resources are for one.<sup>63</sup> Estonia's dependence on mobilization and its lack of specific capabilities enable an adversary to choose the time, place, and method of attack. At the same time, these factors also reduce options for Estonian decision-makers. Listed military challenges make Estonia extremely vulnerable to military surprise attacks and require wise and well-crafted actions to counter the threat.

The economic instrument also offers little assistance to Estonia. Russia, the largest country in the world, has a wealth of resources and a vast industrial base. Russia then uses these resources to build addiction-like relationships with its neighbors and with states that possess power. A Swedish Defence Research Agency study raised several concerns about the Nord Stream gas pipeline, which could provide quite significant leverage to Russia if, at some point in the future, it needs to negotiate with states such as Germany or Austria. This is why Estonia and several other Western countries have expressed deep concern related to these developments in the region. Perhaps the gas pipeline at the bottom of the Baltic Sea could be used an excuse for the Russian Navy to “protect the economic interest of Russia and Germany against the threat X” and cut off the Baltic States without actually launching an attack.<sup>64</sup>

Considering the challenges described above, Estonian leaders face multiple difficult decisions: How should good relationships with allies be maintained so as to guarantee their support during a crisis? What are the options to build a more integrated

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<sup>63</sup> Neeme Raud, “Miks Ei Kaitse Eestit Tankid?” *Postimees*, July 6, 2019, <https://www.postimees.ee/6723997/miks-ei-kaitse-eestit-tankid>.

<sup>64</sup> Robert L. Larsson, *Nord Stream, Sweden and Baltic Sea Security* (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency, March 2007), 6-9, <https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI-R--2251--SE>.

society, protect Estonians from false information, and, at the same time, ensure that Estonian voices are heard in the global domain? Where should scarce resources be spent when building a military force and, if a conflict should erupt, when should the military be mobilized and how can it fight against a numerically stronger opponent? These questions are just a few examples of the leadership challenges Estonia faces when preparing and countering a possible surprise attack.

### Summary

This chapter provided an overview of surprise and its different forms. Additionally, the chapter explained each of the DIME elements and the aspect of leadership (L). Then, the chapter established the questions that the author will use in the following chapters to observe the case studies. Moreover, the author described the threat against Estonia and why strategic surprise is a relevant situation for study. The next chapter details the research methodology used and the techniques applied to solve the research problem.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Overview

This chapter outlines the detailed research methods and techniques applied to answer the research question: “What are the key factors that help a nation overcome the effects of a surprise attack initiated suddenly by another nation or force?” To answer the research question, this study utilizes a qualitative analysis methodology on multiple case studies. Because the research topic and question are cognitively complex, the qualitative analysis was chosen to provide a structured approach to answer the research question.

#### Case-Study Research Methodology

This study uses a case-study methodology to answer the research questions. For the theoretical framework, Robert K. Yin’s works about case-study research were used. Although several important authors have published research about case-study methodology, the Yin works seem to be the most-cited and most recent. Two primary books by Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* and *Applications of Case Study Research*, were used to establish the thesis methodological background.<sup>65</sup>

This study is based on Robert K. Yin’s concepts of how to conduct a case-study analysis to solve problems.<sup>66</sup> More precisely, a multiple-case design approach was used

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<sup>65</sup> Robert K. Yin. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (London: SAGE Publications, 2014); Robert K. Yin *Applications of Case Study Research* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012).

<sup>66</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study: Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 60.

to find patterns and similarities. More than two cases were used to harness the power of the triangulation of results and to identify cross-case similarities with an intent to reach more robust conclusions.<sup>67</sup> The assumption is that if it was possible to draw the same conclusions from three cases, those conclusions likely would apply to other possible scenarios as well. The study utilizes a multiple-step process presented in *Figure 1* to solve the research question. The figure illustrates how, after establishing the research problem and the research question, the author deliberately focused on ways to overcome the effects of a surprise attack. To better understand the ways to overcome surprise, the author selected strategic DIME-L elements as the lens to examine and contrast various case studies to achieve comparable results. In the study, the author described various DIME-L instruments and developed specific interest questions to apply to the case studies. Six case studies were chosen—three failures to counter a surprise attack and three successes—to identify and cross-reference the results. Then, the author examined all case studies with chosen similar control questions and compared the results of both successes and failures to identify common aspects. In conclusion, the results are recommended for a possible surprise scenario in Estonia.

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<sup>67</sup> Yin, *Applications of Case Study Research*, 13.

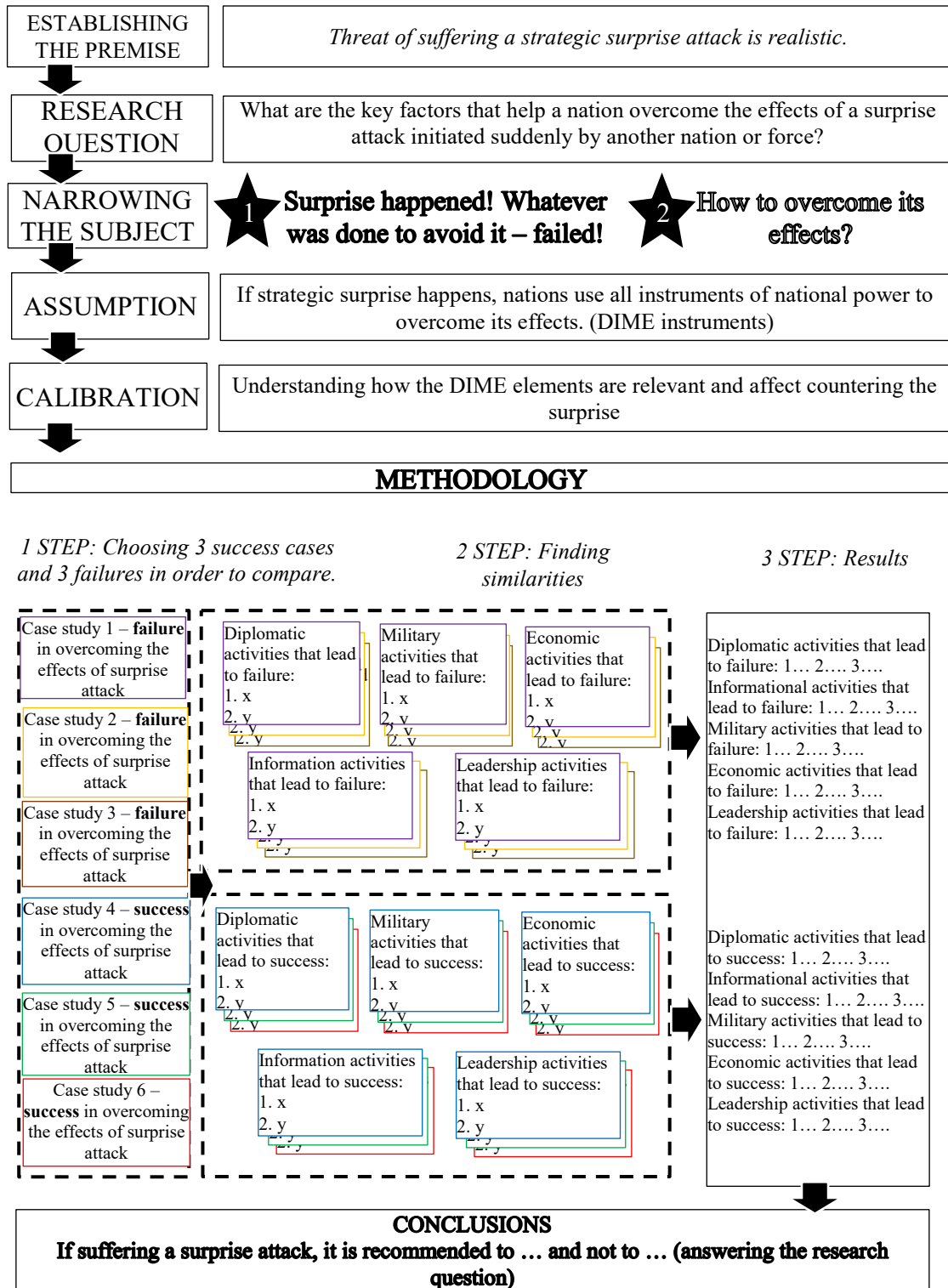


Figure 1. The Research Methodology

Source: Created by author.

## Case Studies

To answer the research question, the author selected six specific case studies. This choice was made using the following bounding criteria:

1. The case had to be as recent as possible to allow conclusions to be drawn for future events. The author decided to use only conflicts that occurred after creation of the United Nations in 1945, as this provided similar international relations background for all cases.

2. Preferably, the case was related to a situation when no hostilities had taken place earlier. For cases in which large-scale hostilities were ongoing beforehand, the author considered them exempt from the strategic surprise context, and outside the scope of the work.

3. Preferably, the comparison of forces pitted a small state against a large state, to better mimic the situation between Estonia and Russia.<sup>68</sup>

The author chose six cases to study—three of them successes in countering a surprise attack and three of them considered failures when countering a surprise attack. The success or failure was determined by using reputable sources whose assessment indicated that conditions after the initial surprise were in favor of the defender or exhibited a loss for the defender. In addition to finding similarities of activities that led to success or failure, the author analyzed the failure and success cases to determine how they were controversial.

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<sup>68</sup> The author admits that it was difficult to find cases that would match those criteria. Therefore, this study includes cases where it is possible to argue whether this point is applicable.

Furthermore, to better consolidate the results of the case studies, the author assumed that if a nation suffered a surprise attack, it would use all instruments of national power to counter the attack. Therefore, all cases were observed through the DIME-L lens to better differentiate the results and make them visibly comparable. In addition to the technical side, the DIME-L lens provided insight and a way to observe whether some of the instruments of national power were more important than others when countering the surprise attack.

#### Data Collection, Processing, and Analysis

To collect data, process it, and analyze it to obtain results, the author used either primary sources or sources that are considered to be reputable. Each case was observed individually using the interest questions that were developed according to each of the DIME-L elements, presented in Chapter 2. In many cases, the author attempted to identify at least two sources confirming similar data before presenting the answer to the question as a stated fact; in some cases, a single reputable source of information was used. All questions were applied to each of the case studies. After each of the cases was analyzed, the author reported the outcomes for failures and successes in the consolidated matrixes in Chapter 4, highlighting the commonalities among the cases. This also illustrates the similarities and differences regarding success or failure of countering the surprise attack.

#### Summary

This chapter described the qualitative methodology employed in the analysis of case studies taken from recognized case-study specialist Robert K. Yin. The framework

for the case-study methodology used in this paper was: establishing the research question, setting the conditions for case studies, choosing the case studies, analyzing the cases using the DIME-L perspective, identifying similarities and differences, and drawing conclusions. Each case study contributed unique factors that broadened the analysis, which were subsequently triangulated to identify similarities and differences. This thesis analyzed each case study individually, then collectively as a cross-case study analysis, to answer the secondary research questions. Answers to the secondary research questions provided the analyzed data required to answer the primary research question. Analysis of the six case studies through this methodology presented ideas for future planners. Chapter 4 describes the analysis of the case studies and the cross-case analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

#### Overview

This chapter presents information from six case studies to demonstrate how various DIME-L elements were or were not used to overcome the effects of a surprise attack. Each subchapter provides a short overview of the conflict followed by a description of how the instruments of national power were employed or not employed to counter the effects of surprise. Chapter 4 provides the answer to the primary research question, “What are the key factors that help a nation overcome the effects of a surprise attack initiated suddenly by another nation or force?” by examining the important elements that have been relevant in history since 1945 when countering surprise attacks.

#### Case Study No. 1: Egypt’s Failure to Overcome the Effects of Israeli Surprise Attack during the Six-Day War in 1967

##### A Summary of the 1967 War

The 1967 war should be observed from two larger perspectives. On one hand, it was a power struggle of the Cold War where the Soviet Union agitated the conflict in the Middle East, exploiting the United States’ unwillingness to commit resources in that region due to its ongoing conflict in Vietnam.<sup>69</sup> The agenda of the Soviet Union was to increase its role and influence in the Middle East as a protector of Arab countries.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2017), 26.

<sup>70</sup> Richard B. Parker, *The Six-Day War: A Retrospective* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 2-3, 293-294.

However, the outcome of the 1967 war was not a desired situation for the Soviets, because it resulted in increased U.S. interest in the region.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, the war was part of a decades-long and extremely complicated confrontation between Israel and the Arab world, where the Arab nations—led by Egypt, which at that time was known as the United Arab Republic, or UAR—were seeking ways to defeat and destroy Israel as a state that they perceived as an unnatural invader of the region.<sup>72</sup>

The war itself was a six-day-long fight pitting Israel against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan; it ended with Israel's decisive victory on all fronts. Although tensions between Israel and its neighbors were ever-present, the 1967 war was initiated by the Soviet Union when it provided false intelligence information to the Arab states. This resulted in a decision by Egypt's leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, to further escalate the situation by removing the UN peacekeepers and closing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping.<sup>73</sup> The latter move was considered by Israel as a threat to its vital interests, resulting in the escalation to war.<sup>74</sup> Nasser's gamble was based on the assumptions that the Egyptian military would be able to withstand an attack, should it occur, and, following a possible prolonged conflict, could rally additional Arab support with the eventual intervention of

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<sup>71</sup> Itamar Rabinovich, "The Politics of the Region," in *The Impact of Six-Day War: A Twenty-Year Assessment*, ed. Stephen J. Roth (London: The MacMillan Press in association with the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1988), 45-48.

<sup>72</sup> Hal Kosut, *Israel & the Arabs: The June 1967 War* (New York: Facts on File, 1968), 1-9.

<sup>73</sup> Parker, *The Six-Day War: A Retrospective*, 6-8.

<sup>74</sup> Jeremy Bowen, *Six Days: How the 1967 War Shaped the Middle East* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2005), 52.

the superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>75</sup> Although both belligerents were seeking guarantees from the superpowers, the actual shooting war was not in the interests of either the Soviets or the Americans.<sup>76</sup>

Nevertheless, closure of the straits was a threat to Israel's economy and prestige. If Israel was to retaliate, its mobilization-based military faced a tight schedule to either act now or return to civilian life.<sup>77</sup> Although numerically smaller, Israeli armed forces enjoyed qualitative supremacy.<sup>78</sup> This advantage was further enhanced when Israel conducted a surprise attack first against Egypt, followed by attacks against Jordan and Syria. The war itself lasted only six days, June 5-10, reshaping the borders of the Middle East. Against Egypt, the Israelis were able to achieve their objectives within three days. Additionally, the war changed the way the superpowers of the time viewed and supported a region,<sup>79</sup> and with the humiliated and reduced Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordan military capabilities setting the stage for future conflicts there.

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<sup>75</sup> Chaim Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in Middle East* (New York: Random House Inc., 1982), 151.

<sup>76</sup> Richard B. Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation in the Middle East* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 33-34.

<sup>77</sup> Bowen, 46, 48.

<sup>78</sup> Eric Hammel, *Six Days in June: How Israel Won the 1967 Arab-Israeli War* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 115-130.

<sup>79</sup> Guy Laron, *The Six-Day War: The Breaking of the Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 302-313.

This thesis examines the reasons why Egypt, although in apparent readiness and with superior numbers in a military fighting force,<sup>80</sup> suffered a surprise attack and explore why it was not able to recover from this situation.

### Diplomatic Aspects of Egypt's Loss

From the perspective of diplomacy, it is possible to argue that Egypt was in a favorable position before and during the Six Days War. First, Egypt had the direct support of the Soviet Union, a superpower at that time. According to Parker, this support was expressed through extensive military-technical support to Egypt, moral support during the escalation phase, and the threat that the Soviets could intervene physically with armed forces in the conflict when it was clear that Egypt was losing. Moreover, Parker states that this support came with disadvantages, as the Soviet Union also used its influence to play strategic games in favor of its interests.<sup>81</sup> Second, in 1967, Egypt was considered to be a leading Arab state in the Middle East. Its ruler, Nasser, had risen to power during the 1956 Suez Crisis when he opposed declining Western powers such as the UK and France, which fought a campaign in compliance with Israel, supporting and coordinating activities.<sup>82</sup> Egypt's popularity in the Arab world was consolidated when, beginning in 1964, Arab leaders gathered for several official meetings to form a coalition and subdue Israel. According to Hal Kosut, those meetings, mainly led by Egypt,

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<sup>80</sup> Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, 149.

<sup>81</sup> Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation in the Middle-East*, 34-35, 145-146, 154-155.

<sup>82</sup> Randolph S. Churchill and Winston Churchill, *The Six Day War* (William Heinemann Ltd., 1967), 19-21.

involved obligations to strengthen armies neighboring Israel, allocation of financial assistance to Palestine, and coordination of efforts to prevent Jordan River flows from being exploited by Israel.<sup>83</sup> This cooperation culminated in a defense pact signed on May 30, six days before the war involving Jordan, Syria, and Egypt.<sup>84</sup>

#### Use of the Diplomacy Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was a diplomatic message communicated directly after the surprise attack, and did it have any immediate effect on countering the attack?

The answer to the question is in the negative. The first official message was released from the Egyptian foreign ministry to its embassies on the afternoon of June 6, the second day of the conflict. This official statement was a fabricated lie that Israelis were being aided militarily by U.S. and UK forces.<sup>85</sup> After the statement, Egypt severed diplomatic relationships with the United States and UK, with Yemen, Mauritania, and Algeria later doing the same.<sup>86</sup> Throughout the conflict, the Egyptian foreign ministry was passive and primarily released messages that were already available in the public information domain. The primary reason for this passivity, according to Parker, was the lack of communication between leaders at Egypt's military headquarters and the foreign ministry.<sup>87</sup> Bowen added that although officials requested this connection, Egypt's

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<sup>83</sup> Kosut, 12-15.

<sup>84</sup> Bowen, 68.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>86</sup> Kosut, 83.

<sup>87</sup> Parker, *The Six-Day War: A Retrospective*, 17-18.

military leaders declined, and throughout the conflict, most of the information the foreign ministry used was taken from the media.<sup>88</sup>

Were treaties or arrangements in effect at the time of the surprise attack, and were they used to mitigate the effects of surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative, but this support did not have a mitigating effect on Egypt's actions to counter the surprise. Egypt's primary support treaty was its defense pact with Jordan and Syria. According to Churchill, this agreement had an imminent effect, as both Jordan and Syria committed their military forces to the conflict within four hours, starting with the Syrian air force dropping bombs on the oil refinery in Haifa Bay. Unfortunately for Egypt, this commitment was limited, and Israeli military response quickly overcame their actions.<sup>89</sup> Hal Kosut observed that—while it was not directly related to treaties with obligations to commit, but was due more to cultural and emotional reasons—five other states declared war on Israel—Algeria, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, and Kuwait. Additionally, Hal Kosut reported that several other Arab states—such as Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Libya, and Tunisia—pledged their support to Egypt's cause.<sup>90</sup> The Soviet Union expressed its support to Egypt and demanded that Israel halt its attacks, starting from the first day of the war.<sup>91</sup> If one considers not choosing sides as

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<sup>88</sup> Bowen, 140.

<sup>89</sup> Churchill and Churchill, 86.

<sup>90</sup> Kosut, 70-71.

<sup>91</sup> Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "Soviet Policy and the Six-Day War," in *The Impact of Six-Day War War: A Twenty-Year Assessment, The Impact of Six-Day War: Soviet Policy and the Six-Day War*, ed. Stephen J. Roth (London: The MacMillan Press in association with the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1988), 134.

providing support, then the United States, UK, and France declared that they would not choose sides.<sup>92</sup> Despite the Arab nations' direct and indirect support, along with the wishes of global powers for a halt to the conflict, this cessation did not happen instantly. Instead, Israel was able to achieve all of its objectives before the international community was able to stop the war. More precisely, the winners stopped and agreed to continue without using military means.

Was any foreign assistance available and was this aid effective in countering the attack?

Foreign material and troop assistance was available, but it was either insignificant in quantity, still on the move toward the conflict region, or was not useful because of the brief duration of the conflict. Theoretically, material support was available from the Soviet Union, but because Egypt was subdued within three days, Soviet assistance never had an impact on the conflict.<sup>93</sup> Bowen stated the Soviets did place their bomber and fighter forces on readiness close to the region, and technical personnel from the Soviet Union were present in Egypt during the conflict. He added that although troop assistance was theoretically present, it did not have any effect on reducing the impact of the surprise attack. The strongest ground element, four Iraqi brigades, were on the move toward Jordan and were out of the crisis.<sup>94</sup> Other belligerents, Syria and Jordan, were targets of

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<sup>92</sup> Kosut, 70-71.

<sup>93</sup> Rubenstein, 134-139.

<sup>94</sup> Bowen, 82, 165-166.

decisive attacks just hours after Egypt, effectively negating any support they might have had for Egypt.

There was strong support among the international community for a quick termination to the conflict. As soon as the war erupted, the UN Security Council began to meet daily and adopted four ceasefire resolutions.<sup>95</sup> These resolutions were accepted by the opposing sides, but not before Israel had gained its objectives. The UN peacekeeping mission, called the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), was sent away from the border by Egypt; paradoxically, this was the strongest quarantine for safety and quick international involvement.<sup>96</sup>

To summarize the use of the instrument of diplomacy, the Egyptians had treaties with neighbors and support from the Soviet Union. The foreign aid was available in the form of material and troops. Yet, both advantages were nullified due to the quick effectiveness of the Israeli military operation. Additionally, Egypt failed to exploit the diplomacy instrument because of a lack of coordination between the foreign ministry and military commanders. If effective diplomatic work had begun earlier, the international community may have been able to enforce its will on the attacker sooner.

#### Informational Aspects of Egypt's Loss

In the informational domain, Egypt was in a favorable position before the outbreak of war. From the media perspective, it controlled the most powerful tool of

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<sup>95</sup> Kosut, 94.

<sup>96</sup> Mohamed Ghani El-Gamasy, *The October War: Memoirs of Field Marshal El-Gamasy of Egypt* (Cairo, Egypt: American University in Cairo Press, 1993), 34-35, Bowen, 41-42.

information in the region, which was the radio station in Cairo called “The Voice of Arabs.” This broadcasting station featured 150,000-watt transmitters and a modern media center and could be heard far beyond Egypt’s borders. Jeremy Bowen claimed that the station was Egypt’s most-prepared element of war, as it featured a manual for messaging during the possible outbreak of war, which was updated yearly. Bowen also stated that Nasser well understood the power of media and that Arabs, at that time, believed what was broadcast on this media channel.<sup>97</sup> Egypt also had powerful supporters like the Soviet Union, which, if needed, was able to amplify Egypt’s messages and provide information in favor of Egypt’s goals. The Soviets exploited this latter factor as a tool in favor of the interest of the Soviet Union.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, Egypt enjoyed a highly positive relationship with other Arab states, meaning they were able to support and amplify whatever Egypt communicated.

Additionally, the military communications were functional, at least at on some level, because the top military headquarters in Cairo were receiving and processing information.<sup>99</sup> Despite having working communications and tools to broadcast chosen messages to both an internal audience and the public domain, Egypt failed to do so.

#### Use of the Informational Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was situational awareness established quickly. If not, why not?

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<sup>97</sup> Bowen, 44-45.

<sup>98</sup> Churchill and Churchill, 28.

<sup>99</sup> El-Gamasy, 61-70; Bowen, 138.

The answer is in the negative. Overarching situational awareness was not established quickly. According to Bowen, although information regarding the air attack followed by the ground offensive was received by Egypt's military high command within hours, no immediate action was taken. Bowen also claimed that the Egyptian military high command fell into general disbelief, resulting in silence from the military in response. Rather than responding to the reality of the situation, the military high command instead poured lies into Radio Cairo. This passiveness and false reporting on the part of the military had several impacts. First, Egypt's allies, Jordan, and Syria, were not informed, and the fight was not coordinated between allies.<sup>100</sup> Second, Nasser was unable to establish a situational understanding of the surprise attack until approximately seven hours after it occurred. One cause was an effective operation of deception executed by Israel. First, it denied the attack and claimed that Egypt was attacking Israel. Additionally, Israel had enforced strict force protection measures, jamming Egypt and other foreign collection assets that could establish situational awareness for Egypt, at least indirectly.<sup>101</sup> The third factor impeding situational understanding was Egypt's own propaganda; the false information broadcast by the military high command indirectly helped the Israelis exploit the effects of surprise. According to Bowen, the number of planes Egypt allegedly shot down rose from 20 to 80 within one day. However, because people believed Radio Cairo, they tended not to see signs that contradicted the broadcast information. The people began to actually understand the situation on June 7, the third

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<sup>100</sup> Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, 153, 160; Bowen, 136, 138-140, 112-113.

<sup>101</sup> Bowen, 127, 136.

day of war, and the defeat was widely known by June 8 when many soldiers from the front reached populated areas.<sup>102</sup>

Was a message communicated to the internal audience that supported overcoming surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. Messages were indeed communicated, but they did not help to overcome the effects of surprise. Communicated messages can be divided into two categories. Early on, the Egyptian audience received a general announcement of the Israeli attack three hours after it happened. Additionally, they heard a series of fabricated lies related to amazing Egypt military victories, resulting in victory celebrations happening in Cairo during the evening of June 5.<sup>103</sup> Then, a message claiming intervention by U.S. and UK forces was communicated on June 6, resulting in a reaction of condemnation among the people.<sup>104</sup> Although these messages worked to unite the population, they did not have an effect on countering the surprise.

Was a message communicated to an external audience that supported overcoming surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. A few messages were communicated to the external audience with partial questionable effect. First came the diplomatic message examined in the previous subchapter. Second, the media broadcast false information from the military that generated positive emotional responses among the Arab states. Both did

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<sup>102</sup> Bowen, 135, 237.

<sup>103</sup> Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, 160; Bowen, 172, 191, 120.

<sup>104</sup> Bowen, 191.

not affect the outcome of the attack. In personal communication, both Nasser, through political channels, and Egypt's military leader, Abdel Hakim Amer, through military channels, reported to their Arab allies about Egypt's success in countering the Israeli attack with the likely intention of ensuring that allies would commit to war.<sup>105</sup> Although this was a lie and bore no positive outcome for Arab states, it generally guaranteed the escalation of the situation along with wider international attention. While perhaps morally wrong, it also guaranteed that Egypt was not fighting alone. Additional messages related to claims of intervention by the United States and UK forces were immediately rejected by those countries; still, they had a uniting effect for Arabs and resulted in anti-American and anti-British protests in capitals around the Arab world. The United States was forced to evacuate its citizens from regions most affected by the protests.<sup>106</sup> Although these intervention messages did not have an instant effect on countering surprise, they did produce a significant amount of international attention.

Was national support behind the leadership when the attack occurred? Did it have an impact if there was little support or none at all?

The answer is in the affirmative. The Egyptian people were behind Nasser, the Egyptian leader, and strongly supported him during the conflict. According to Herzog and Bowen, this support had several origins. First, he was an authoritarian leader without any real consolidated opposition. Second, he was the hero of the Suez Crisis, in which he opposed former colonial powers and achieved political victory. Third, he controlled the

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<sup>105</sup> Bowen, 128; Laron, 285-313.

<sup>106</sup> Kosut, 84-85.

only influential media channel in Egypt.<sup>107</sup> A brief, three-day period, full of incorrect information and lies about Egypt's success, only strengthened his support. Eventually, when the truth was revealed, and Nasser announced his resignation, masses of Egyptians paraded in his support and he remained in power although Egypt had lost the war.<sup>108</sup>

To summarize the use of the instrument of information, it appears that Egypt had tools to share information with internal and external audiences. At least in military leadership, Field Marshal Amer received information about the situation, and the population supported the political leadership. Two distinguishable messages were communicated—one a lie regarding Egypt's military success and the second, also a lie, about foreign military involvement. Both lies did not have a direct impact on countering surprise; rather, those lies had an indirect influence on the situation.

#### Military Aspects of Egypt's Loss

Prior to the conflict, Egypt was considered a strong fighting force in the region. Supported by the Soviet Union, it had a relatively modern military force with combat experience from the 1956 Suez Crisis and from Yemen, where Egypt participated with 100,000 troops. Egypt knew that Israel was a threat. The Sinai Peninsula was a large, fortified area with strongpoints, supply routes, and minefields, and, when hostilities began, was properly manned with five divisions, two of them armored, and three infantry.<sup>109</sup> The only notable weakness without looking deep was Egypt's involvement in

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<sup>107</sup> Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, 141; Bowen 44-45.

<sup>108</sup> Bowen, 289-291.

<sup>109</sup> Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, 154.

Yemen, where it had deployed one-third of its military.<sup>110</sup> Setting that aside, the force available against Israel was not weaker in any way on numbers.<sup>111</sup> On the other hand, Egyptian Field Marshal El-Gamasy stated that Egypt was not ready for war. He cited issues such as a reduction in the defense budget, a shortage of manpower, poor mobilization skills, and a defective training system. Most importantly, he said the military high command was misinforming political leaders about the status of the armed forces.<sup>112</sup> The effects of Israel's surprise attack, accompanied by Egypt's military unpreparedness, resulted in Egypt suffering a devastating loss within only three days.

#### Use of the Military Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was the enemy able to significantly reduce the capabilities of the defender? If not, why not?

The answer is in the affirmative. Within the first few hours, the Israeli air attack was able to decisively defeat the Egyptian air force. The Egyptian army, operating in Sinai, was able to resist and fight until it was overwhelmed by Israeli military strength and Egyptian military command decisions. There were no significant maritime engagements in this war. Guy Laron and Jeremy Bowen list some of the reasons for the loss of Egyptian air force. First, the Israelis understood the Egyptian fighters' daily operating schedule and knew when they were not in the air and ready. The Israeli attack

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<sup>110</sup> Parker, *The Six-Days War: A Retrospective*, 4; Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, 148; El-Gamasy, 37.

<sup>111</sup> Churchill and Churchill, 103-108.

<sup>112</sup> El-Gamasy, 36-42.

was specifically designed to happen when the Egyptian air force was on the ground. Second, the Egyptian radar systems were limited by the VIP visits to Sinai and were not ready for the Israeli planes' low and unexpected direction of approach toward their targets. Third, the Israelis conducted an operation of deliberate deception, with simultaneous jamming of communication and radar systems. Finally, although requested by Egypt's air force commander, the money for covered, reinforced plane bunkers was never allocated, leaving planes open in the field and easy targets for Israeli planes.<sup>113</sup> After the first few hours of the war, Egypt lost its air force, and Israel owned air supremacy. That helped the Israeli ground forces make a significant advance later into Sinai.

Was the military plan of the defender to defeat a surprise attack effective? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. There was a plan, but the initial plan was not executed. After the 1956 Suez Crisis, the Egyptian Eastern Command developed a defensive plan named Qaher to use in the Sinai. Laron observed that although Plan Qaher emphasized the defense in depth, just a few weeks before the war, it was changed due to Nasser's demands into a more static and terrain-oriented stationary variant that emphasized not giving up any ground.<sup>114</sup> This last-minute change favored the Israeli plan of attack and helped Israel be effective in a ground fight. The original and modified versions of Plan Qaher both considered some areas of the Sinai desert impassable, which

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<sup>113</sup> Laron, 285-313; Bowen, 83, 122.

<sup>114</sup> El-Gamasy, 38-39; Bowen, 142-143; Laron, 288-289.

the Israelis proved to be untrue.<sup>115</sup> Overall, there was a plan that was changed due to political considerations, thereby helping the attacker achieve its objectives.

Did specific military capabilities have an effect on overcoming surprise? If so, what were they?

Critical capabilities affecting the overall outcome were intelligence flaws, loss of air force, and the low quality of Egypt's ground force. The first critical capability flaw was intelligence failure. Guy Laron argued that due to the authoritarian nature of the Egyptian regime, the intelligence community dealt mainly with internal threats to the regime, rather than collecting information against a possible outside enemy. He highlighted technical aspects, such as the fact that enemies knew that Egyptian radar could not detect planes below a certain altitude, but no corrective actions were taken during peacetime.<sup>116</sup> Second, after losing its air force, Egypt lacked assets to project military effects to depth and support its allies or its relatively stationary ground forces in Sinai.<sup>117</sup> Third, the ground force, although decently equipped with Soviet equipment, was not able to fight well due to poor logistics and the low quality of soldiers.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, Egyptian ground forces fought hard, and both sides suffered heavy casualties during the first two days of the war.

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<sup>115</sup> Bowen, 169.

<sup>116</sup> Laron, 285-313.

<sup>117</sup> Bowen, 171.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

When the surprise occurred, were the military units able to resist the attack? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. The Egyptian air force was totally overwhelmed by the enemy and was unable to resist the attack. Conversely, Egyptian ground forces did engage in heavy fighting, at least for the first two days of the conflict. Bowen and El-Gamasy describe the reasons and events related to the ground forces fight. The opposition to attack was possible due to early deployment to Sinai, as five divisions were deployed and resisted the attack. However, the fight by the Egyptian ground force was complicated due to several reasons. First, Qaher's planned defense changes resulted in confusion and a lack of depth for defense. Second, just a week before the hostilities, the Egyptian command hierarchy was altered and the so-called Sinai Command Headquarters was established above the Eastern Command. This created confusion, as exact command relationships were not established and new staff lacked knowledge of the situation or plan. Third, the Egyptian army fought in Sinai in fixed positions, and difficulties in the execution of command resulted in untimely activation of reserves.<sup>119</sup> The final blow that made the Egyptian ground force in Sinai incapable to resist was the retreat order. This order, given by Field Marshal Amer at approximately 16:30 on June 6, was arguably the greatest mistake of the Egyptian high command.<sup>120</sup> The order was given without details directly by Amer to ground commanders, and it pushed the Egyptian army in Sinai into chaotic retreat, which the Israelis were quick to exploit with devastating results to

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<sup>119</sup> El-Gamasy, 41-45; Bowen, 101, 125, 141-143, 171.

<sup>120</sup> El-Gamasy, 63-71; Bowen, 119, 162; Laron 290-291, 292.

Egyptians.<sup>121</sup> Guy Laron observed that Egypt's military failure was influenced by the nature of the regime, which used the military primarily as an asset to remain in power, not to prepare for war. Laron also stated that purges in military leadership before the war had a negative impact on Egyptian fighting capability.<sup>122</sup>

Summarizing reasons for Egyptian military losses, Chaim Herzog observed that the Egyptian leaders' falsely placed confidence in their military capabilities was a reason for failure.<sup>123</sup> In this specific case study, the Egyptian military was mobilized, tensions were high, and conflict was anticipated. However, the Egyptian military was unable to resist the attack. Much of this loss was related to the effects of surprise, which led to complete defeat of the air force. Reasons for failure in the ground campaign can be traced to poor quality of troops, the inability to execute a defensive plan, and leaders' command failures.

#### Economic Aspects of Egypt's Loss

Economic instruments in Egypt's toolbox were the Suez Canal and the closure of Straits of Tiran.

#### Use of the Economic Instrument After Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was economic leverage in the hand of a defender? If yes, was it used and to what effect?

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<sup>121</sup> Bowen, 223, 270.

<sup>122</sup> Laron, 285-286.

<sup>123</sup> Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, 190, 151.

The answer is in the affirmative: through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran. However, the use of these tools did not help Egypt resist the effects of surprise. Egypt was first to exploit its leverage, the closure of Straits of Tiran as a tool of power to achieve political objectives before the war.<sup>124</sup> The blockade of the straits resulted in an escalation of the crisis and provided Israel with the legal justification for war.<sup>125</sup> After the war began, there is no indication that Egypt attempted to use the argument of opening the straits for its benefit. The closure of the Suez Canal happened June 6, on the second day of war, and was part of Egypt's response to its belief that UK forces were supporting Israel. Although the closure had an effect in the international domain, it did not impede the Israeli forces from reaching their objectives. The overall effectiveness of the economic instruments as tools to mitigate the impact of surprise was therefore minimal.

#### Leadership Aspects of Egypt's Loss

Leadership played a crucial role in Egypt's loss. Several mistakes were made before the conflict that escalated the situation to war. According to Herzog, the war was a result of Nasser's miscalculations. Nasser falsely assumed that Israel was successful in 1956 because of help from the UK and France, which led to an underestimation of Israeli military capabilities. Nasser also believed that Egypt and Arab armies were in better shape than they actually were. Herzog added that, from a military perspective, Egyptian leaders overestimated the quality of their troops and were blinded by the Soviet

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<sup>124</sup> Bowen, 46, 63-64.

<sup>125</sup> El-Gamasy, 34-35; Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, 149.

technology that had arrived before the war.<sup>126</sup> This was accompanied by an underestimation of the effects of a possible surprise attack, despite the fact that, during the Suez Crisis in 1956, British and French air forces had proved the effectiveness of surprise against Egypt's air force.<sup>127</sup>

### Leadership Actions after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Did the national leadership act decisively, establishing clear intent and a plan of action when the attack occurred?

The answer is in the negative. First, the military leadership system existed but was incompetent in reacting to attack. According to El-Gamasy and Bowen, Field Marshal Amer went into a state of shock and disbelief on the first day, and on the second day, when the important stronghold in Abu Agheila was lost, panicked and ordered retreat without any planning beforehand.<sup>128</sup> This lack of professionalism was accompanied by the erroneous belief that American and British support was behind the Israeli attack.<sup>129</sup> Providing false information to the public and not bringing Egypt's political leadership into the picture had a limiting effect on the employment of other instruments of power.<sup>130</sup> Probably the only active action by Egypt's leadership was assuring the involvement of Syria and Jordan in the conflict by falsely reporting Egypt's successes in the battlefield

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<sup>126</sup> Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, 189-190.

<sup>127</sup> Laron, 286.

<sup>128</sup> El-Gamasy, 66-71; Bowen, 202-203, 171, 184; Laron, 285-313.

<sup>129</sup> Bowen, 138.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 138-139.

and gaining the support of the Arab world by spreading the lie about the American and British involvement.<sup>131</sup> However, none of it was impactful in reducing the effects of surprise attack in the Six-Day War.

Case Study No. 2: Georgian Failure to Overcome the Effects of Russian Surprise Attack During the Conflict in South Ossetia in 2008

A Summary of the 2008 War

The 2008 war between Georgia and Russia was significant in many ways. Although wars in the Caucasus over important trade routes and economic hubs occurred throughout history, this war was different. Ronald Asmus stated that this war was specifically escalated from a frozen conflict to a shooting war by Russia to restrain Georgians and to draw lines for the West. Asmus added, augmented by Thomas Goltz, that it ended the illusions that Europe and its surrounding areas are free of war in the 21st century, that Russia could be turned to the path of Western democracy, and that small states neighboring Russia are out of its sphere of influence and interests.<sup>132</sup>

The war itself had one source: Moscow's determination to stop the Georgian approach to the Western world and to end the further expansion of NATO to its borders.<sup>133</sup> As a result of this brief, five-day war, Georgia suffered decisive defeat with

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<sup>131</sup> Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, 160.

<sup>132</sup> Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West* (Tallinn: AS Eesti Ajalehed, 2010), 18-22; Thomas Goltz, *Georgia Diary a Chronicle of War and Political Chaos in the Post-Soviet Caucasus* (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2009), 256.

<sup>133</sup> Asmus, 69, 242-243; Goltz, 258-259.

the loss of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia territories.<sup>134</sup> In addition to humiliated Georgians, the losers were also Western democracies, because of their failure to foresee Russian preparations for war and their failure to stop the hostilities before they began.

The most important facts about the war, according to Asmus, are the following: First, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the interaction between Russia and its neighbor Georgia was fragile due to the disputed territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Separatist movements, tensions, and smaller-scale skirmishes were not rare in the region. Second, beginning in 2004, new Georgian leadership guided by President Mikheil Saakashvili launched intense reforms to integrate with the West and join NATO. That was not in Russia's interest. Third, Western democracies crossed Russia's foreign interests when they supported Kosovo's independence and provided Russia an excuse to directly support the separatist Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. Fourth, Russia had been preparing for war for months and skillfully outmaneuvered Georgian leadership to take actions that led to war. Fifth, Georgians were not ready for Russian military intervention in support of the separatist movement. Finally, Western powers completely missed the escalation and were caught off guard, then were able to influence the outcome only superficially.<sup>135</sup> Although the final Russian objective, a change in the Georgian political regime, did not materialize, the war was a resounding success for the Russian

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<sup>134</sup> Ariel Cohen and Robert E. Hamilton, *The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications* (North Charleston, SC: Createspace, 2011), iii, vii.

<sup>135</sup> Asmus, 75-85, 103-119, 125, 127-157, 186-191, 192-196, 242, 248-250; Ants Laaneots, "The Russian-Georgian War of 2008: Causes and Implication," *Estonian National Defense College Occasional Papers* 4, no. 1 (2016): 95-96, [https://www.kvak.ee/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ENDC\\_Occasional\\_Papers\\_4\\_final.pdf](https://www.kvak.ee/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ENDC_Occasional_Papers_4_final.pdf).

military and geopolitics.<sup>136</sup> This case study examines the reasons why Georgia failed to respond to the Russian attack and suffered a surprise, finding itself unable to recover from the situation.

### Diplomatic Aspects of the Georgian Loss

From the perspective of diplomacy, it is possible to argue that Georgia was in an unbalanced situation. On the one hand, Georgia enjoyed enormously positive relations with the United States, the only superpower at the time.<sup>137</sup> This relationship was expressed through military cooperation in Iraq, economic support, and personal relations between key officials in the United States and Georgia.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, Georgia's relations were at least as positive with the EU and its members, particularly smaller Eastern European states, which Georgia saw as an example in its quest to become a Western state. These relationships encouraged Georgia's leaders to actively pursue moving Georgia farther toward the West. On the other hand, the weakness of Georgian diplomacy was its relations with neighboring Russia and with the disputed regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia supported both regions.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, Abkhazia saw war in 1993 between Georgia and Abkhazian separatists, who were supported by Russia.

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<sup>136</sup> Laaneots, 95-96.

<sup>137</sup> Ana K. Niedermaier, *Countdown to War in Georgia: Russia's Foreign Policy and Media Coverage of the Conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia* (Minneapolis, MN: East View Press, 2008), 332-333, 466; Asmus, 73-75.

<sup>138</sup> Goltz, 257-258; Asmus, 74.

<sup>139</sup> Per Gahrton, *Georgia: Pawn in the New Great Game* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 177; Asmus, 94-95.

Disputes over those regions was the main reason that Georgia had difficulties achieving its foreign policy objectives, namely, invitation to the Membership Action Plan (MAP), a path toward achieving NATO membership to balance Russian influence.<sup>140</sup>

Ronald Asmus highlighted another shortcoming of Georgian diplomacy. Although Georgia tried, it did not manage to alarm the Western countries about an escalation of the conflict, accompanied by the failure to replace Russian peacekeepers in the region with a more impartial force.<sup>141</sup> Stephen Blank claimed that perhaps personal relations between high-ranking U.S. and Georgian officials sent false signals and injected confidence to the Georgian leadership that underpinned their bad strategic decisions.<sup>142</sup> The latter does not change the fact that Russia outsmarted Georgian leaders, leading them to make decisions that gave Russia an excuse to use military force in its interest.

#### Use of the Diplomacy Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was a diplomatic message communicated directly after the surprise attack, and did it have any immediate effect on countering the attack?

The answer to the question is in the affirmative, but there was no immediate effect that could have helped mitigate the effects of surprise. Georgian diplomats were constantly talking with their international counterparts, especially the Americans. According to Asmus, the Georgian ambassador, John Tefft, sent a message to the United

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<sup>140</sup> Goltz, 259; Asmus, 99-102.

<sup>141</sup> Asmus, 16.

<sup>142</sup> Stephen Blank, "The Georgia Crisis and Western Strategic Options," in *Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Georgia and the West*, ed. Paul B. Rich (New York: Routledge, 2012), 184-185.

States on August 7, stating that the situation was escalating out of control; the message was received and discussed during Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's morning office call. At that time, war in Georgia had just begun. Niedermaier and Asmus both point out that Georgian President Saakashvili, understanding that the situation was escalating, did attempt to establish a one-sided ceasefire just before the outbreak of war. This was announced at a press conference the evening before the opposing sides first clashed.<sup>143</sup>

Diplomacy was actively used from the first day of the war, first by the United States and later by France. Asmus and Niedermaier describe the unfolding of diplomatic events, such as an attempt by Condoleezza Rice to forge a peace agreement with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and frequent telephone conversations between U.S. President Bush and President Saakashvili. Nevertheless, the Russian military success negated those diplomatic efforts and the United States handed over peace negotiations to France. Meanwhile, the U.S. embassy did a great deal of work to keep the United States informed about realities in Georgia. However, those efforts came too late for Georgia.<sup>144</sup>

Were treaties or arrangements in effect of the time of surprise attack, and were they used to mitigate the effects of surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative, because both Georgia and Russia were members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an organization bringing together former states of the Soviet Union. The objective of the institution was to encourage cooperation in economic, political, and military affairs with some powers to coordinate

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<sup>143</sup> Niedermaier, 396; Asmus, 51, 185.

<sup>144</sup> Niedermaier, 410-411; Asmus, 66, 56, 198-200, 202-203, 206-207.

trade, finance, lawmaking, and security. However, in this case, the hostilities were between two member states, so paradoxically, this association had no effect on reducing the effects of surprise. Supporting connections that could be considered helpful were Georgia's membership in the United Nations and Georgia's application to achieve the MAP proposal for joining NATO. The latter move was discussed intensely in the international arena but eventually was not offered at the NATO summit in Bucharest in the spring of 2008.<sup>145</sup> Probably the best hope for support was from the United States. Very warm relationships existed between the United States and Georgia, especially due to cooperation in the Iraq war, but nothing could trigger immediate intervention from the United States or another state when conflict erupted. The United States and the EU proposed several plans for a peaceful resolution involving Russia, Georgia, and disputed Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The most well-known initiative was the so-called Georgian Steinmeier plan, which failed due to disagreements among allies and escalation of the conflict.<sup>146</sup>

Was any foreign assistance available, and was this aid effective in countering the attack?

The answer is in the affirmative. Foreign material assistance was available in the form of humanitarian aid provided by the United States.<sup>147</sup> The second element of U.S.

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<sup>145</sup> Goltz, 258-259; Asmus, 140-157.

<sup>146</sup> Marcel Van Herpen, "How the West Failed in Ukraine: Lessons to Be Learned." *The Cicero Foundation Great Debate Paper* 14, no. 04 (2014): 3-30, 8-9; Asmus, 173-176.

<sup>147</sup> Goltz, 276; Jim Nichol, *Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 2008), 35.

support was flying Georgian units from Iraq to Georgia.<sup>148</sup> On a theoretical basis, there were supporters in the U.S. government who favored either direct or indirect military support to Georgia but that support never manifested itself into actual actions because of the assessed threat of further escalation.<sup>149</sup> Asmus observed that this U.S. support was much less than Georgians expected. Additional support was provided by Poland and Estonia when key Georgian websites were hacked.<sup>150</sup> This support enabled Georgian officials to communicate with their foreign partners.

Strong support for a quick termination of hostilities existed in the international community. Both American and EU diplomats did their best during those five days to achieve a solution that would end the fight. Nevertheless, the attacker persisted until the situation was favorable to the antagonist. Asmus stated that without U.S. diplomatic intervention, Georgia would have been completely defeated and Russia would have gained its final objective: a change of power in Georgia.<sup>151</sup>

To summarize the use of the instrument of diplomacy, the Georgians had friends but no treaties with allies that would guarantee support. Additionally, the eventual ceasefire treaty mediated by France remained too general and freely open to

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<sup>148</sup> Gahrton, 180; Asmus, 206.

<sup>149</sup> Martin E. Hellman, Handout #7, “Nuclear Weapons, Risk and Hope” Stanford University, November 4, 2010, [https://ee.stanford.edu/~hellman/sts152\\_01/handout07.pdf](https://ee.stanford.edu/~hellman/sts152_01/handout07.pdf); Asmus, 207-208.

<sup>150</sup> Asmus, 187, 207.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

interpretation.<sup>152</sup> Foreign aid was available strictly in the form of humanitarian and military airlift help from the United States. This support did not affect the overall response to the surprise attack.

### Informational Aspects of the Georgian Loss

Georgia was not in a favorable position in the information domain before the outbreak of war. According to Asmus, Georgians were already fighting a deliberate strategic communication battle with the Russians. The Russian media machine was well-established in the region, and Russia began executing a planned and deliberate media campaign months before the actual war, designed to depict Georgians as negative players.<sup>153</sup> Brian Whitmore from Radio Free Europe added that another sign of deliberate Russian media manipulation was the transport of 50 Russian journalists to the town of Tskhinvali, the center point of the conflict, directly before hostilities broke out.<sup>154</sup> These journalists then made controversial reports from the conflict zone, thereby impeding Georgia's situational understanding. To illustrate, several large Western media channels reported information that later was found to be incorrect.<sup>155</sup> Conversely, a favorable

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<sup>152</sup> Nichol, 23-24; Asmus, 19.

<sup>153</sup> Brian Whitmore, "Russia-Georgia Border Scene Hints at Scripted Affair," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, August 25, 2008, [https://www.rferl.org/a/Russia\\_Georgian\\_Scripted\\_Affair/1193319.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Russia_Georgian_Scripted_Affair/1193319.html); Asmus, 19, 166.

<sup>154</sup> Asmus, 188.

<sup>155</sup> Niedermaier, 393-395; Asmus, 62-63.

factor for Georgia was that it was not in isolation; it enjoyed support from the United States, which received information from a Georgian perspective.

Outside the media domain, high-ranking Georgian officials at the strategic state level were aware of what was happening, as they received reports about Russian activities on the borders and in South Ossetia. However, at the same time, 39 important government, foreign, economic, and media websites were attacked with an intent to demoralize the Georgian people and reduce opportunities to communicate with international partners.<sup>156</sup>

#### Use of the Informational Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was situational awareness established quickly? If not, why not?

The answer is in the affirmative on the strategic level. Principal strategic situational awareness was established quickly. According to Asmus, Georgia's high-ranking officials met several times the day before they sent forces to Tskhinvali to discuss Russian activities in the vicinity of the Roki Tunnel. Georgia's leaders were receiving regular reports about a build-up in forces on their borders and skirmishes in South Ossetia.<sup>157</sup> Asmus observed that these reports included information about Russian columns near the Roki Tunnel, the presence of a Russian A50 plane in the region capable of controlling large-scale air operations, the departure of Russian ships from the Sevastopol, and the presence of an unusually high number of Russian news reporters in the region. This information was the basis for Georgia's follow-up decisions. What

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<sup>156</sup> Laaneots, 66; Asmus, 186-188.

<sup>157</sup> Laaneots; 37, 57; Asmus, 46-52, 186, 201.

Georgian leaders failed to understand was the true objective of the Russian forces' activities, especially when Russia opened the second front in Abkhazia.<sup>158</sup> Problems with situational awareness were found at the tactical level because of hasty planning, poor reconnaissance, and missing or malfunctioning communication equipment.<sup>159</sup> To illustrate, some Georgian units were surprised and suffered a loss of morale after countering Russian armed forces due to them not being aware that was an option.<sup>160</sup>

Was a message communicated to the internal audience that supported overcoming surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. Georgian media reported constantly about the situation, broadcasting news every hour, with the reporting favoring the Georgian narrative. Margareta Akhvlediani described the media domain as two “separate, simultaneous conflicts” underway—the Georgian and Russian. She stated that Georgian media depicted the country as fighting against Russian aggression, a side suffering with moral right in its actions. Akhvlediani added that this was possible for two reasons: First, Georgian media was at least partially state-controlled. Second, Russian media channels

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<sup>158</sup> Asmus, 36, 38-39, 44, 55, 201.

<sup>159</sup> Lavrov, 113; Asmus, 194-196.

<sup>160</sup> Lavrov, 43; Laaneots, 65; Riho Uhtegi, “Venemaa Hubriidsoda Georgias 2008. Aastal.” *Estonian Journal of Military Studies* 7, no. 1 (2018): 62–85. [https://doi.org/https://www.ksk.edu.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/03\\_yhtegi.pdf](https://doi.org/https://www.ksk.edu.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/03_yhtegi.pdf).

providing opposing views were not broadcast. Overall, she said, both sides' media instruments were biased.<sup>161</sup>

As a result, according to Akhvlediani, Georgian public opinion was in support of the Georgian government, thanks in part to some manipulated reporting. For example, when American humanitarian aid flights were sent to the region, they were presented as a military-humanitarian activity, leaving an impression that the United States had joined the military operations. This led to an official denial from the U.S.<sup>162</sup>

These official state announcements took place throughout the conflict. Two calls for mobilization were issued on the afternoon of August 7 and in the early hours of August 8. Additionally, shortly after midnight on August 7, the Georgian Ministry of Defense announced that a decision had been made to restore constitutional order in South Ossetia.<sup>163</sup> Additional messages were provided on state and local government levels to keep the population informed, for example, announcements of limited ceasefires to allow evacuation and updates on Georgian military activities.<sup>164</sup>

As the fighting turned away from Georgia's favor, President Saakashvili made a statement to the Georgian people on the evening of August 11, stating that Russian forces

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<sup>161</sup> Margarita Akhvlediani, "The Fatal Flaw: The Media and the Russian Invasion of Georgia," in *Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Georgia and the West*, ed. Paul B. Rich (New York: Routledge, 2012), 114-115, 120.

<sup>162</sup> Akhvlediani, 120, 124; Niedermaier, 412.

<sup>163</sup> Laaneots, 58; Gahrton, 177, Niedermaier, 400-401.

<sup>164</sup> Niedermaier, 395-397; Laaneots, 62-63.

could occupy Georgia as a whole. This resulted in mild panic in the capital.<sup>165</sup> The following day, President Saakashvili rallied his people to participate in a demonstration to uphold public morale.<sup>166</sup>

Was a message communicated to an external audience that supported overcoming surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. For example, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reported the deteriorating situation to the international community a week before the conflict. However, this so-called “diplomatic SOS” was disregarded.<sup>167</sup>

From a media perspective, Georgia’s message to the outside audience was relatively similar to the message provided on media channels. Margarita Akhvlediani observed that there was a public relations war between Georgian and Russian media, both of whom intended to win favor with the international community.<sup>168</sup> Additionally, there were the already-mentioned official and personal diplomatic connections that Georgia used to build its narrative. Several official declarations supported media and diplomatic activities. For example, on the morning of August 9, the Georgian Parliament approved a

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<sup>165</sup> Gahrton, 177; Asmus, 205.

<sup>166</sup> James Kilner, ““Thousands of Georgians Rally to Support Saakashvili.” *Reuters*, August 12, 2008. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-georgia-ossetia-demonstration/thousands-of-georgians-rally-to-support-saakashvili-idUSLC7201620080812>; Asmus, 227.

<sup>167</sup> Asmus, 43.

<sup>168</sup> Akhvlediani, 130-132.

declaration of the state of war for 15 days.<sup>169</sup> When the Georgian side began to lose, the Georgians announced on August 10 at 17:30 that they would observe a unilateral ceasefire and would move their forces out of South Ossetia. The opposing side did not respond, and hostilities continued.<sup>170</sup> Finally, Georgia resigned, with public display, from the Commonwealth of Independent States.”<sup>171</sup>

Was national support behind the leadership when the attack occurred? Did it have an impact if there was little support or none at all?

The answer is in the affirmative. The Georgian people were supportive of the leadership. When called, Georgians mobilized, and several massive demonstrations occurred in the capital of Tbilisi in support of the leaders and against Russian actions. This support was closely linked with local media activities that favored the Georgian tale. Soon after the war, the Republican Institute conducted the Georgian National Study and found that public support before, during, and after the conflict was strong for Georgian leadership.

To summarize the use of the instrument of information, Georgia had tools with which to communicate to inner and external audiences. Although cyber-attacks attempted to close important Georgian state and non-state internet pages, they did not significantly damage Georgian actions. The heavy competition took place in the media domain, with both sides using it to promote favorable narratives. The Georgians received strategic

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<sup>169</sup> Laaneots, 67.

<sup>170</sup> Council of the European Union, *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia: Report*, vol. 2 (European Commission, 2009), 211.

<sup>171</sup> Laaneots, 77.

information about their opponents' actions but failed to interpret that in full. Strategic knowledge did not reach a tactical level due to hasty military actions and inoperable communication systems at that level.

### Military Aspects of the Georgian Loss

Before the conflict, starting from 2003 when President Saakashvili's team came to power, the Georgian military underwent some significant changes. Ants Laaneots related some developments that had an impact on the later conflict. First, Georgia's leaders had chosen the so-called expeditionary force type of army as a fundamental element of its armed forces, with a reduced number of conscripts. Second, several changes were made in military leadership, such as manning the Ministry of Defense with civilians, retiring many experienced senior military leaders, and replacing them with young, inexperienced officers. Third, the annual defense budget was significantly increased, enabling the procurement of new equipment and the payment of higher salaries to servicemen and women. Fourth, the Georgian military fielded almost a full range of military capabilities with four services: Army, Navy, Air Force, and National Guard. Although many units were unmanned, the military was 30,000 strong when the war started in August 2008. The main ground fighting force was composed of five infantry brigades, of which three were usable for military activities in Georgia when the war began.<sup>172</sup> Asmus and Brigadier General Riho Uhtegi, former defense *attaché* in Georgia, observed that the

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<sup>172</sup> Laaneots, 38-46, 85.

Georgian military entered into war without preparation and readiness to fight.<sup>173</sup> The troops were immature, were focused on activities related to the Iraq war, and were unprepared to fight Russian armed forces, which resulted in military defeat.

#### Use of the Military Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was the enemy able to significantly reduce the capabilities of the defender? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. The author explores this theme through the prism of the military services. First, the main fighting throughout the war was done by the ground forces on the Georgian side. Indeed, there were casualties as the fighting progressed, but the numbers as a result of the Russian surprise attack were not extraordinary. Even the Georgian air defense radar and command systems were not jammed significantly or taken down before the second and fourth days of the war.<sup>174</sup> Second, the Georgian air force operated only on the first day and, at a later date, was grounded and dispersed around Georgia. Laaneots observed that this probably was related to a lack of ammunition for the air force.<sup>175</sup> The Georgian navy was indeed destroyed in port on the fourth day of the war, without resisting,<sup>176</sup> but since no naval fighting happened before August 12, the author does not consider this a surprise reduction of

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<sup>173</sup> Riho Ühtegi, *The 2008 Russia-Georgia War Five Years Later* (International Center for Defence and Security, 2013); Asmus, 192-194.

<sup>174</sup> Laaneots 69, 74.

<sup>175</sup> Anton Lavrov, *The Tanks of August*, ed. Ruslan Pukhov (Moscow, Russia: Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, 2010), 74; Laaneots, 62.

<sup>176</sup> Laaneots, 78.

specific capability. In this conflict, cyberspace was used as a domain against Georgia to lower morale, damage communications, and disrupt the economy. Hamilton and Cohen observed that cyberattacks, although extensive, did not have a significant impact on Georgian activities because, at that time, Georgian institutions were not “wired enough” to allow that type of impact.<sup>177</sup> Even the air defense was operational for the first few days of the conflict and was capable of inflicting significant damage to attacking Russian aircraft.<sup>178</sup>

Was the military plan of the defender to defeat a surprise attack effective? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative; there was no plan for South Ossetia. According to Asmus, the reasons were that the Georgian military realized that if the conflict were to escalate, it would probably be in the region of Abkhazia. Therefore, when the president ordered the operation in South Ossetia, all present plans were discarded and a new, hasty plan was drafted.<sup>179</sup> Thomas Goltz added that South Ossetia was an easy target due to a divided populace.<sup>180</sup> An interesting question in the context of the war in South Ossetia is why Georgia did not close the Roki Tunnel, thereby allowing Russian forces to enter the region in large numbers. Both Laaneots and Asmus argue that closure of the Roki Tunnel was not the task assigned to the Georgian military. Objectives, although not yet fully

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<sup>177</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, 45-46.

<sup>178</sup> Lavrov, 59; Asmus, 201.

<sup>179</sup> Asmus, 192, 194.

<sup>180</sup> Goltz, 260.

revealed to historians, seemed to be related to Tskhinvali. The fact that the Roki Tunnel was not an objective is illustrated by multiple attempts by the Georgians to destroy Gupta Bridge, an important path toward the tunnel.<sup>181</sup> Asmus observed that Georgia's last-minute operational plan is probably the most solid proof that no long-term plan was in place to clear South Ossetia of separatists or to fight Russian forces.<sup>182</sup> Another illustration that reveals problems in military planning was the collapse of the Georgian military command system. Asmus and Laaneots both claimed that when Georgia pulled its troops back from South Ossetia, it lacked a plan for how to continue fighting and how to protect Tbilisi, the capital, because of failures in the command structure.<sup>183</sup>

Did specific military capabilities have an effect on overcoming surprise? If so, what were they?

Critical capabilities affecting the overall outcome were lack of combat power, training, and problems with military leadership. First, Georgia's five-brigade ground force<sup>184</sup> was not sufficient to operate on two fronts.<sup>185</sup> When Russia opened the second front on August 9 in Abkhazia, Georgia lacked forces to repel the troops and "was forced to a defensive posture."<sup>186</sup> As a result, when Georgia committed to the South Ossetian

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<sup>181</sup> Laaneots, 50-51, 54-55; Asmus, 56.

<sup>182</sup> Asmus, 57.

<sup>183</sup> Laaneots, 72; Asmus, 204.

<sup>184</sup> In reality, 1st Infantry Bde was in Iraq, and 5th Infantry Bde was a training unit, which left three brigades as the fighting force.

<sup>185</sup> Asmus, 192; Laaneots 70.

<sup>186</sup> Laaneots 55; Asmus, 201.

front, it automatically lacked an operational reserve. Logistical readiness, another aspect of combat power, was low. Laaneots indicates that Georgia did not foresee the military operations lasting more than three or four days. Second, the Georgian army was not trained to fight a conventional battle. According to Laaneots, Georgia's training methods and equipment were oriented toward tasks in Iraq and were ineffective against capable combined arms opponent. Third, the military leadership lacked operational plans in the event of failed communications. This is illustrated by the fact that on the third day of the war, the Georgian units received no commands from headquarters and acted as they saw fit.<sup>187</sup> Asmus observed that the Georgian Joint Staff began to recover from the shock on August 14 when they attempted to restore the military command, control systems, and combat capabilities.<sup>188</sup>

When the surprise occurred, were the military units able to resist the attack? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. Asmus claimed that Georgia was not ready for the military operation. First, Georgia's military planning was focused on Abkhazia, where conflict seemed more likely. Second, because tensions were high in spring and early summer, Georgia's armed forces were in a state of constant readiness during that time. However, for August the situation was assessed as a low threat, and Georgian leaders began distributing free passes to the troops. In reality, this meant the Georgian military was at its lowest readiness status of the year. Additional aspects of low readiness were

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<sup>187</sup> Laaneots, 52, 68, 72.

<sup>188</sup> Asmus, 79.

that modernization work was underway on Georgia's tank fleet, leaving it useless in full to counter the attack; the military's best unit, the 1st Infantry Brigade, was deployed to Iraq; and a lack of ammunition meant a change of rifles from M4 carbines to Russian Kalashnikov-type weapons, which added confusion.<sup>189</sup> Laaneots supports that argument by claiming that the Georgian military failed in building up the logistical system to supply the units.<sup>190</sup>

Summarizing reasons for Georgia's military loss, Laaneots and Uhtegi both suggest the following. First, the political leadership was involved in the operational command, thereby confusing the chain of command. Second, Georgia's troops, although better-equipped, were poorly trained for conventional combat, had immature leadership, and suffered a loss of morale when Russian forces were encountered. Third, the reconnaissance and analysis capability was weak. Fourth, weak cooperation between the combined arms team, artillery fires direction, and low anti-armor capability caused problems for the fighting force. Finally, the unpreparedness of the mobilization system with a failed logistics system resulted in a lack of supplies and manpower for the battle.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Asmus, 44, 48-49.

<sup>190</sup> Laaneots, 85.

<sup>191</sup> Laaneots, 87-88; Uhtegi, *The 2008 Russia-Georgia War Five Years Later*.

## Economic Aspects of Georgian Loss

Economic instruments that could have some relevance in the Russia-Georgia comparison were two oil pipelines crossing Georgia—Baku-Supsa and Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan.

### Use of the Economic Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was economic leverage in the hand of a defender? If yes, was it used and to what effect?

The answer is in the negative. The main reasons are that Russia is economically independent, and no internationally important trade routes were threatened that could have resulted in more speedy involvement by other states. Tracey Garman claimed that during the conflict, the oil pipelines running through Georgia were not objectives for Russian military activities, although Georgian media and political leaders attempted to claim otherwise.<sup>192</sup> If pipelines and the related economy were influenced, then it was only indirectly, through a lowered security situation in the region.<sup>193</sup> Therefore, the overall effectiveness of economic instruments as tools to mitigate the effects of surprise was minimal in this case, if it existed at all.

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<sup>192</sup> Gahrton, 186.

<sup>193</sup> Tracey C. Garman, “Pipeline Politics: Georgia and Energy Security,” in *Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Georgia and the West*, ed. Paul B. Rich (New York: Routledge, 2012), 94-108.

## Leadership Aspects of Georgian Loss

Leadership played a crucial role in Georgia's loss. The country's political leaders were young and had been educated in the West. Four years before the conflict, the leadership had made significant changes to transform Georgia into a modern state. However, the leaders' success and their youth, according to Laaneots, were also their weaknesses. They tended to be reckless in their decisions with a belief in their correctness, a dangerous formula for national security.<sup>194</sup> Asmus argued that several factors influenced the Georgian leaders' decision-making. First were historical and political realities. Political leaders believed they would not survive politically if they surrendered the disputed territories without a fight. President Saakashvili chose war at the last minute and later found himself cornered. He hoped that quick Western diplomatic intervention would allow him to retreat and blame separatists. He was wrong. The second factor was the belief that Western states would intervene and that their support would be offered quickly.<sup>195</sup> Cohen and Hamilton added that the United States had, at multiple times and through several channels, said it would not support possible Georgian military actions in disputed territories.<sup>196</sup>

From a military leadership perspective, Georgia was in weak situation. Several experienced senior officers were released from duty before the conflict, the military education system was not working well, and command systems were not well established

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<sup>194</sup> Laaneots, 84.

<sup>195</sup> Asmus, 17, 24, 54-55, 64-65.

<sup>196</sup> Cohen and Hamilton, 18, 85.

for that type of operation. Asmus observed that just before the operation, command was given to General Mamuka Kurasvili, who led a hastily formed mixed force of regular infantry and police. Kurasvili lacked a command post and working radio communications with subordinate units. That led to face-to-face leadership or the use of mobile phones. An additional complication was the continuous political intervention in the military chain of command.<sup>197</sup>

#### Leadership Actions after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Did the national leadership act decisively, establishing clear intent and a plan of action when the attack occurred?

The answer is in the negative. President Saakashvili decided to send Georgian troops to Tskhinvali on August 7 at 23:35. Asmus observed that the EU Commission Mission later determined this decision to be illegal. He added that Georgia's leaders had concluded that not taking action would result ethnic cleansing by separatists against Georgians, something they believed would lead to political collapse.<sup>198</sup> President Saakashvili gave three orders to the Georgian military: stop Russian columns coming from the Roki Tunnel toward Tskhinvali, prevent the shelling of Georgian villages and positions, and avoid civilian casualties while doing so. However, these orders were vague and hastily formed. This, combined with poor military conduct and lack of high-echelon

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<sup>197</sup> Ühtegi, "The 2008 Russia-Georgia War Five Years Later"; Asmus, 194-196.

<sup>198</sup> Asmus observed that the decision was not made single-handedly by President Saakashvili but after he consulted with advisers.

command, resulted in chaos and panic when Georgian forces encountered the Russian army.<sup>199</sup> Laaneots explained:

The Georgian political leadership became too eagerly involved in the command and control of the military, which resulted in chaos on the battlefield. Relinquishing the plan to close the Roki Tunnel, the reckless withdrawal from Tskhinvali, and the subsequent failed attempt to re-enter the city can also be attributed to inexperienced political and military leaders who simply lost their head.<sup>200</sup>

No further specific plans had been developed to move forward after the operation in Tskhinvali. An emerging disorder among Georgia's leaders was partially due to their inability to analyze and assess the real intentions of Russian actions. The threat that the attack was designed to occupy Georgia entirely was a constant source of panic for its leaders.<sup>201</sup>

### Case Study No. 3: Ukrainian Failure to Overcome the Effects of Russian Surprise in Crimea 2014

#### A Summary of the 2014 Surprise in Crimea

The 2014 occupation of Crimea could be viewed from many perspectives. On the one hand, it was a remarkable military operation conducted by Russian armed forces.<sup>202</sup> On the other hand, this success was a direct result of weakness on the part of the

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<sup>199</sup> Asmus, 24, 35, 39, 46-47, 52.

<sup>200</sup> Laaneots, 86.

<sup>201</sup> Asmus, 40, 65-66.

<sup>202</sup> Michael Kofman, Katya Migacheva, Brian Nichiporuk, Andrew Radin, Olesya Tkacheva, and Jenny Oberholtzer, *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1498.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1498.html).

Ukrainian state.<sup>203</sup> Nevertheless, a significant amount of geopolitics was involved, setting the stage for what happened on the Crimean Peninsula during February and March 2014. The primary ingredients in the situation, which resulted in Ukraine losing Crimea, included the existence of an almost failed state on the border between the East and West, the failure of Western powers to understand Russia and its motives, and the perception of Russia's threat to the region's geopolitical interests. The last factor was accompanied by an innovative and risky plan which was executed by Russian forces.

All three themes have been debated extensively, and there is no easy way to present them. Basic facts and information to know in this thesis are the following: First, Ukraine was a state consisting of multiple small ethnic groups with a wide mixture of cultural backgrounds.<sup>204</sup> Historically, before 1991, Ukraine had never been an independent state, and it lacked the necessary knowledge and skills for governing a democratic state.<sup>205</sup> Additionally, the Ukrainian people enjoyed little shared identity. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, local oligarchs began wielding power; their empires tended to be region-based, further increasing the new state's fragmentation.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Constantine Pleshakov, *The Crimean Nexus: Putins War and the Clash of Civilizations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 132-133.

<sup>204</sup> David Marples, "Ethnic and Social Composition of Ukraine's Regions and Voting Patterns," in *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, ed. Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Richard Sakwa (Bristol, England: E-International Relations Publishing, 2016), 8-15; Pleshakov, 36-42.

<sup>205</sup> Verena Fritz, *State-Building: A Comparative Study of Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, and Russia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 111-117; Pleshakov, 19.

<sup>206</sup> Pleshakov, 43-44.

These factors significantly affected Ukraine's development in the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Crimean Peninsula was not historically part of Ukraine but was transferred to Ukraine in 1954 by the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.<sup>207</sup> However, after 1991, the Russian military remained in Sevastopol to uphold Russia's geopolitical interests. The collapse of the Soviet Union meant the Russian Black Sea navy had no control of a serviceable year-round harbor. To overcome this deficiency and maintain access to the Black Sea and Bosphorus Straits, Russia spent five years negotiating a treaty with the Ukrainian government. The treaty was eventually signed in 1997, allowing Russia to rent the Sevastopol navy base for 10 years. Later, in 2010, that treaty was extended to 2042. The treaty also allowed the presence in Crimea of a 25,000-strong contingent with armored vehicles and military airplanes. In return, Russia sold natural to Ukraine at a discounted price,<sup>208</sup> which further increased Russian influence over the populace. In the following events, the base was used extensively as a staging area for Russian forces occupying the peninsula.

From a broader geopolitical aspect, the roots of the conflict are in the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Pleshakov and Walker argued that a single factor that

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<sup>207</sup> Greta Uehling, "Everyday Life After Annexation: The Autonomous Republic of Crimea," in *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, ed. Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Richard Sakwa (Bristol, England: E-International Relations Publishing, 2016), 68; Pleshakov, 91.

<sup>208</sup> Ivan Katchanovski, "Crimea: People and Territory Before and After Annexation," in *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, ed. Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Richard Sakwa (Bristol, England: E-International Relations Publishing, 2016), 80; Pleshakov, 45-46.

pushed Russia to occupy Crimea and invade Donbas was the expansion of NATO. They added that after the end of the Cold War, Russian diplomats operated under the assumption that an unwritten agreement existed between American and Russian leaders, essentially providing that NATO would not expand to the East after the newly unified Germany was admitted to NATO as a single entity. In return, Russia would not change borders in Eastern Europe through the use of force.<sup>209</sup> When NATO announced plans to expand eastward, Russia saw that as a violation of its interests and began systematic work to build a strategic response.<sup>210</sup>

Decades of hectic politics led to the situation in the fall of 2013, when Ukraine needed to choose between two patrons: Russia or the EU. Pleshakov described events that followed: When Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich decided to choose Russia, protests erupted in Kiev. Those protests grew to clashes between the government and rioters, which prompted Yanukovich and other government officials to flee to Russia. The Western powers and Russia both exerted their geopolitical influence by using economical, informational, and diplomatic means to turn the situation in their favor.<sup>211</sup> Pleshakov observed that the political crisis was at its peak on February 21, 2014. With

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<sup>209</sup> Edward W. Walker, “Between East and West: NATO Enlargement and the Geopolitics of the Ukraine Crisis,” in *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, ed. Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Richard Sakwa (Bristol, England: E-International Relations Publishing, 2016), 134-145; Pleshakov, 22-24.

<sup>210</sup> Peter Rutland, “An Unnecessary War: The Geopolitical Roots of the Ukraine Crisis,” in *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, ed. Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Richard Sakwa (Bristol, England: E-International Relations Publishing, 2016), 122-131; Pleshakov, 20.

<sup>211</sup> Pleshakov, 50-51.

the president's departure, the remaining political leaders formed an interim cabinet and called for new presidential elections in May. Western powers recognized this government as official, but Russia did not. This interim cabinet consisted of many radical members who managed to ban the Russian language in Ukraine. This resulted in strong protest, especially in Russian-speaking regions, which further tore the country apart.<sup>212</sup>

So-called *little green men* emerged in Crimea in the last week of February 2014.<sup>213</sup> Within a month, exploiting the chaos in the Ukrainian government, those disciplined and well-trained forces occupied the Crimean Peninsula, overpowered Ukrainian forces with minimal violence, and annexed Crimea to the Russian Federation. Within weeks, Russia deployed thousands of troops to Crimea with heavy equipment including A2/AD capabilities, to deter any possible idea of resistance and to send a message to the West.<sup>214</sup>

The author acknowledges that this specific case study is different when compared with others, as no actual fighting took place. Still, it was a complete surprise in all levels of warfare,<sup>215</sup> and the military operation executed incorporated a direct application of

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<sup>212</sup> Pleshakov, 58.

<sup>213</sup> Tad Schnauffer, "Redefining Hybrid Warfare: Russia's Non-Linear War against the West," *Journal of Strategic Security* 10, no. 1 (2017): 17–31; Pleshakov, 63.

<sup>214</sup> Keir Giles and Mathieu Boulegue, "Russia's A2/AD Capabilities: Real and Imagined," *Parameters* 49, no. 1-2 (2019): 24, 28, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/3701.pdf>; Kofman et al., 25.

<sup>215</sup> Colby Howard and Ruslan Pukhov, *Brothers Armed: Military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine* (Minneapolis: East View Press, 2015), 157.

military power.<sup>216</sup> The fact that Ukrainian resistance was minimal provides insight into how other instruments of power are effective or ineffective when countering surprise. This case study examines why Ukraine failed to respond to the Russian attack and suffered a surprise without the ability to recover from the 2014 situation in Crimea.

### Diplomatic Aspects of the Ukrainian Loss

From the perspective of diplomacy, Ukraine lacked a unified plan for its foreign policy. Various factions fought constantly over which path to choose: Western democracy or the Eastern way of state governance. American and Russian influence helped to polarize the state even further. To understand the diplomatic aspect of the crisis, this thesis must return to Russian and American foreign relations in Ukraine. Constantin Pleshakov, a professor of political science, explains that in 2004, at the time of the so-called Ukrainian Orange Revolution, Russia publicly observed that the candidate supported by the United States failed to win the democratic election. This action was seen in Russia as another sign of how the United States “was capable of unseating a government in the post-Soviet space” and was understood to be a direct reference to possible U.S. support of the opposition in Russia. The latter situation was considered an immediate threat to the regime in Moscow.<sup>217</sup>

The second warning sign for Russia was support by Western powers for Kosovo’s independence. As in South Ossetia, Russia later used this excuse to justify its actions in

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<sup>216</sup> Kofman et al., 75.

<sup>217</sup> Pleshakov, 31, 34, 58-59.

Ukraine.<sup>218</sup> At the same time, the United States conducted so-called rogue diplomacy in which some U.S. officials, seemingly without a clear American government-supported strategy, attempted to realize regime change in Ukraine. Europe's significant powers, which were dependent on Russia's natural gas, could not afford a confrontation with Russia and remained mostly silent.<sup>219</sup>

The intervention of foreign powers, accompanied by the political collapse of the Ukrainian government at the end of February 2014, left Ukraine lacking a unified diplomatic approach to future challenges. For these reasons, Pleshakov argues that the conflict in Ukraine was a proxy war, a fight for influence, in which Kiev's interim government fought for NATO and the insurgents fought for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Pleshakov and Rutland both observed that annexation of Crimea therefore was the Russian response to the Western powers' participation in Kiev's political crisis.<sup>220</sup>

#### Use of the Diplomacy Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was a diplomatic message communicated directly after the surprise attack, and did it have any immediate effect on countering the attack?

The answer to the question is partially in the affirmative: The message was communicated but there was no immediate effect on countering Russian actions.

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<sup>218</sup> Taras Kuzio, "The Origins of Peace, Non-Violence, and Conflict in Ukraine," in *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, ed. Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Richard Sakwa (Bristol, England: E-International Relations Publishing, 2016), 108-109; Pleshakov, 29-30.

<sup>219</sup> Pleshakov, 53-55, 56-57.

<sup>220</sup> Rutland, 130; Pleshakov, 10, 64.

February 27, 2014, was an important date in development of the conflict. First, it was a day when Ukraine lacked government, as the provisional government had just begun to work. Furthermore, it was a day when Russian forces began operating openly in Crimea, which was confirmed in a public statement by Ukraine's minister of the interior.<sup>221</sup> The next day, Ukraine stated that Russian troops were taking strategic positions on the peninsula and that Moscow was behind the actions of the *green men*. On March 1, the Ukrainian government was informed about imminent war, placed its troops on high alert, began to call in reserves, and appealed for the help of NATO.<sup>222</sup> The first official action came on March 2 from U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, who condemned Russia for an "incredible act of aggression" and threatened "very serious repercussions."<sup>223</sup> During the next month, Western diplomats actively condemned Russian actions, and an intense political power play took place in the form of public statements, world leaders' calls, negotiations, threats, promises, lies, and intimidation to enforce sanctions.<sup>224</sup> None of it had an effect on countering Russia's actions in Crimea. After three weeks, Russia completed its operation and incorporated Crimea into the Russian Federation.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline," accessed January 11, 2020, <http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm#3>.

<sup>222</sup> Gabriela Baczynska, Pavel Polityuk, and Raissa Kasolowsky, "Timeline: Political Crisis in Ukraine and Russia's Occupation of Crimea," *Reuters*, March 8, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-timeline/timeline-political-crisis-in-ukraine-and-russias-occupation-of-crimea-idUSBREA270PO20140308>.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> CSIS, "The Ukraine Crisis Timeline."

<sup>225</sup> Chris Morris, "Crimea Referendum: Voters 'Back Russia Union'," *BBC News*, March 16, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26606097>; Pleshakov, 119.

Were treaties or arrangements in effect at the time of the surprise attack, and were they used to mitigate the effects of surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative, because of the following reasons. First, both Ukraine and Russia were members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an organization established by former Soviet Union states to encourage cooperation in economic, political, and military affairs with some powers to coordinate trade, finance, lawmaking, and security. Nonetheless, in this case, the hostilities were between two member states, so, paradoxically, this association amplified the effects of surprise. Second, on December 5, 1994, the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. One point in this treaty, known as the Budapest Memorandum, stated that Ukraine was assured by the signatories that it would maintain its territorial integrity and existing borders.<sup>226</sup> With the annexation of Crimea, Russia violated this treaty, and the United States and Britain failed to guarantee its terms.

Was any foreign assistance available and was this aid effective in countering the attack?

The answer is in the affirmative. Foreign material assistance was available in the form the financial aid from the United States. On March 6, \$1 billion in financial support was approved by the U.S. Congress. This decision was accompanied by enforcement of

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<sup>226</sup> Milena Ingelevič-Citak, “Crimean Conflict – from the Perspectives of Russia, Ukraine, and Public International Law,” *International and Comparative Law Review* 15, no. 2 (2015): 23-45.

sanctions against Russia.<sup>227</sup> Pleshakov claimed that some American politicians demanded a stronger response but remained in the minority.<sup>228</sup> Regardless of financial support, Ukraine's central government was unable to build effective resistance before April, when the situation had already escalated to the Donbas region and actual resistance against pro-Russian rebels and Russia began. As previously discussed, the diplomatic tools used extensively by Western states persuaded Russia to finish its actions in Crimea. During the following months, additional sanctions were enforced by the U.S. and EU against Russia. However, these measures did not stop the Russian occupation of Crimea and actions in Donbas.<sup>229</sup>

To summarize the use of the instrument of diplomacy, the following aspects are important to note: First, it took time—weeks, not days—for Ukraine's central government to understand what was transpiring. Second, Ukrainian government weakness and Russia's ability to hide its true intentions resulted in the delay in the Ukrainian response.<sup>230</sup> A RAND Corporation study observed that Ukraine's decision to “choose restraint for fear of escalation” provided Russia enough time to achieve its

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<sup>227</sup> Paul Lewis, “Congress Approves Ukraine Aid Package,” *The Guardian*, March 28, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/27/congress-approves-aid-package-ukraine>; Pleshakov, 127-128.

<sup>228</sup> Pleshakov, 127-128.

<sup>229</sup> Kristin Archick and Derek E. Mix, *U.S.-EU Cooperation on Ukraine and Russia* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 2015); Pleshakov, 146-147.

<sup>230</sup> Chin Hui Han, “Maskirovka In the Information Age,” *Pointer, Journal of the Singapore Armed Forces* 42, no. 1 (2016): 39-48; Kofman et al., 23.

objectives.<sup>231</sup> This passive approach resulted in a slow response from Ukraine and the West. As a result, the instrument of diplomacy was unable to prevent the occupation of Crimea.

#### Informational Aspects of the Ukrainian Loss

In the informational domain, Ukraine was not in a favorable position before the outbreak of hostilities. The RAND Corporation reported some elements of the situation. First, the Russian and Ukrainian languages are closely related; as a result, Russian media always had large audience numbers in Ukraine. In regions where the Russian language was spoken, such as in Crimea and Donbas, the Russian media were dominant. Second, at the end of February, the Russian media launched an aggressive messaging campaign, criticizing the Ukrainian central government, blaming Western countries for orchestrating the government's collapse, while simultaneously promoting Russia in a positive light. Third, Russia hampered the broadcast capabilities of several Ukrainian channels when the occupation operation began. These actions were accompanied by Russia's active use of media to disinform the public about its true intentions.<sup>232</sup>

The Russian media operation happened simultaneously with extensive exploitation of the cyberspace domain. Emilio Iasiello wrote in the U.S. War College quarterly journal *Parameters* that Russia extensively used cyberattacks to take down the telecommunication systems, hack Ukrainian internet pages, and jam mobile networks.

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<sup>231</sup> Kofman et al., 24.

<sup>232</sup> Morgan Maier, "A Little Masquerade: Russia's Evolving Employment of Maskirovka" (Master's Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2016), 39-42; Kofmann et al., 12-16, 29.

Personal cyber targeting with cyber espionage also took place against several key Ukrainian, NATO, and EU officials. A wide variety of informational tools were used under unifying narratives that supported Russian objectives in the region.<sup>233</sup> The fact that media and cyberspace operations were at least partially or in broader themes coordinated made it difficult for the Ukrainian side to mount a response, especially when considering that the state was barely functioning. There was emotional and active opposition to the Russian operations in social media, but its nature was reactive.

#### Use of the Informational Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was situational awareness established quickly? If not, why not?

The answer is in the affirmative. A transcript of the Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council (RNBO) meeting of February 28, 2014, revealed how remarkably well-informed Ukrainian leaders were about the realities of the situation.<sup>234</sup> Anton Lavrov, in the book *Brothers Armed*, lists sources that provided situational awareness. First, approximately 22,000 troops were stationed in Crimea, including naval, air, and ground units, who reported their encounters with strange *little green men*. What initially confused Ukrainian law-enforcement and military leaders was their lack of markings along with the use both civilian and military equipment.

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<sup>233</sup> Emilio J. Iasiello, “Russia’s Improved Information Operations: From Georgia to Crimea,” *Parameters* 47, no. 2 (2017): 51-64.

<sup>234</sup> Ірина Штогрін, “Чому Не Втримали Крим: Стенограма РНБО Від 28 Лютого 2014 Року,” [“Why Crimea was not kept: The NSDC Transcript of February 28, 2014”] *Радіо Свобода*, March 1, 2019, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/amp/29794488.html>.

Additionally, Lavrov claimed that Russian intentions became clearer on February 28 when Russian transport and attack helicopters crossed Ukrainian airspace and moved into Crimea. However, the treaty between Russia and Ukraine expressly forbade the presence of attack helicopters on Russian bases in Crimea. This action resulted in the Ukrainian military high command sending their fighters on a scrambling mission and placing troops on high alert.<sup>235</sup> Additionally, social media platforms were widely used in 2014 to share and send information about what was happening in the region. Every well-informed military intelligence operator understood who those *green men* were who were not wearing any markings. However, the Ukrainian central government issued orders not to resist. As the RNBO meeting report indicates, the decision was made based on the understanding of how poorly Ukraine was ready to resist.

Was a message communicated to the internal audience that supported overcoming surprise?

The answer is in the negative. The perspective of torn-apart Ukraine is again an important one. A RAND Corporation study observed some failures of internal communication. First, with the interim government in power, the turmoil continued when the nationalist wing of the coalition passed a law eliminating Russian as the official language. Although the central government announced a few days later that this law would not be signed into effect, it had already resulted in increased tensions and further polarization of the state. Second, the Ukrainian government's right-wing coalition

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<sup>235</sup> Anton Lavrov, "Russian Again: The Military Operation for Crimea," in *Brothers Armed: Military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine*, 2nd ed., ed. Colby Howard and Ruslan Pukhov (Minneapolis: East View Press, 2014), 157, 163-167.

threatened to send paramilitary forces to Crimea to subdue the protests. This was perceived as a threat in Crimea and resulted in local Crimean checkpoints preventing possible paramilitary movements from Ukraine to Crimea.<sup>236</sup> As the protests and gatherings in Kiev illustrated, many social tensions existed inside the Ukrainian society. Nevertheless, those emotions did not translate rapidly to active resistance by the population against the Crimean occupation. The passiveness of the Ukrainian government did not help as well. The national awakening happened only when the crisis escalated in Donbas, resulting in volunteer involvement and activities in defense of the state.

Was a message communicated to an external audience that supported overcoming surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. Although the interim government started to release information about Russian involvement in Crimea that initiated a response in the global domain, this did not help overcome the effects of surprise. For example, Oleksandr Turchynov, Ukraine's acting head of state, reported on February 28 that Russia was mimicking the Abkhazia scenario in Ukraine, and the UN Security Council reacted with talks.<sup>237</sup> Messages condemning Russian intervention by Ukraine's central government continued throughout the active phase of crisis and were supported with diplomatic and economic actions of the international community. Still, none of the response measures actually helped to overcome the effects of surprise.

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<sup>236</sup> Kofman et al., 20-22.

<sup>237</sup> Katya Gorchinskaya, "Turchynov: Russia Starts Aggression in Crimea," *Kyiv Post*, February 28, 2014, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/war-against-ukraine/turchynov-russia-waging-war-of-aggression-in-crimea-337972.html?cn-reloaded=1>.

Was national support behind the leadership when the attack occurred? Did it have an impact if there was little or no support at all?

The answer is in the negative. The state was extremely weak and the constantly changing governments helped lead to conflict. The trust of the Ukrainian people in their leadership was low. The voting results in previous elections reveal how divided Ukraine was before the conflict, with Russian-speaking Eastern Ukraine and Crimea at odds with the western parts of Ukraine.<sup>238</sup> The lack of unity inside the state resulted in a situation allowing Russia the simple ability to remove Crimea from Ukraine. Public support began to grow after the Crimean occupation when a broader audience understood the actual Russian activities. That led to the formation of volunteer units and an extensive national commitment to fight in Donbas in support of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

To summarize the use of the instrument of information, Ukraine's high-ranking officials had plenty of information about what was occurring. Nonetheless, due to a well-executed Russian deception operation, accompanied by simultaneous media and cyber operations, the Ukrainian central government failed to understand the true objectives of Russian actions and lacked the will to take appropriate action. Tools to communicate information to internal and external audiences were primarily controlled by Russia, which made it challenging to establish a Kiev-controlled narrative. The positive aspect of information was that Ukraine's government succeeded in holding the support of the

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<sup>238</sup> Max Fisher, "This One Map Helps Explain Ukraine's Protests," *The Washington Post*, December 9, 2013, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/12/09/this-one-map-helps-explain-ukraines-protests/>.

Western powers throughout the conflict, although this support did not mitigate the effects of surprise.

### Military Aspects of the Ukrainian Loss

Militarily, the Ukrainian armed forces were in extremely bad shape at the start of 2014. Sergey Denisentsev observed that, in 1991, Ukraine had one of the most powerful armies in the world. Within two decades, this army “went through unprecedented degradation.”<sup>239</sup> Anton Lavrov and Alexei Nikolsky provided several reasons for this. First, starting in 1991, the Ukrainian governments considered the likelihood of conflict in the region low and therefore paid little attention to its status. Second, the idea of joining the West was supported by only some elements of society. This polarity transferred to the military, making it as divided as the entire Ukrainian populace. Shortly after the loss in Crimea, the Ukrainian defense minister reported that out of 41,000 military personnel, only 6,000 were ready for action. This same report indicated that the equipment readiness numbers were similarly low. For example, only 15% of air force planes were assessed to be flight-ready.<sup>240</sup> This meant that Ukraine’s military was unprepared, from a personnel

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<sup>239</sup> Vasili Denisentsev, “The Soviet Inheritance of Ukrainian Armed Forces,” in *Brothers Armed: Military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine*, 2nd ed., ed. Colby Howard and Ruslan Pukhov (Minneapolis: East View Press, 2014), 55.

<sup>240</sup> Anton Lavrov and Alexei Nikolsky, “Neglect and Rot: Degradation of Ukraine’s Military in the Interim Period,” in *Brothers Armed: Military Aspects of the Crisis in Ukraine*, 2nd ed., ed. Colby Howard and Ruslan Pukhov (Minneapolis: East View Press, 2014), 69-70.

and equipment perspective, to counter the Russian armed forces' actions when the conflict erupted.<sup>241</sup>

However, when Russian actions began in Crimea, Ukraine's force ratio and equipment available could have easily blocked the Russian incursion had Ukrainian forces identified the threat.<sup>242</sup> The fact that no defense happened indicates that the problems in the Ukrainian military were deeper than a shared lack of numbers or the quality of equipment. Eventually, Russia disrupted and confused Ukrainian actions in Crimea starting from February 27 until Crimea was annexed to the Russian Federation about March 25.<sup>243</sup>

#### Use of the Military Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was the enemy able to significantly reduce the capabilities of the defender? If not, why not?

The answer is in the affirmative; the capabilities were reduced through the moral domain. A RAND Corporation study concluded that Ukrainian armed forces were demoralized and not receptive to the interim government. This relationship was mutual, as the military did not trust the government, and the government considered the military at least partially disloyal. This turned out to be true when several high-ranking officers

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<sup>241</sup> Lavrov and Nikolsky, 72.

<sup>242</sup> Kofman et al., xii.

<sup>243</sup> Agnia Grigas, *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 127; Kofman et al., 11.

defected to the Russian side.<sup>244</sup> Lavrov described how, after the Ukrainian leadership decision not to resist, the Russian forces quickly occupied key areas of the Crimean Peninsula, then blocked Ukrainian military vessels in harbors and airplanes in airfields. Military bases and government installations were surrounded and, with heavy psychological pressure, most Ukrainian units surrendered without a fight within a few weeks.<sup>245</sup> Although Russian operations began with light troops using unconventional tactics, within weeks the heavy equipment was brought to the peninsula, making any possible Ukrainian counteraction difficult.<sup>246</sup>

Furthermore, when Russian operations began, there was no acting Ukrainian defense minister and the chief of general staff suffered a heart attack while still being loyal to the former president.<sup>247</sup> Moreover, Russian forces effectively engaged the psychological domain with Ukrainian troops, used minimal force whenever possible and luring Ukrainians to defect with a promise of better salaries, improved living conditions, and continuation of service at the same rank in the Russian military. As a result, eventually, more than half of the Ukrainian contingent in Crimea defected.<sup>248</sup> The ones who could fight did not receive orders; this was due to overall confusion as well as Russian activities eliminating communication lines between the mainland and the

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<sup>244</sup> Kofman et al., 19.

<sup>245</sup> Lavrov, “Russian Again: The Military Operation for Crimea,” 163-181.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 170-173.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>248</sup> Kofman et al., 11.

Crimean Peninsula. Additionally, in some areas, cell phones were jammed. A RAND Corporation study concluded that Ukraine lost effective command over its units that were stationed in Crimea a week after Russian operations began.<sup>249</sup>

Was the military plan of the defender to defeat a surprise attack effective? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. First, no information exists about any plan against a possible Russian offensive. Second, the transcript of the Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council meeting of February 28 indicated that the Ukrainian leadership made a deliberate decision not to resist in Crimea.<sup>250</sup> Therefore, even if a plan existed, it never materialized. Even so, with the defection of so many Ukrainian troops—including high-ranking officers<sup>251</sup>—if a plan existed, it would have been easily known to Russia should it have been initiated.

Did specific military capabilities have an effect on overcoming surprise? If so, what were they?

One element that the Ukrainian military lacked was the mental side, the will to fight and resist. This was accompanied by the leadership decision to exercise restraint and not to escalate, which further enhanced the lack of resistance. Since no actual fighting took place, it is impossible to assess the possible effects of physical instruments in

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<sup>249</sup> Kofman et al., 10.

<sup>250</sup> Шторпін..

<sup>251</sup> Lavrov, “Russian Again: The Military Operation for Crimea,” 167-168.

countering surprise. In a way, Russia achieved the ideal of Sun Tzu's fighting principles; it managed to "subdue the enemy without fighting."<sup>252</sup>

When the surprise occurred, were the military units able to resist the attack? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. The primary reason is that the conflict was not a traditional attack but more of an infiltration operation. As mentioned in this thesis, the Ukrainian leadership decided not to resist. The decision was formulated based on the negative assessment of the Ukrainian military forces' capabilities. The following factors influenced the failure of the military instrument and were the basis of this assessment: First, throughout most of the years after 1991, Ukraine was governed by pro-Russian politicians who were comfortable with the security situation and did not allocate resources to the military, leaving it in neglect.<sup>253</sup> After the Georgian War in 2008, Ukraine, for the first time, assessed the situation from the perspective of possible conflict with Russia. At that time, all Ukrainian units were stationed as they were when the Soviet Union existed, mainly in the western part of the country. Donbas and Crimea lacked combat troops at all. The plans to relocate forces were hindered by the 2008 global economic crisis that hit Ukraine hard.<sup>254</sup> Lavrov and Nikolsky concluded that, due to low

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<sup>252</sup> Sun Tzu, 8.

<sup>253</sup> Kashin, 14.

<sup>254</sup> Lavrov and Nikolsky, 62-63.

training levels and lack of exercises, most of the Ukrainian military was incapable of fighting at all.<sup>255</sup>

Summarizing reasons for the Ukrainian military loss, Pleshkov identified the following reasons for Ukraine's military weakness: "carelessness, infighting, bad judgment, and corruption," accompanied by the prepared operation conducted by professional Russian forces.<sup>256</sup>

#### Economic Aspects of the Ukrainian Loss

One economic instrument that could have influenced the conflict was the natural gas pipelines that ran through Ukraine exporting natural gas from Russia to Central Europe. Pleshakov stated that approximately 50 percent of natural gas sold to Central European states flowed through Ukraine, and both the EU and Ukraine depended on Russian natural gas. Furthermore, Ukraine itself also received natural gas from Russia, at an extensive discount. This support was something that Russia used to ensure that Ukraine remained within its sphere of influence. Pleshakov continued by describing the traditional economic power plays undertaken by Ukraine and Russia: Ukrainians manipulated the gas flow and Russians manipulated the gas price. Eventually, to isolate Ukraine and to obtain direct access to Germany, Russia began construction of the Nord Stream gas pipeline.<sup>257</sup> In conclusion, an economic instrument indeed existed, but since Ukraine itself depended on it, exploitation of this option would have been difficult.

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<sup>255</sup> Lavrov and Nikolsky, 65-73.

<sup>256</sup> Pleshakov, 117.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 47-49, 56.

## Use of the Economic Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was economic leverage in the hand of a defender? If yes, was it used and to what effect?

The answer is in the affirmative. The Crimean Peninsula was economically linked to Ukraine. Most of the water, electricity, and supplies were provided through land lines from Ukraine, which were eliminated when Russia occupied Crimea.<sup>258</sup> Nonetheless, this happened after the Russian forces had achieved their objective, therefore, it had no effect against countering surprise.

### Leadership Aspects of the Ukrainian Loss

Leadership played a crucial role in the overall loss of Crimea. As mentioned earlier, the decades-long disarray in Ukraine made it extremely difficult for the interim government to build a response. Moreover, the populist decision to restrict use of the Russian language in the country further increased polarization among the people, which Russia fully exploited. As the transcripts of the Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council meeting reveal, the interim government, taking into account the low chance of successful military resistance, decided to find other ways to counter the threat.<sup>259</sup> Regardless, the RAND Corporation study and Maier Morgan's SAMS monograph indicated that Russia's tactical, operational, and strategic deception was the factor that

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<sup>258</sup> Pleshakov, 144.

<sup>259</sup> ШТОРІН.

deceived the local population, Ukrainian leadership, and the West, allowing the Russian military to achieve decisive success on the Crimean Peninsula.<sup>260</sup>

#### Leadership Actions after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Did the national leadership act decisively, establishing clear intent and a plan of action when the attack occurred?

The answer is in the negative. The RAND Corporation study revealed that although Ukraine's leaders were situationally aware at the operational level, Russia confused them about its true intentions and thereby delayed Ukrainian response. Assessing readiness for realistic resistance, the decision to opt for restraint was chosen due to fears of escalation. All of the highest-ranking political decision-makers decided against military intervention in Crimea. The notion of restraint was also promoted by Western powers who "sought ways to freeze the conflict."<sup>261</sup> The first decision regarding resistance was authorized by the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense on March 18. It included the use of deadly force only in self-defense after an incident involving the deaths of several Ukrainian soldiers while Russia assumed control of the bases. This order was followed on March 24 by the Ukrainian president's orders to pull all forces out of Crimea.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Maier, 37-45; Kofman et al., 23.

<sup>261</sup> Kofman et al., 23-24.

<sup>262</sup> Claire Phipps and Ben Quinn, "Ukraine Pulls Forces out of Crimea as Russia Takes over Military Bases," *The Guardian*, March 24, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/24/ukraine-crimea-russia-military-bases-live>; Kofman et al., 90-91.

Kiev eventually started fighting back, but only after the conflict had moved and escalated in Donbas. The resistance first began on the civil society level and eventually moved to the national leadership level.<sup>263</sup>

#### Common Themes from Case Studies Related to Failures of Countering a Surprise Attack

The consolidated results of the failure case studies are presented in Table 1. The table provides an overview and comparison of the failure case studies and DIME-L elements that enabled or did not enable states to overcome the effects of a surprise attack. Each factor is described as either positive or negative, with few remarks about the most important reasons to justify the conclusion. In some instances, the additional remark was added to determine how relevant the element seemed. Positive indicates that the answer is yes or seems to incline toward yes, and negative indicates the opposite. Overall, the table helps to compare the effect of various DIME-L instruments on each case.

When analyzing the diplomacy instrument of countering surprise, several aspects become noticeable. First, in two case studies, effective communication with the international community took place. In the case of Egypt in 1967, inner state friction and the denial of military leadership stole the opportunity from diplomats. Second, the treaties and agreements had only little effect when countering surprise. It is always possible to argue that perhaps the intent of those treaties or their precise wording never meant to trigger an effective international response, but it still is a trend. In the case of Egypt, that support came late. In Georgia, the attacker was, paradoxically, a member of the same

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<sup>263</sup> Kofman et al., 63.

union. In Ukraine, the guarantee of territorial integrity was apparently not mandatory. Third, foreign assistance was available in all case studies but it either arrived late or was in the form of humanitarian and financial aid and therefore was insufficient to change the situations.

The information instrument was used extensively to counter surprise in all cases of failure. However, the overall effectiveness of this instrument remained low. The situational awareness about the details of the attacker's actions was, in all cases, rather well-established. Only in the case of Egypt did the military high command decide not to share information with the political leadership in a timely manner. What seemed to be much more challenging to assess were the true intentions of the attacker. In the case of Georgia, where the attack could have had existential consequences to the state, the failure to evaluate the enemy's real end-state led to panic in leadership, and in Ukraine, it shadowed the decision-making process of the Ukrainian government. In all cases, the media actively influenced the local population, doing so in Egypt by broadcasting false information. Use of the media was actively done in all cases but it failed to establish an instant effect on countering surprise. Maintaining local support was easy in the cases of Egypt and Georgia. In both, the attacker was considered an enemy and the governing regime was supported by the population. In the case of Ukraine, the state was on the brink of collapse, and internal tensions had polarized the country. This situation was skillfully exploited by the Russians. Overall, the information instrument served as an enabler for other instruments such as diplomacy, military, and leadership. In the observed cases, it appears that its role was carried out sufficiently. Situational awareness was established, internal and external audiences received information, and in at least two

instances, public support for the leadership was guaranteed. Nevertheless, the informational instrument cannot succeed alone in countering surprise.

The military instrument failed in all observed cases. Primary consistent themes for all cases seemed to be the lack of plans or failure in planning, poorly qualified fighting troops, last-minute changes in leadership, and poor command. Naturally, in the case of Ukraine, the loss of morale and poor leadership led to almost total collapse and virtually zero resistance. However, all listed failures were similarly present in the Ukrainian military, establishing the pattern for likely failure if the Ukrainian military had indeed fought back. What the case studies about Egypt and Georgia indicate is that when the military actually fought and resisted, it caused concerns for the enemy. In both cases, when leaders gave up the fight, the military collapsed as well. In Ukraine, that happened before any resistance at all.

The economic instrument was used in two cases out of three, but its effects for countering surprise were minimal. The author assessed that the reason is probably the fact that more time is needed to activate economic elements, and their impacts are not as sudden as those of the military instrument could be.

From the perspective of leadership, all case studies indicate a failure in leadership. In the case of Ukraine, it was long-term neglect by politicians, a situation that the Russians were clever to exploit. In the cases of Egypt and Georgia, the political leadership panicked; this was accompanied by some questionable decisions by military leaders. Eventually, the source of all failures has its roots in the leadership. Case studies about failures indicated a clear connection between leadership actions and eventual results.

Table 1. Similarities and Differences of Case Studies Where State Failed to Overcome the Effects of Surprise Attack			
Element	1967 Six Days War	2008 South Ossetia	2014 Crimea
D	Surprise through time and method	Surprise through location and strength	Surprise through method and strength
	Diplomatic message communicated with effect?	NEG – no effect	POS – no effect
	Lack of cohesion inside Egypt government and ministries, late info sharing	Active communication between partners.	Active communication between partners.
	Treaties, arrangements that could mitigate the effects?	POS – no effect	POS – no effect
	Support from the Soviet Union, multiple local supporters	One member of the treaty attacked other	One member of the treaty attacked other, guarantee from the US, UK
	Foreign assistance available with effect?	POS – no effect	POS – no effect
I	Material support from the Soviet Union late, troops support from local allies did not help	Humanitarian aid from the US and airlift of troops by the US	Financial aid from the US, Western countries diplomatic pressure
	Situational awareness established quickly?	NEG	POS
	Egyptian military command held information	Failed to understand Russian forces real objectives	Failed to understand Russian forces true objectives
	Message communicated to the internal audience with effect?	POS	POS
	Several lies about military successes, publicity continued to support government	Constant media information about situation presenting a defense	The interim government released messages more polarizing nation
	Message communicated to an external audience with effect?	POS – little effect	POS – little effect
M	Some lies, personal contacts with Arab leaders	Media competition, multiple statements by leaders of the western world	Constant media coverage and statements from the interim government and world leaders
	National support behind leadership?	POS	NEG
	The popular leader with media support	Population felt under attack	State functions weak, polarized society
	Any capabilities lost due to enemy surprise?	POS	POS
	Egyptian AF destroyed on the ground	No capabilities lost that would have changed the course of events	All capabilities due to C2 actions and low will to fight
	Plan to counter surprise effective?	NEG	NEG
E	Changes in the plan, conflicting orders	Hasty plan, no plan for South Ossetia	No plan existed, or it was not executed due to lack of resistance
	Critical capabilities helping or denying the ability to overcome the effects?	Denying: loss of AF, intelligence flaws, low quality of troops	Denying: low morale, readiness
	Was military successful in resisting the attack? If not why?	NEG	NEG
	Leadership flaws, order to retreat, able to fight for two days	Low readiness, not prepared to fight against Russia, resisted for 3 days	Were not engaged in fighting
	Economic leverage used with effect?	POS – no effect	POS – no effect
	Suez Canal closed during conflict	No economic leverage used	Crimea water, electricity cut
L	National leadership decisive action?	NEG	NEG
	Leadership collapsed	Vague plans, panic among leadership	No resistance at all

Source: Created by author.

Case Study No. 4: South Korea's Success in Overcoming  
the Effects of Surprise Attack in 1950

A Summary of the 1950 Surprise

The roots of the Korean War and its surprise beginning can be traced to the end of World War II, when the Japanese occupation concluded with the Soviet Union and the United States dividing the Korean peninsula at the 38th parallel. As either side was not ready to give up and just leave, a construct of a two-state Korea was born, with North Korea under Soviet-supported communist rule and South Korea backed by the United States. At the time when the Korean War broke out, the post-war world stage was more or less set. The direct opposition formed in Europe, where half of the region was under Soviet influence, and the remainder was rebuilding with U.S. support. The final action triggering the confrontation was the blockade of Berlin, which drew the line between the Soviets and the West.<sup>264</sup> From the global perspective, Soviet and U.S. opposition had become apparent. The Soviets had rejected the Marshall Plan, blockaded Berlin, and occupied Czechoslovakia. Europe was divided into two distinct and hostile opposing blocs. With China secured under Communist Party rule, Moscow was more and more sure that war in Europe was imminent and it wanted to secure its East-Asian front.<sup>265</sup>

South Korea gained its independence in 1948. Under the leadership of President Syngman Rhee, the few years before the war were characterized by economic insecurity, political turmoil, and terror against opponents of the regime. In addition to complex inner

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<sup>264</sup> *Confrontation in Asia: the Korean War* (West Point, NY: U.S. Military Academy, 1981), 3-6.

<sup>265</sup> Adrian Buzo, *The Making of Modern Korea* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 111.

politics, President Rhee would have preferred the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Korea. However, he did not press the matter because he acknowledged the threat from the north.<sup>266</sup>

At the same time, Washington saw Rhee's regime as a possible troublemaker. There was a legitimate threat and chance that, if armed and prepared enough, South Korea would itself invade North Korea to unite the two Koreas. This idea restrained Washington from supporting South Korea in full.<sup>267</sup>

From a state-building perspective, distinct differences existed in North Korea and South Korea before the war. Adrian Buzo described North Korea as organized and "ideologically driven" and South Korea as weak and "disorganized." On the other hand, South Korea's governance was corrupt, economically disastrous, filled with refugees, socially aloof, and politically unstable. Nevertheless, both Korean leaderships had a similar objective of a unified Korea. The South Korean leadership simply lacked a structured vision of how to reach this objective. Furthermore, due to the communist threat, the United States was seen from the viewpoint of South Korea as the assurance of freedom from communism.<sup>268</sup>

At the same time, north of 38th parallel, the North Korean leadership had the ambition of uniting Korea and the plan to do so. While South Korea was suffering

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<sup>266</sup> Richard C. Allen, *Koreas Syngman Rhee: An Unauthorized Portrait* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company Publishers, 1960), 101-111.

<sup>267</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1982), 51-52.

<sup>268</sup> Buzo, 108-109.

political and economic turmoil, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung gradually increased his power and control over a steadily growing military force supported by the Chinese and the Soviets. That support enabled North Korea to build a base for the military campaign, secure backing from China and the Soviet Union, and exhibit an ideological front both in North Korea and in South Korea. Adrian Buzo observed that Pyongyang assessed that it could go to war only if supported by Russia and China. Therefore, only after Moscow and Peking approved the campaign did North Korea launch its long-prepared military operation. Kathryn Weathersby added that the Soviet decision to support was based on the assessment that U.S. intervention in the conflict was highly unlikely. As a result of this estimate, the North Korean objective was a short and decisive war to unite Korea under communist rule. The fact that the planned campaign escalated into a major confrontation is an example of mistaken assessments done both in North Korea and on the Soviet side.<sup>269</sup> The critical miscalculation made by North Korean and Soviet leaders concerned U.S. military intervention and its speed.<sup>270</sup>

From a strategic perspective, the war had a significant global impact. For example, it demonstrated to the Soviet Union that there was determination in the West to fight back and prevent the spread of communist ideology without resistance. From a

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<sup>269</sup> Kathryn Weathersby, "The Soviet Union," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War*, *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War*, ed. Donald W. Boose and James I. Matray (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 85-94; Buzo, 106-107.

<sup>270</sup> Allan R. Millett, "The Ground Wars, 1948-1953," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War* *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War*, ed. Donald W. Boose and James I. Matray (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 115.

military perspective, it overthrew several perceptions that the next large theater of war would be in Europe. Moreover, the war proved that ground forces were not secondary in comparison to nuclear and air forces. For South Korea, the war was an exhausting experience, but it also laid a foundation for modern South Korea as we know it today.<sup>271</sup>

The Korean War is an abundant source of various types of surprises, including the start of the war, General MacArthur's Inchon landings, and the Chinese intervention. Nevertheless, in the interest of remaining focused on the thesis objective, the case-study analysis will examine the beginning of the war and the activities that led to U.S. involvement in June-July 1950. The following case study observes how and why South Korea was able to overcome the effects of surprise attack with extensive U.S. support at the beginning of the Korean War, starting on June 25, 1950.

#### Diplomatic Aspects of South Korea's Success

From a diplomatic perspective, South Korea was struggling with state-building. President Syngman Rhee exercised a somewhat authoritarian leadership style characterized by suppression of opposition and fights with the communist insurgency in the country. From a foreign policy perspective, after South Korea gained its independence, its diplomats oriented toward cooperation with the United States. This was largely because the South Korean leadership required funding for the state in the form of economic aid and military assistance. Although Rhee's regime requested an increase in support multiple times before the outbreak of war, the United States declined, seeing Rhee's government as a possible antagonist itself. Instead, the Americans offered lesser

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<sup>271</sup> *Confrontation in Asia: the Korean War*, 5-13; Allen, 114-115.

economic support and military assistance through military advisers. An organization called the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG), consisting of approximately 500 U.S. military personnel, operated in South Korea to train the South Korean military.<sup>272</sup> In addition to receiving less support than it sought, the South Korean leadership was disappointed when U.S. public diplomacy began to reflect a lack of interest in South Korea. For example, in January, U.S. Secretary of State Acheson announced that mainland China was outside the perimeter that the United States considered to be defensible. Subsequently, this announcement was understood in North Korea as proof that the United States would not intervene in case of war, providing the communists an excuse to launch their offense.<sup>273</sup> Furthermore, the U.S. Congress was reluctant to guarantee additional economic aid to South Korea in the spring 1950, creating a feeling of abandonment on the part of South Koreans.<sup>274</sup>

The relationship between South Korea and the United States reflected the indecisive American policy toward South Korea. Moreover, the U.S. leadership assumed that in the event of military conflict, the South Korean military was capable of holding off the attack until the United Nations could intervene.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: Dell Publishing Group, 1987), 45.

<sup>273</sup> Buzo, 112; Allen, 116-117.

<sup>274</sup> Blair, 54.

<sup>275</sup> Buzo, 111-112.

### Use of the Diplomacy Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was a diplomatic message communicated directly after the surprise attack, and did it have any immediate effect on countering the attack?

The answer to the question is in the affirmative. Directly after the attack, President Rhee met with the UN Commission and denied that South Korea had started the hostilities. In the first few days of the war, the South Korean leadership was unsure whether the United States would come to its aid or not. As a result, President Rhee agreed that the UN Commission should appeal for a ceasefire. Additionally, Rhee requested help from President Truman through cable communication.<sup>276</sup> When General MacArthur was sent to South Korea to assess the situation, President Rhee restated the request for U.S. support.<sup>277</sup>

On the other side of the Pacific Ocean, equally important events evolved. The news about the North Korea surprise offensive reached U.S. decision-makers approximately five hours after the attack. The message was passed through the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. President Truman and Secretary of State Acheson discussed the matter via telephone and decided to address this issue in the UN. The next day, after it was clear that South Korea was unable to hold off the offense on its own, President Truman decided to evacuate U.S. citizens from Korea and provide additional military equipment to South Korean armed forces. Additionally, he authorized the U.S. Air Force to attack the North Korean forces. On the same day, the UN resolution was announced, calling for

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<sup>276</sup> Allen, 119-120.

<sup>277</sup> Blair, 77.

an immediate ceasefire.<sup>278</sup> When the situation further degraded, the United States decided to send direct military assistance in the form of multiple ground divisions. Nevertheless, Bevin Alexander claimed that the U.S. intervention was not in the name of saving South Korea but rather to oppose the suspected communist plot. Therefore, the U.S. involvement was primarily driven by a global power struggle with the Soviet Union.<sup>279</sup>

Were treaties or arrangements in effect at the time of surprise attack, and were they used to mitigate the effects of surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. Before the conflict, South Korea had been active in international relations, joining with multiple organizations and unions. A report titled “Review of Governmental Procedures During Two Years of Peace and Two of War,” published in Washington, listed more than 30 different international agreements involving South Korea and its foreign partners. The significant ones were the agreements with the United States regarding military assistance and economic cooperation. Nevertheless, South Korea was not a member of the UN at that time but participated in the organization as an observer. Moreover, no official alliance or agreement had been signed that required dedicated support from any foreign state in case of attack. Regardless

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<sup>278</sup> James I. Matray, “Koreans Invade Korea,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War*, ed. Donald W. Boose and James I. Matray (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 315.

<sup>279</sup> Bevin Alexander, *Korea: The First War We Lost* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1987), 24.

of that fact, 46 countries under the UN umbrella at the time of the North Korean attack provided some form of aid to South Korea. Of those, 27 sent their troops to Korea.<sup>280</sup>

Was any foreign assistance available and was this aid effective in countering the attack?

The answer is in the affirmative. The U.S. military and material assistance was available before the conflict in the form of military advisers and financial aid. When the conflict broke out, South Korea received UN military support consisting mainly of U.S. forces and U.S. material support. From the second day of the war, the U.S. military began to send military and humanitarian aid from Japan to South Korea.<sup>281</sup> Moreover, two days after the North Korean attack, the UN issued its second ceasefire resolution. On June 30, U.S. leaders reached the conclusion that only direct foreign military intervention could save South Korea. The initial decision was made to dispatch a regimental combat team followed by two divisions. The speed with which Washington made these decisions was the critical element that saved South Korea from collapse.<sup>282</sup> Additionally, the “Review of Governmental Procedures During Two Years of Peace and Two of War” report provided an extensive overview of multiple countries that provided aid, from direct

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<sup>280</sup> Robert T. Oliver, *Korean Report, 1948-1952; a Review of Governmental Procedures During Two Years of Peace and Two of War* (Washington: Korean Pacific Press, 1952), 12-17.

<sup>281</sup> Blair, 79.

<sup>282</sup> Matray, 316-317.

military involvement to scholarships abroad, and that reacted when South Korea was attacked.<sup>283</sup>

Overall, the quick U.S. response to the North Korean attack was diplomatically crucial in overcoming the effects of surprise. The formation of U.S.-led UN forces and the quick dispatch of supplies and troops guaranteed that South Korea was not overrun by troops from the north.

#### Informational Aspects of South Korea's Success

Assessing the informational aspects before the Korean War, the following factors are noticeable. First, in the capital city, Seoul, many foreign news services were present whose correspondence was critical in a time of crisis by informing the world about the ongoing attack.<sup>284</sup> Second, in South Korea, the public information systems operated rather well. Hundreds of different newspapers or magazines were published with state encouragement. Additionally, many broadcasting stations operated in Seoul. When the attack occurred, the South Korean radio relocated to the Pusan perimeter and continued to operate, although losing most of its equipment. Moreover, it continued to transmit other foreign channels, enabling a continuous flow of information to the public.<sup>285</sup>

From the perspective of intelligence, the North Korean attack was a surprise to both South Korean and U.S. intelligence officials. South Korean leadership had

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<sup>283</sup> Oliver, *Korean Report, 1948-1952*, 12-17.

<sup>284</sup> *The Truth Behind the Korean War* (Seoul: Public Relations Association of Korea, 1973), 61-109.

<sup>285</sup> Oliver, *Korean Report, 1948-1952*, 9-11.

information that the threat was growing, since the force build-up was apparent; as a result, multiple requests were made to the United States to increase its military assistance. The applications went unanswered.<sup>286</sup> An additional factor that deceived the intelligence organizations was the deception operation executed by North Korea before the war, in which it halted border raids and requested negotiations, thereby displaying apparent de-escalation of the situation.<sup>287</sup>

The U.S. intelligence picture before the war is a topic of controversy. It appears that the United States successfully intercepted North Korean radio traffic but failed to analyze it in sufficient detail. The second aspect that hindered the understanding of North Korea's intentions was the fact that North Korea was not on the top priority list in regard to intelligence collection. Moreover, Major General Willoughby assessed seven months before the war that the North Korean offense was imminent. As it did not occur, the threat perception was lost. A look back in grim retrospect reveals that indicators of an imminent attack were present, but the intelligence community disregarded them or failed to correctly assess them. The belief that North Korea would not attack without direct Soviet support was an additional shadowing factor that clouded the assessment of the factual data.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Robert T. Oliver, *Syngman Rhee the Man Behind the Myth* (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1954), 299.

<sup>287</sup> Betts, 54-55.

<sup>288</sup> Peter G. Knight, "Intelligence," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War*, ed. Donald W. Boose and James I. Matray (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 200-203.

### Use of the Informational Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was situational awareness established quickly? If not, why not?

The answer is in the affirmative. The message about the attack reached President Rhee three hours after the attack began, and Rhee decisively demanded full-scale resistance to the invasion. This decision was followed by Rhee's efforts to inform the international community and especially the United States.<sup>289</sup> From the military perspective, control over the situation was less apparent. When North Korea began the attack, there was significant confusion inside South Korean military leadership and units. For example, some units were reported to have sent false information to "save face."<sup>290</sup> On the other hand, some units attempted to execute the defensive plan, and commanders at every level had an understanding of the situation. Regardless of those shortcomings and the constant loss of combat power, the South Korean military continued to process information and operate in retreat mode.<sup>291</sup>

Was a message communicated to the internal audience that supported overcoming surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. When the North Korean forces attacked, President Rhee correctly assessed that this was not another border skirmish but war, and ordered an all-out assault on the attackers through the media.<sup>292</sup> Moreover, even during

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<sup>289</sup> Oliver, *Syngman Rhee the Man Behind the Myth*, 301.

<sup>290</sup> Allen, 119.

<sup>291</sup> Matray, 314-317.

<sup>292</sup> Allen, 119.

the retreat toward Pusan—and constant relocation, initially from Seoul to Taejon and later to Taegu—Rhee continued to communicate with the South Korean people to encourage resistance. His decisions to hold the government closer to the front had an additional positive effect on people who were still free from North Korean occupation.<sup>293</sup> President Rhee used radio broadcasts to transmit assurances to the South Korean people that the fight was ongoing and that help was on the way. When the tide turned, and the UN forces broke out from the Pusan perimeter, President Rhee and the troops were welcomed as liberators. Rhee also visited the South Korean troops almost every week to boost their morale.<sup>294</sup>

Was a message communicated to an external audience that supported overcoming surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. When the attack occurred, primarily foreign news agencies in Seoul quickly forwarded news to the world about ongoing military operations above the 38th parallel. The headlines around the globe were in agreement that North Korea had initiated the attack. The speed of these communications was the reason that the UN Security Council was able to condemn North Korea's offensive actions on the first day of hostilities. Overall, the global press review from the last days of June 1950 indicated sympathy to South Korea and condemnation of North Korea.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Allen, 120.

<sup>294</sup> Oliver, *Syngman Rhee the Man Behind the Myth*, 303-306, 310.

<sup>295</sup> *The Truth Behind the Korean War*, 61-109.

Was national support behind the leadership when the attack occurred? Did it have an impact if there was little or no support at all?

The answer is in the affirmative. Several observations should accompany this answer. First, the leadership of South Korea was rather repressive to the people before the Korean War. Although the state took steps toward democracy, they were done through repressive measures. The accompanying factors were that the state itself was poor, partially illiterate, and rife with corruption. Riots were common, and opposition was not tolerated by the regime. Nevertheless, when the attack occurred, it came not from the inside but from outside. Although there were collaborators with the invaders, their numbers were insufficient to threaten the existence of the South Korean government.<sup>296</sup> Kim observed that, before the war, Rhee's regime was crumbling. The effect of the North Korean attack, however, was to anger the South Korean population and unite them behind President Rhee, who gained widespread support from the common people.<sup>297</sup>

To summarize the use of the instrument of information, South Korea had the means to communicate its messages internally and externally. Although the government was politically unstable, the sudden attack united people behind President Rhee, enabling him to continue to function as the state leader. From the intelligence perspective, the surprise was predicted but not anticipated. Information was available to make correct assessments, but mainly, the United States failed to read the signs correctly and focused

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<sup>296</sup> Kyung-cho Chung, *New Korea: New Land of the Morning Calm* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 17-21.

<sup>297</sup> Jinwung Kim, "South Korea," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War*, ed. Donald W. Boose and James I. Matray (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 30.

instead on the belief that North Korea would not attack without direct Soviet support. That estimation turned out to be false.

### Military Aspects of South Korea's Success

The South Korean military was founded after World War II as a police-like organization with light weapons. In 1948, the South Korean Republic was established and this force laid a foundation for its military. As a result, limited time was available to build a fight-capable organization before the Korean War. Although loyal to the government, the military had many more problems on the eve of the war. Park described some of them: The weapons were not modern, and their effectiveness against the North Korean forces was low. Units were barely on battalion-level training, with poor leadership in command. South Korea's was an army not ready for war. Moreover, the political parties continued to extend their influence over the military, further reducing the military's combat power.<sup>298</sup> Clay Blair listed some additional problems with the Korean military, including a lack of equipment and spare parts, the uneven background of South Korean officers, uneducated soldiers, and cultural pride. Blair observed that regardless of those deficiencies, many in the United States believed that the South Korean military was a formidable fighting force. This was because of a public media campaign launched from Washington to bolster a pullout from South Korea, which was planned before the hostilities erupted. The same policy was partly the reason why the intelligence reports

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<sup>298</sup> Il-Song Park, "Republic of Korea Army," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Korean War*, ed. Donald W. Boose and James I. Matray (Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 242-245.

were disregarded in the intelligence community.<sup>299</sup> From the positive side, when the U.S. XXIV Corps left Korea, it transferred its equipment to the South Korean military although the heavy weapons were not left behind. Thus, almost all South Korean equipment was of U.S. origin.<sup>300</sup>

On the opposing side, North Korea had 150,000 troops under arms, many of those experienced fighters from the Chinese civil war. Additionally, the troops were partially trained in the Soviet Union and equipped mostly with Soviet equipment from World War II.<sup>301</sup> Unfortunately, the United States underestimated North Korea's military capabilities and readiness. Moreover, the U.S. military aid was not consistent with the growing threat in the region, leaving the South Korean military in bad shape before the war.<sup>302</sup>

The shadowing factors that hindered the United States from grasping the situation and preventing South Korea from strengthening its forces were the border war and skirmishes, which were ongoing between South and North Korea for years before the 1950 summer offensive. In addition to clashes on the border, the South Korean military was involved in an extensive counterinsurgency campaign against communist fighters in South Korea. Both fights were an expensive endeavor for the South Korean military, draining resources and hindering the ability to build up its forces. Overall, the South Korean military leadership and the U.S. military advisers in-country assessed that the

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<sup>299</sup> Blair, 51-52, 55-59.

<sup>300</sup> Millett, 112-113.

<sup>301</sup> Buzo, 108.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 112.

South Korean military was not ready to confront the North Korean might. Regardless of those assessments, U.S. military leaders and the chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff were confident that South Korea was able to resist a possible attack by North Korea and would be in trouble only if the Soviet army directly intervened in the fighting.<sup>303</sup> The latter assumption proved to be wrong.

#### Use of the Military Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was the enemy able to significantly reduce the capabilities of the defender? If not, why not?

The answer is in the affirmative. The North Korea battle plan foresaw the destruction of the South Korean military in the vicinity of Seoul. With four divisions on the front line, South Korea failed to block the North Korean attack thrust supported by T34 tanks. Nevertheless, the 6th South Korean division executed a withdrawal operation that delayed the attack long enough to prevent North Korea's decisive destruction of the South Korean army. Although Seoul was lost in two days, and only two divisions in the South Korean army remained capable of fighting, the South Korean army was not ultimately defeated as was planned by the communists. Nevertheless, 50 percent of the South Korean military was lost as casualties during the first few days of the war.<sup>304</sup> With the quick involvement of the United States and President Rhee's decision to place the

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<sup>303</sup> Millett, 114.

<sup>304</sup> Oliver, *Syngman Rhee the Man Behind the Myth*, 303.

South Korean military under UN command, the armed forces were saved from further collapse.<sup>305</sup>

Was the military plan of the defender to defeat a surprise attack effective? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. According to Clay Blair, the South Korean army, with KMAG advisers, had assessed possible locations for North Korea's offense and had made plans to counter these threats. The best units were placed opposing the most dangerous avenues, with reserves in depth with a plan for support in case of a possible attack. When the attack happened, South Korea attempted to execute the plan but was unable to do so because of its surprise and intensity. When units began to move toward designated support positions, those areas were already in the hands of North Koreans, and the fight swiftly turned into a retrograde operation.<sup>306</sup>

Did specific military capabilities have an effect on overcoming surprise? If so, what were they?

Due to extensive losses in the first days of fighting, and understanding the overall status of the South Korean armed forces, it is difficult to pinpoint a specific capability that helped to overcome the surprise. The fact is that, militarily, the U.S. involvement was the tide-turning factor that saved South Korea. Looking at it from the opponent perspective, it is possible to conclude that the most important technical advantage the North Korean military had in the initial phases of the conflict over the South Korean

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<sup>305</sup> Park, 245-246.

<sup>306</sup> Blair, 52, 60.

military and the U.S. forces was the armor. That advantage was mitigated when the fighting moved to the mountainous region of South Korea and with the combat involvement of the U.S. Fifth Air Force. It is believed that 40 percent of North Korean tank losses were caused by the U.S. Air Force after the United States became involved in the conflict.<sup>307</sup> The factor that guaranteed the success of the North Korean advance during the first few months was its artillery dominance over the South Korean and U.S. forces.<sup>308</sup> General Lee from the South Korean army stated that the lack of anti-tank weapon systems and the troops' limited combat experience hindered the army's ability to resist.<sup>309</sup>

When the surprise occurred, were the military units able to resist the attack? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. When North Korea attacked using four avenues into South Korea, the primary approach corridor was defended by only 4,500 men of the possible 7,211 assigned. All munitions were in short supply, including personal ammunition and anti-tank weapons. As mentioned earlier, the defense plan failed, and more than half of the South Korean troops were lost during the first days of fighting. Richard Allen observed that some South Korean units fought exceptionally well against the odds, but other units ran.<sup>310</sup> Nevertheless, the South Korean army and the U.S. 24th

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<sup>307</sup> Millett, 115.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Chi-Op Lee, *Call Me "Speedy Lee": Memoirs of a Korean War Soldier* (Seoul, Korea: WonMin, 2001), 3-4.

<sup>310</sup> Allen, 119.

Infantry Division fought desperately, delaying the fight toward the south. With every day in the battle, the South Korean army performed better and overcame its deficiencies.<sup>311</sup>

Summarizing the South Korean military actions, it is a fact that South Korea would not have overcome the effects of surprise without U.S. military intervention. Nevertheless, when the war ended in 1953, the South Korean forces covered two-thirds of the front line. While in the summer of 1950 the South Korean military boasted only 95,000 soldiers, by 1953 that number had grown to 554,000, comprising a force that could hold up the fight on its own.<sup>312</sup>

#### Economic Aspects of South Korea's Success

Before the war, South Korea was highly dependent on U.S. aid, which guaranteed the country's political rule. Moreover, South Korea's economy was in extremely bad shape. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the South Korean government had just begun the process of reorganizing the economy to privately owned property.<sup>313</sup> The war erupted in the middle of this process.

#### Use of the Economic Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was economic leverage in the hand of a defender? If yes, was it used and to what effect?

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<sup>311</sup> Millett, 115.

<sup>312</sup> Park, 241.

<sup>313</sup> Buzo, 110.

The answer is in the negative. The author could not identify any significant economic leverage in the hand of the South Korean government to mitigate the effects of surprise attack. Therefore, the assessment is that the impact of the economic instrument was low if it existed at all.

### Leadership Aspects of South Korea's Success

The South Korea leader, Syngman Rhee, was a controversial character. Well-educated in the United States, he was assessed to be good orator, intellectually smart, and possessing charm. On the other hand, he was arrogant, stubborn, and consistently disregarded the daily political realities that challenged his own perceptions.<sup>314</sup> His regime, although positively engaging with foreign partners, was not trusted by the U.S. government. Additionally, the methods close to terror that South Korea's leaders executed were considered autocratic.<sup>315</sup> On the eve of the Korean War, Rhee's political power was weakening, and his rule might have been nearing its end. It could be said that the Korean War saved President Rhee's regime and enabled him to remain in power for years to come.<sup>316</sup>

Military leadership was a weak point for South Korea. In addition to the apparent youthfulness of the troops, problems existed regarding the background of the officer corps. Due to the lack of professional officers, the South Korean military accepted anyone who had military experience. For example, the army took officers who had served

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<sup>314</sup> Buzo, 108.

<sup>315</sup> Kim, 29-31.

<sup>316</sup> Buzo, 110-111.

in the Japanese military, which resulted in military leadership that was fractionalized. Overall, both South Korea's political leaders and foreign observers assessed the nation's military leaders' competence as low.<sup>317</sup>

#### Leadership Actions after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Did the national leadership act decisively, establishing clear intent and a plan of action when the attack occurred?

The answer is in the affirmative, especially from the political side. As soon as President Rhee was made aware of an ongoing attack, he immediately ordered the defense minister to resist with full force using all available means. This decision to oppose was critical, enabling a follow-up to the resistance and establishing conditions for U.S. involvement.<sup>318</sup> Moreover, after the attack, President Rhee continued to function as the head of the state. He conveyed messages to the people, held talks to seek foreign support, and encouraged South Koreans to resist. His decisions to keep the government closer to the military front allowed South Korean political friction to be forgotten, at least for a while, and underscored the commitment established to uphold the government.<sup>319</sup> President Rhee's mistakes in leadership arguably happened before the war, when his anti-Japanese rhetoric with threats to unite Korea, augmented by unstable governance, prevented opportunities to better prepare for the war. The second mistake occurred when UN forces turned the tide of the war and Rhee began dreaming of uniting Korea once

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<sup>317</sup> Park, 242-245.

<sup>318</sup> Oliver, *Syngman Rhee the Man Behind the Myth*, 301-303.

<sup>319</sup> Allen, 116-120.

again, causing the Chinese to intervene.<sup>320</sup> Still, most remarkably, the South Korean regime and Rhee did not collapse despite predictions to the contrary by the North Koreans and the Soviets.<sup>321</sup>

South Korean military leaders were taken by surprise when the attack occurred. General Lee reported that senior commanders were so unaware that some of them reached the headquarters hours after the attack had begun. He also described the confusion and exhaustion that affected the military when the army fought desperate retrograde battles toward Pusan.<sup>322</sup> Clay Blair observed that the South Korean military headquarters evacuated Seoul early, abandoning troops fighting for it with President Rhee. The decision was made by General Chae, the South Korean army chief of staff.<sup>323</sup>

Overall, the military leadership was in a state of confusion and at least partially held up by the KMAG advisers. To illustrate, Bevin Alexander observed that KMAG officers were forced to persuade South Korean military commanders to establish positions and not to retreat hastily in some regions without commanding troops. Additionally, there was confusion about blowing up bridges on the Han River in Seoul. Subsequently, the bridges were destroyed too early, trapping many fight-capable South Korean forces in the hands of opponents.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Allen, 126-130.

<sup>321</sup> Millett, 115.

<sup>322</sup> Lee, 1-20.

<sup>323</sup> Blair, 76.

<sup>324</sup> Alexander, 28-31.

When summarizing reasons why South Korea was able to overcome the effect of the surprise attack, the following is noteworthy: First, President Rhee remained confident and acted quickly, guaranteeing foreign support. Diplomatic and informational instruments amplified his actions. Most importantly, the United States reacted quickly, and its military support was the primary factor that enabled South Korea to overcome the effects of surprise.

Case Study No. 5: Egypt's Success in Overcoming the Effects  
of Surprise Attack During the Suez Crisis of 1956

A Summary of the 1956 Surprise

Control over the man-made Suez Canal, which was completed in 1869 to connect the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, was one of the reasons for conflict in 1956. The canal is the source of the conflict's name, but it would be more precise to observe this conflict through multiple viewpoints, as several direct and indirect participants had reasons to be involved. First, there was Egypt, owner of the land where the canal had been built. Egypt was governed by new leaders, who had gained power in 1952 through a military coup. These leaders were seeking ways to build socioeconomic growth, establish independence from Western powers that had controlled the state for several hundred years, and create a sense of Arab nationalism. Thus, to secure growth, Egypt began constructing the Aswan High Dam, initially securing financial support from the Western powers. However, after Egypt signed an arms treaty with Czechoslovakia, those Western

powers withdrew their financing for the dam.<sup>325</sup> Partially in retaliation to that move and partially under the flag of Arab nationalism, Egypt President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, which had been managed until that time by the Western powers.<sup>326</sup>

The second participant was Israel. Egypt's decision to procure a significant number of weapons from the Soviet Union was perceived in neighboring Israel as the transformation of the fragile power balance between Israel and the surrounding Arab states. After Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran and the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping, the vital interests of Israel were under threat. That prompted Israel's decision to resolve the situation with Egypt through force.<sup>327</sup>

The United Kingdom and France were two declining superpowers who had their own reasons to become embroiled in the crisis. France, involved at that time in the Algerian war, saw an opportunity to undermine the influence of Egypt, whom it considered to be a supporter of Algerian rebels.<sup>328</sup> The UK intended to secure a vital

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<sup>325</sup> Yoram Meital, "Egyptian Perspectives of the Suez War," in *The 1956 War: Collusion and Rivalry in the Middle East*, ed. David Tal (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), 196.

<sup>326</sup> David Nicolle, Tom Cooper, and Ali Gabr, *Wings Over Sinai: the Egyptian Air Force During the Sinai War, 1956* (Solihull, West Midlands, England: Helion & Company Limited, 2017), 4.

<sup>327</sup> David Tal, "Introduction-A New Look at the 1956 Suez War," in *The 1956 War: Collusion and Rivalry in the Middle East* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), 6-7; Yagil Henkin, *The 1956 Suez War and the New World Order in the Middle East* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 61.

<sup>328</sup> Henkin, 53.

transportation hub for the British empire.<sup>329</sup> Finally, having links with all of the participants and owning interests in the region, there were the United States and the Soviet Union. Both were caught in an awkward position when the crisis started. The U.S. president was in the middle of an election campaign, and the Soviet Union was busy suppressing an uprising in Hungary. Nevertheless, when the conflict erupted, both superpowers intervened to stop the fighting and re-establish the status quo, and, while doing so, increase their influence in the region.<sup>330</sup>

An essential element of the conflict was a secret plot between Israel, France, and the UK to overthrow the existing Egyptian leadership. The Protocol of Sevres was an agreement that enabled Israel to initiate the conflict and to seize Sinai. With the attack, Israel sought to reduce Egyptian combat power, reopen its trade routes through the Suez Canal and Straits of Tiran, and end border raids that had occurred for years from Sinai. Following the Israeli attack and operating under the false agenda of enforcing the ceasefire between Egypt and Israel, the UK and France imposed an unrealistic ultimatum followed by military intervention to seize the Suez Canal area. That move would have brought the important trade route back under the control of Western powers. If the

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<sup>329</sup> Keith Kyle, "Britain and the Crisis, 1955–1956," in *Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences*, ed. William Roger Louis and Roger Owen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 104-130.

<sup>330</sup> Tal, 11-14.

opportunity had presented itself, a regime change in Egypt was a desired outcome for France and the UK.<sup>331</sup>

The crisis began with the Israeli attack on Sinai, followed by military intervention by the UK and France. The attack was a strategic surprise for Egypt through location and timing and a tactical surprise through the use of airborne operations.<sup>332</sup> The military operations and fighting lasted from October 29 to November 7, 1956, when a ceasefire led by the United Nations and enforced by the United States was established.

As a result of the conflict, Egypt, although having suffered several military defeats on the battlefield, was able to continue fighting with the simultaneous use of other instruments of power in order to overcome the effects of surprise. Moreover, the strategic position of Egypt as a result of the crisis strengthened. The direct result of the crisis was that Egypt became the lead nation in the Arab world with the formation of the United Arab Republic.<sup>333</sup> The following case study observes how and why Egypt was able to overcome the effects of surprise attack in the 1956 conflict.

#### Diplomatic Aspects of Egypt Success

From a strategic perspective, Egypt was no borderland. Its geographic location at the intersection of Africa and the Middle East, with an economically vital Suez Canal

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<sup>331</sup> Avi Shlaim, "The Protocol of Sèvres, 1956: Anatomy of a War Plot," in *The 1956 War: Collusion and Rivalry in the Middle East*, ed. David Tal (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), 119-141.

<sup>332</sup> Rechavam Zeevy, "Military Lessons of the Sinai Campaign: the Israeli Perspective," in *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal*, ed. Moshe Shemesh and Selwyn Ilan Troen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 62-63.

<sup>333</sup> Meital, 204-205.

running through its sands, established Egypt as a critical country in the region. Egypt was the place where interests of both the UK and the United States were present, with the UK drawing on its historical colonial influence and the United States seeking an opportunity to fight the global threat of the Soviet influence. For example, the United States saw Egypt as a door to the Arab world and an essential place for the defense of the Middle East against communism.<sup>334</sup> Relevant Egyptian diplomatic interests were related; first, securing the power of Nasser and his government, then keeping Egypt free from the influence of former masters, establishing growth in national prosperity and wealth, and locally promoting Arab nationalism and securing a position as the leading Arab nation.<sup>335</sup> In light of those agendas, Egypt's leadership balanced diplomacy among various interest groups. First, Nasser negotiated the withdrawal of British troops from the Suez Canal Zone in 1954. Second, Nasser negotiated with the U.S. and UK governments to secure a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to secure funds for the construction of the dam on the Nile River. Simultaneously, Nasser had parallel negotiations with the Soviet Union for the same project. When the arms deal was agreed between Czechoslovakia and Egypt, the United States, seeing a double play, withdrew its funding for the dam. In retaliation, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company. In

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<sup>334</sup> Henkin, 19.

<sup>335</sup> Meital, 195-197.

doing so, Egypt now threatened the UK's vital economic interest and established the stage for conflict from that side.<sup>336</sup>

The signing of a significant arms agreement with the Eastern Bloc enabled Nasser to pursue Egypt's anti-Western and anti-Israel ambitions, an important part of his political agenda securing local and Arab support for his interests. One of the first steps on that path, after Egypt felt it had sufficient support from the Soviet Union, was to block Israeli shipping on the Straits of Tiran and the Suez Canal.<sup>337</sup> The increase in military capability and Nasser's statements against Israel, accompanied by economic pressure, were considered to be a direct threat to Israel. This notion was enforced by an increase in smaller border skirmishes between Israel and Egypt. Seeing that diplomacy was not achieving the desired effect, Israel started to prepare for a military solution.<sup>338</sup>

Egypt's leaders, understanding the consequences of their actions, assessed their position to be too weak for confrontation with France or the UK. Therefore, they decided to make full use of diplomatic and informational instruments to mitigate the threat of conflict. As a result, an extensive diplomatic and informational campaign was launched that secured at least moral support from the Arab world and also from China and India. The campaign likewise sparked sympathy in the U.S. leadership.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Chaim Herzog, "The Suez-Sinai Campaign: Background," in *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal*, ed. Moshe Shemesh and Selwyn Ilan Troen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 5-6.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>339</sup> Meital, 199-200.

From the global diplomatic perspective, the crisis began at an inconvenient time for Egypt's possible supporters: The Soviet Union was occupied with the uprising in Hungary and the U.S. leadership was busy with the presidential election.<sup>340</sup> It is noteworthy that U.S. policy toward Israel and Egypt before the conflict was aimed at maintaining the status quo without favoring either side. This policy had a critical effect on the following events.<sup>341</sup>

Neighboring Arab countries observed Egypt's actions, such as nationalization of the canal, with mixed feelings. Many supporters saw this step as a positive action against Western powers, but there were others, like Iraq, that saw a possible conflict with the UK as directly opposed to the national interest.<sup>342</sup>

#### Use of Diplomacy Instrument after Suffering Surprise Attack

Was a diplomatic message communicated directly after the surprise attack, and did it have any immediate effect on countering the attack?

The answer to the question is in the affirmative. Extensive diplomatic communication took place from the first moment of the conflict, primarily between Egypt and other Arab nations. Nevertheless, while fighting against three invading armies, Nasser calculated that only the intervention of a superpower would be able to change the

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<sup>340</sup> Zeevy, 72.

<sup>341</sup> Isaac Alteras, "Suez, Eisenhower and the Sinai Campaign of 1956: The First Major Crisis in U.S.-Israeli Relations," in *The 1956 War: Collusion and Rivalry in the Middle East*, ed. David Tal (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), 26.

<sup>342</sup> Elie Podeh, "Regaining Lost Pride: The Impact of the Suez Affair on Egypt and the Arab World," in *The 1956 War: Collusion and Rivalry in the Middle East*, ed. David Tal (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), 209-214.

situation. On November 1, Nasser asked the U.S. ambassador to send a message to the U.S. president pleading for support for Egypt in the UN and seeking backing from American allies to end the attack. The assessment of President Nasser turned out to be correct. The United States and its pressure on its allies had a significant effect, and within seven days, the outside support in the form of UN pressure, led by the United States, ended the fighting.<sup>343</sup>

Were treaties or arrangements in effect at the time of surprise attack, and were they used to mitigate the effects of surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. Prior to the conflict, President Nasser had secured supportive military agreements with Syria and Jordan. Although the Unified Arab Command was not yet operational in 1956, both countries offered their military assistance but Egypt declined.<sup>344</sup> Rabinovich offered an explanation, saying the decision was probably related to Nasser's political calculations that Syrian and Jordanian involvement would not serve Egypt's interests at that moment.<sup>345</sup> Therefore, the alliance with Syria and Jordan did not have an overall effect of mitigating surprise the effects of surprise.

Was any foreign assistance available, and did this aid have an impact on countering the attack?

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<sup>343</sup> Meital, 202-203.

<sup>344</sup> Zeevy, 70-71.

<sup>345</sup> Itamar Rabinovich, "The Suez-Sinai Campaign: The Regional Dimension," in *The 1956 War: Collusion and Rivalry in the Middle East*, ed. David Tal (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), 162-172.

The answer is in the affirmative. Foreign support can be divided into two parts. First, there was the support of the Arab nations. As already mentioned, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan offered Egypt military support. Nasser declined due to the threat that Western powers might use their involvement as an excuse to enter Syria. Elie Podeh pointed out that Nasser was also seeking Soviet support and wanted other Arab nations to help persuade the Soviets to guarantee the assistance. Additionally, Syria and Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with the UK and France. Other Arab states attempted to enforce diplomatic measures, such as Lebanon, which explored the option of executing unified Arab foreign policy with the UK and France. This option was considered extremely inconvenient for the UK and France, with both nations seeing it as another step on the path toward losing influence in the region.<sup>346</sup>

Second, there was support from the “superpowers.” By October 30, the United States had presented a ceasefire plan to the UN Security Council, followed by the U.S. president’s public announcement on the following day, condemning the actions of the attackers.<sup>347</sup> The Soviet Union, although criticizing the Israeli attack and the French-UK ultimatum on October 31, was initially more passive, allowing the United States to play a more active role in the international arena. The Soviet Union became more active after November 4, when it had completed its elimination of the Hungarian uprising. Strong

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<sup>346</sup> Podeh, 215-216.

<sup>347</sup> Henkin, 204-205.

messages were sent to all attacking sides, and the ambassador was called from Israel. Eventually, the Soviet leadership threatened to intervene with direct force.<sup>348</sup>

Overall, the greatest diplomatic support provided to Egypt came from the United States. From the early stages of the conflict, the United States demanded an immediate ceasefire. This pressure was constant and ultimately forced France, Israel, and the UK to retreat from the conflict.<sup>349</sup>

### Informational Aspects of Egypt's Success

In 1956, the primary media involved in sharing information were radio, newspapers, and leaflets. Radio Cairo and "The Voice of Arabs" broadcasting station had a significant impact by promoting Nasser's viewpoint in Egypt and neighboring Arab countries.<sup>350</sup> From a popular support perspective, the Egyptian people were fully behind President Nasser because of his popular decision to nationalize the Suez Canal and actions taken to strengthen Egypt's position regionally and globally. Nasser's anti-Israeli statements were also well-received by the Egyptian public.<sup>351</sup> Moshe Shemesh pointed out that Nasser was a charismatic leader who had the full support of his people; this fact

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<sup>348</sup> Laurent Rucker, "The Soviet Union and the Suez Crisis," in *The 1956 War: Collusion and Rivalry in the Middle East*, ed. David Tal (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), 79-82.

<sup>349</sup> Alteras, 25-43.

<sup>350</sup> Mahmoud I. Shalabieh, "A Comparison of Political Persuasion on Radio Cairo in the Eras of Nasser and Sadat" (Thesis, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, 1986), 155-156.

<sup>351</sup> Moshe Shemesh, "Sayyid Mar'I's political papers." in *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal*, ed. Moshe Shemesh and Selwyn Ilan Troen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 360-361.

was not fully understood by attacking forces. Secondly, Nasser's actions to oppose the Western powers were also well-received in the Arab world,<sup>352</sup> with the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the resulting war making Nasser a hero. It also further enhanced his agenda that there should be unified Arab commitment against Israel, led by Egypt.<sup>353</sup>

#### Use of Informational Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was situational awareness established quickly. If not, why not?

The answer is in the affirmative. Hewedy and Bandmann pointed out that the Egyptian military attaché in Paris received and forwarded information about the cooperation of Israel, France, and the UK two days before the war. Nasser did not believe it initially, but when Israel started operations in Sinai, Nasser changed his mind.<sup>354</sup>

Bandmann additionally reported that the information about imminent war with Israel reached Cairo on October 29. As a result, the air force and navy established alert readiness. The first Israeli operations were closely monitored by Egypt leadership, but the assessment was made that Israel acted alone without the support of other allies. As a result, assessment reserves were sent to Sinai that earlier were stationed to confront a possible French or UK sea and air attack. Nevertheless, the Egyptian command struggled to understand the Israeli operational objectives, which hindered its options for response. Even after receiving the ultimatum from France and the United Kingdom stating that

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<sup>352</sup> Amin Hewedy, "Nasser and the Crisis of 1956," in *Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences*, ed. William Roger Louis and Roger Owen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 170-171.

<sup>353</sup> Podeh, 219-220.

<sup>354</sup> Hewedy, 169.

their forces would intervene if the fighting was not stopped within 12 hours, the Egyptian leadership assessed that possibility as minor.<sup>355</sup> A sign of good situational understanding is illustrated by the fact that Israel's first military action was not considered by Egyptian leaders to be yet another border raid but an act of war from the first day.<sup>356</sup>

Was a message communicated to the internal audience that supported overcoming surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. First, Egyptian propaganda sources began releasing several false reports about successful Egyptian battles. That policy of false reporting continued throughout the crisis. For example, the defense of Port Said was described in heroic terms.<sup>357</sup> Second, President Nasser made several public announcements to secure internal and external support. To unite the nation, Nasser made his public announcement rejecting the ultimatum presented by the Western powers from the old university, the Al-Azhar Mosque. That brought a vast majority of the Egypt population under a common agenda of resisting the invasion.<sup>358</sup> Brian Cull reported that Nasser's speeches used phrases of unity, such as "struggle for independence" and "another phase in Egypt's struggle for sovereignty." The speeches and government actions to foster the spirit of resistance had the desired effect on the national will, with

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<sup>355</sup> Yonah Bandmann, "The Egyptian Armed Forces During the Kadesh Campaign," in *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal*, ed. Moshe Shemesh and Selwyn Ilan Troen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 83-85.

<sup>356</sup> Shemesh, 337.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>358</sup> Hewedy, 170.

commitment assessed to be strong.<sup>359</sup> Additionally, Egypt conducted, at least at on some level, counterpropaganda activities. As an illustration, when the Western powers announced the destruction of the Egyptian air force, Nasser denied it by stating that only the dummy planes were destroyed.<sup>360</sup>

Was a message communicated to an external audience that supported overcoming surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. Public opinion throughout the Arab world already favored Nasser before the crisis. The same messages that had a uniting effect on Egyptians were influential among other Arabs as well. It is necessary to understand that, at that time, Radio Cairo was the only Arab broadcast outlet in the region. As a result, the Egyptian leadership's anti-Israeli and anti-British agenda was overwhelmingly present for all who listened to it.<sup>361</sup> When Egypt was attacked, Arab opinion supported Nasser and translated into outright action. For example, the aggressor states' ships and planes were boycotted by Arab unions in the region's ports and harbors.<sup>362</sup>

Was national support behind the Egyptian leadership when the attack occurred, and did it have an impact if there was small support or none at all?

The answer is in the affirmative. The Egyptian population fully supported Nasser. When the attack occurred, and the invaders made it clear that they wished only to

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<sup>359</sup> Brian Cull, David Nicolle, and Shlomo Aloni, *Wings Over Suez* (London: Grub Street, 1996), 340.

<sup>360</sup> Meital, 201-202

<sup>361</sup> Shalabieh, 156-158.

<sup>362</sup> Hewedy, 170-171.

eliminate Nasser and his leadership, the people rallied to protect their president and established a unified front against the attackers.<sup>363</sup>

To sum up the use of the instrument of information, Egypt's government was well-supported at home and in neighboring Arab states. During the attack, this support held and even rose. Although Egypt was surprised, the situational awareness was established quickly. Egyptian messaging or propaganda was overly optimistic and often based on lies; nevertheless, President Nasser's public speeches served to unite both the internal and external domains.

#### Military Aspects of Egypt Success

The Egyptian military was battle-tested. In 1948, it had lost the war against Israel, and the resulting turmoil and military coup changed the power in Egypt in 1952. The new leadership was a group called Free Officers. As a result of the coup, leaders of the Egyptian military and state government became remarkably close. In 1955, Egypt signed significant arms agreements with Czechoslovakia that gave Egypt access to modern weaponry. The weapons deal provided 530 armored vehicles, 500 artillery pieces, approximately 200 aircraft, and a set of naval assets.<sup>364</sup>

Although seemingly well-equipped, Egypt was far from well-prepared. There were few pilots and even fewer well-trained pilots. The army was supplied by a broad range of military equipment, and the training level to use this equipment was relatively low. The process of shifting from Western weapons to Soviet ones was still ongoing. The

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<sup>363</sup> Hewedy, 170.

<sup>364</sup> Herzog, "The Suez-Sinai Campaign: Background," 4-5.

war caught the Egyptian military in the midst of this process, which reduced its readiness to fight.<sup>365</sup> Although on paper the military was impressive, its fighting capability was assessed even by its own commanders as no match against Israel and even less against Western powers.<sup>366</sup>

Egyptian military strategy foresaw the primary threat from the UK and the secondary threat from Israel. In both cases, the assessment was made that Egypt was unable to confront those states in a direct military fight, and therefore the option of a long guerrilla war was discussed at the high command level, with the possibility that Sinai would require evacuation.<sup>367</sup>

#### Use of Military Instrument after Suffering Surprise Attack

Was the enemy able to significantly reduce the capabilities of the defender? If not, why not?

The answer is in the affirmative. The Egyptian air force was decisively neutralized by the French and British air forces on October 31. Bandmann pointed out that Egyptian air force effectiveness in support of the ground campaign during two earlier fighting days was questionable. Coordination between ground commanders and the air force was insufficient, resulting in only limited sorties flown over Sinai.<sup>368</sup> Although on paper the Egyptian military had a significant amount of rather modern equipment, it had

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<sup>365</sup> Zeevy, 72.

<sup>366</sup> Henkin, 199.

<sup>367</sup> Hewedy, 164.

<sup>368</sup> Bandmann, 89-90.

yet to develop the necessary supporting systems. For example, no systems were in place that would have enabled a nighttime aerial battle. The Egyptian air force was rendered ineffective not so much through a brilliant air campaign by the attackers but rather through the low readiness of the air force itself.<sup>369</sup> Moreover, the Egyptian military, in general, was hampered by problems highlighted earlier related to the shift in weapons systems and poor levels of training. Rechavam Zeevy added that the Egyptian army's weakness was that it did not cope well with change.<sup>370</sup>

One factor that prevented Egypt from suffering a much more devastating blow was the minimal coordination between Israel and the Western powers regarding actual military actions. This was primarily due to the effort to hide the connection that attacks by Israel and the Western powers were part of a single strategic plot.<sup>371</sup>

Was the military plan of the defender to defeat a surprise attack effective? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. Egyptian units were stationed in Sinai and defenses were prepared, but the overall assessment that Israel might attack with a large-scale offensive was considered low by Egyptian intelligence. Some type of border raid from Israel was assessed to be more likely. The threat that a Western power might conduct military action after the nationalization of the canal was considered much higher.

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<sup>369</sup> Roy Fullick and Geoffrey Powell, *Suez: The Double War* (London: Leo Cooper Octopus Publishing Group, 1990), 109-117, 120.

<sup>370</sup> Zeevy, 70.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

Therefore, the threat perception was focused on the Suez Canal region.<sup>372</sup> Egyptian leaders, although receiving reports that Israel was preparing for war, dismissed the option that it might be against Egypt and considered Israeli preparations for war to be against Jordan.<sup>373</sup> On the other hand, the Egyptian defense plan foresaw that the primary threat was from attacking Western powers who were expected to overwhelm Egyptian forces on every front. Therefore, the Egyptian defensive plan was oriented toward delaying actions to win time for political instruments to achieve an effect. Both naval and airborne landings were predicted in the Suez Canal Zone.<sup>374</sup> While those landings did indeed occur, the Egyptian military was unprepared to defend the canal.

Did specific military capabilities have an effect on overcoming surprise? If so, what were they?

Regarding the capabilities that could have had an effect on overcoming surprise, the following factors stand out. First, there was adequate situational understanding, but Egypt failed to correctly assess Israel's strategic reasoning. This led to the situation where Egypt, although observing Israeli military build-up, failed to interpret it as an action aimed against Egypt. Israel's operation of deception, indicating that its military preparations were aimed against Jordan, turned out to be successful.<sup>375</sup> Second, as mentioned earlier, the Egyptian military was simply not ready for the fight, despite being

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<sup>372</sup> Bandmann, 78-80.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-84.

<sup>374</sup> Shemesh, 377.

<sup>375</sup> Zeevy, 62-63.

adequately equipped. This was largely due to the overall incompetence of Egypt's top military leaders. For example, the air force, although equipped with modern Soviet planes, lacked the fuel and correct ammunition to counter the Israeli attack.<sup>376</sup> Moreover, the command style of General Amer was directive and failed to allow freedom of action from his subordinates. Troops were sent to fight without a clear overarching plan. The order to withdraw from Sinai was given when the Western powers launched their air campaign against Egypt.<sup>377</sup>

When the surprise occurred, were the military units able to resist the attack? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. The Egyptian military, although possessing large quantities of Soviet military equipment, had not yet managed to incorporate it into the armed forces to a fully adequate level alongside the existing British equipment.<sup>378</sup> As a result, the Egyptian army was not realistically ready for the fight that occurred.<sup>379</sup>

Bandmann also pointed out the following: The Egyptian defense plan was not initiated due to the reduction of forces in Sinai in the fall 1956. This reduction was based on the assessment that it was more likely that Western powers would attack and would do so in the Suez Canal region. That allowed Israel an operational advantage in Sinai. The execution of the Egyptian defense was therefore hasty and inadequate in response to

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<sup>376</sup> Henkin, 125.

<sup>377</sup> Shemesh, 338-339.

<sup>378</sup> Zeevy, 60-61.

<sup>379</sup> Bandmann, 74-75.

Israeli activities. Additionally, the tactics and assumptions for planning used by the Egyptian 3rd Division were static and inflexible. Moreover, the lack of air support on the Egyptian side and the well-executed air support on the Israeli side made a decisive difference, severely hindering the defense conditions of Egyptian forces.<sup>380</sup>

Regardless of the fact that the Israelis had the advantage of surprise and quality of forces, the Egyptians fought hard and were locally successful on multiple occasions.<sup>381</sup> The relative success of the Egyptian army was at least partially related to the attacker's actions. For example, the Israelis did not plan to push all the way to the Suez Canal Zone due to an agreement with the Western powers. Additionally, France and the UK were relatively slow to bring in reinforcements to expand on their initial success. Eventually, the outside pressure forced the campaign to stop before the Western powers had reached their planned objectives.<sup>382</sup>

Summarizing Egypt's military actions, it is fair to note that the fighting ended with mixed results for the Egyptians. On the one hand, the Egyptian army held its ground in Sinai until a retreat order was issued. On the other hand, the losses of equipment and personnel were extremely high. Some units fled the battlefield but others fought with the highest effort.<sup>383</sup> The descriptions at this point are varied: The Israeli and Western

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<sup>380</sup> Bandmann, 91-97.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-89.

<sup>382</sup> Henkin, 221-212; Cull, Nicolle, and Aloni, 340.

<sup>383</sup> Henkin, 141, 154-155.

sources present Egyptian army activities in Sinai as chaotic, and the Egyptian sources describe them as functioning in a more organized fashion.<sup>384</sup>

### Economic Aspects of Egypt Success

From an economic perspective, the reason behind the Suez crisis was at least partially the Suez Canal, an essential economic transportation hub connecting Middle East oil-rich countries to Europe. Additionally, the Egyptian government's pursuit of economic independence and prosperity was considered a significant contributing factor. The plan to build the Aswan High Dam on the Nile River and the political games around the financing for this project were directly related to the war through the nationalization of the Suez Canal.

### Use of Economic Instrument after Suffering Surprise Attack

Was economic leverage in the hand of the defender? If yes, was it used, and was there an effect?

The answer is in the affirmative. The leverage was the closure of the Suez Canal to French and British shipping. Earlier, the canal had been closed to Israeli shipping. Nevertheless, that leverage had a more symbolic effect. Control over the Suez Canal was indeed considered in the UK's vital interest, and it was one of the reasons for war. Nevertheless, the UK failed to secure international support for its participation in the attack. A rather complex dynamic is behind that idea, connecting the UK's perception of

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<sup>384</sup> Meital, 200-202.

power with U.S. support for the British economy and their allied relationship.<sup>385</sup>

Therefore, the economic instrument was used, but its effectiveness in mitigating the surprise remains questionable.

### Leadership Aspects of Egypt's Success

The nationalization of the Suez Canal was carefully calculated by the Egyptian leadership, and they expected imminent retaliation from the West. Egypt's leaders knew their military was not ready for a confrontation with the Western powers, but they calculated that the UK and France would not risk their interests in the Arab world to go to war. The possibility that Israel, France, and the UK would cooperate was deemed to be unlikely.<sup>386</sup> Nasser did not believe the UK or any other Western state would use military force to regain control over the canal. He expected the UN would resolve the situation.<sup>387</sup> From the viewpoint of civil-military relations, Egypt's military leadership was oriented toward politics, not toward military affairs. The politically assigned military leaders tended to be incompetent and self-deceiving by nature. For example, Egypt's Chief of Staff General Amir stated that his country could destroy Israel within 48 hours.<sup>388</sup> It was an unrealistic statement that did not reflect the realities of Egyptian military capabilities but instead served as populism.

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<sup>385</sup> Diane B. Kunz, "The Importance of Having Money: The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis," in *Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences*, ed. William Roger Louis and Roger Owen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 223-231.

<sup>386</sup> Meital, 198-199.

<sup>387</sup> Shemesh, 363.

<sup>388</sup> Zeevy, 61.

### Leadership Actions after Suffering Surprise Attack

Did Egypt's national leadership act decisively, establishing clear intent and a plan of action when the attack occurred?

The answer is in the affirmative. In general, both military and political leaders functioned during the conflict, and the state did not collapse. Orders were given and received; information was processed at the strategic leadership level.<sup>389</sup> After Israel launched an offensive in Sinai and France and the UK announced their ultimatum, the Egyptian leadership considered that they might face a coordinated offensive from all three countries. That was the strategic calculation behind the decision to withdraw Egyptian troops fighting in Sinai.<sup>390</sup> Nevertheless, there were some problem areas and moments of despair. One problem was the constant friction between political requirements and the wishes of military leaders concerning how to conduct the war. For example, the evacuation of Sinai was not desired by military leaders but was deemed a political necessity. On the other hand, fighting in Port Said was not required by the military but was necessary for political reasons to guarantee international political intervention. A positive for Nasser was his ability to secure compliance from the military leadership for those decisions.<sup>391</sup> Regarding moments of despair, Henkin pointed out that although they exhibited strength and determination to external forces, the Egyptian

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<sup>389</sup> Bandmann, 85-88.

<sup>390</sup> Meital, 200-202.

<sup>391</sup> Hewedy, 167-168.

leadership had reached the brink of collapse by November 3 and were ready for significant concessions to stop further attacks.<sup>392</sup>

Additional problems included the command style of Amer, which was directive and failed to allow freedom of action to his subordinates. Troops were sent to fight without a clear overarching plan.<sup>393</sup>

Three reasons surface when summarizing the reasons that Egypt was successful in overcoming the attack. Perhaps the most important was the diplomatic pressure applied by the United States and the Soviet Union to the attacking sides. Second is the fact that the Egyptian leadership did not collapse. Third was the willingness of lower-level Egyptian soldiers to fight, even against the odds, supporting the development of present-day Egypt in a positive light. Eventually, Egypt, and especially Nasser, emerged from the Suez crisis as the leader of the Arab world.<sup>394</sup>

The Egyptian leadership won in the political arena but lost in the military domain.<sup>395</sup> As a result of the conflict, although Egypt suffered many casualties and lost a considerable amount of military equipment, it was able to announce victory.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Henkin, 201.

<sup>393</sup> Shemesh, 338-339.

<sup>394</sup> Henkin, 146, 155-156, 199-200, 268.

<sup>395</sup> Yitzhak Rabin, "The Sinai Campaign and the Limits of Power," in *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal*, ed. Moshe Shemesh and Selwyn Ilan Troen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 238.

<sup>396</sup> Herzog, "The Suez-Sinai Campaign: Background," 11.

Nevertheless, the case of the 1956 Suez crisis reveals the importance and effectiveness of foreign diplomatic pressure to the attacker when countering a surprise attack.

Case Study No. 6: Israeli Success in Overcoming the Effects  
of Surprise in the Yom Kippur War of 1973

A Summary of the 1973 Surprise

In 1973, Israel was a prosperous country that enjoyed a booming economy and a growing population. Having the United States as a close ally—and possessing a strong, battle-proven military—Israel was considered to be a regional superpower.<sup>397</sup> Although Israeli-initiated border clashes and skirmishes were frequent against Syria and Egypt, actual war was not assessed to be realistic by Israeli Military Intelligence (often abbreviated as Aman).<sup>398</sup> The change that happened in October 1973 was so radical that Ariel Sharon, one of the most notorious Israeli military commanders, stated, “I have been fighting for 25 years, and all the rest were just battles. This was a real war.”<sup>399</sup>

The 1973 war was a violent clash pitting Israel against Egypt and Syria. It was not simply a regional conflict, because, as in the June War in 1967, the United States and the Soviet Union played a crucial role as behind-the-scenes power players and supporters of opposing fighting sides.<sup>400</sup> During 19 days of high-intensity fighting, more than 7,000

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<sup>397</sup> George W. Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War: The Albatross of Decisive Victory*, vol. 21 (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1996), 5.

<sup>398</sup> Uri Bar-Joseph, “Israel’s 1973 Intelligence Failure,” in *Revisiting the Yom Kippur War*, ed. P. R. Kumaraswamy (New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 13.

<sup>399</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israel War*, 76.

<sup>400</sup> Elizabeth Monroe and Anthony-H Farrar-Hockley, *The Arab-Israel War, October 1973: Background and Events* (London: International Institute for Strategic

men lost their lives, more than 450 planes were shot down, and approximately 600 tanks were destroyed.<sup>401</sup>

The direct roots of the 1973 war lie in the Six-Day War fought by the same adversaries in 1967. For Egypt and Syria, 1967 was a humiliating loss, resulting in a determination to overcome their deficiencies and to pay back the Israelis. On the other hand, after the 1967 success, Israel began to believe it was permanently superior to its Arab neighbors, surmising that they were “incapable of joint political and military action.”<sup>402</sup> How Israeli leadership was surprised in 1973, although controlling arguably the best intelligence system in the region at that time, has been the subject of many debates. Those discussions will not “turn black to white,” and the simple truth is that although Israel had all the warnings and intelligence information available, it still fell victim to surprise.<sup>403</sup> Moreover, the conflict was fought so intensely that all sides, at some point, sought the escalation and direct involvement of either the United States or the Soviets. Furthermore, the United States and the Soviet Union increased their readiness statuses due to the conflict, threatening to escalate the situation.<sup>404</sup> Although the conflict eventually ended with a tactical and operational Israeli victory, it “redeemed

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Studies, 1975), 2; Frank Aker, *October 1973 the Arab-Israeli War* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1985), 6.

<sup>401</sup> Aker, 1-2.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>403</sup> Bar-Joseph, 12.

<sup>404</sup> P. R. Kumaraswamy, *Revisiting the Yom Kippur War* (New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 1-2.

Arab dignity and self-esteem” and humbled Israel. It is also fair to note that during this conflict, top Israeli officials considered employing nuclear weapons in defense of the state.<sup>405</sup> The following case study observes how and why Israel was able to overcome the effects of surprise attack in the 1973 war.

### Diplomatic Aspects of Israeli Success

From the perspective of diplomacy, its location, and the way the state was established, Israel had many challenges. On the one hand, Israel was surrounded by Arab nations that saw its existence as a flaw, and conflicts with its neighbors had been almost constant since the formation of the Israeli state. On the other hand, Israel enjoyed the support of the United States, and a relatively large Jewish community around the world granted leverage or at least compassion in most of the influential Western states. Additionally, since the formation of the Israeli state in 1948, Israel had quickly evolved into a modern country with a developing economy and strong state apparatus with foreign contacts all over the world. In light of the Yom Kippur War, the most crucial aspect was Israel’s relationship with the United States, which granted the country full diplomatic and economic support during the conflict.<sup>406</sup> In the domain of diplomacy also lies the most significant controversy: the disconnect between military defense planning and Israeli

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<sup>405</sup> Efraim Karsh, “Preface,” in *Revisiting the Yom Kippur War*, ed. P. R. Kumaraswamy (New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), ix; Walter J. Boyne, *The Two O’clock War: The 1973 Yom Kippur Conflict and the Airlift that Saved Israel* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2002), 58-59.

<sup>406</sup> Simcha Dinitz, “The Yom Kippur War: Diplomacy of War and Peace,” in *Revisiting the Yom Kippur War*, ed. P. R. Kumaraswamy (New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 105-126.

foreign policy. In short, to receive the United States' unconditional material support, Israel had to prove that it was not the side that started the conflict.<sup>407</sup> Nonetheless, most of Israel's war-preparedness military plans included the concept of "first strike" to guarantee favorable conditions for further operations. With Egyptian and Syrian surprise, the Israeli government lacked time to present its arguments in support of the first strike in the diplomatic domain. Time to prepare and set favorable diplomatic conditions was something that had existed before launching an offensive in the 1967 war.<sup>408</sup> This meant that even after receiving a warning a few hours before the 1973 war, the planned pre-emptive strike was out of the question, leaving the military to start a war from a surprisingly unfavorable position. Eventually, it was the U.S. diplomatic effort that concluded the war and prevented it from escalating into Soviet incursion on the side of the Arab states.<sup>409</sup>

#### Use of Diplomacy Instrument after Suffering Surprise Attack

Was a diplomatic message communicated directly after the surprise attack, and was there any immediate effect of it on countering the attack?

The answer to these questions is in the affirmative. Extensive diplomatic information-sharing was underway, especially between Israel and the United States, which was based on existing, well-founded networks.<sup>410</sup> The United States, a superpower

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

<sup>408</sup> Kumaraswamy, 3.

<sup>409</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israel War*, 71.

<sup>410</sup> Boyne, 28.

and Israel's closest ally, was well-informed about the situation in the region.<sup>411</sup> Just a few hours before the attack, the Israeli political leadership decided not to launch pre-emptive strikes against Egypt and Syria to "underscore the identity of the aggressor." This decision was made with the understanding that the surprise was so sudden that there was no other way to convince outside foreign political leaders about the peculiarities of the Israeli situation due to lack of time.<sup>412</sup> Thanks to this step, Israel was able to prove that it suffered an attack, which guaranteed U.S. support. Later in the conflict, Israeli diplomatic efforts helped maintain the support of the U.S. military's flow of materials and the leverage the United States was providing to balance the Soviet support to the Arab states.<sup>413</sup>

Were any treaties or arrangements in effect at the time of the surprise attack, and were they used to mitigate the effects of surprise?

The answer to these questions is in the affirmative. Jim Zanotti from the U.S. Congressional Research Service pointed out that although there was no official U.S.-Israel defense agreement, multiple stand-alone agreements and memoranda of understanding had been established. Perhaps the most significant was the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement signed in 1952. In addition, all U.S. presidents had assured that the United States would guarantee Israel's security.<sup>414</sup> Those warm relationships were

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<sup>411</sup> Dinitz, 111-113.

<sup>412</sup> Kumaraswamy, 3.

<sup>413</sup> Boyne, 29-30.

<sup>414</sup> Jim Zanotti, *Israel: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 2012), 24.

exploited extensively during the 1973 war through material and diplomatic assistance that the United States provided to Israel.

Was any foreign assistance available, and was there an effect of this aid to counter the attack?

The answer is in the affirmative. The foreign material assistance was partially available starting from the first night of the war; it was followed by a massive U.S. strategic airlift operation dubbed “Nickle Grass” starting from the fifth day of the war.<sup>415</sup> This support was the critical element that enabled the Israelis to be successful in achieving their defensive objectives.<sup>416</sup> According to Aker, approximately 20,000 tons of war supplies from ammunition to tanks to airplane parts were delivered to Israel by the U.S. Air Force.<sup>417</sup> Gawrych added that the decision in Washington to support the Israeli war effort with specialized equipment was made on the evening of the first day.<sup>418</sup> Simsa Dinitz pointed out that U.S. support had a huge psychological, political, and military impact that enabled the eventual Israeli military success.<sup>419</sup> Without this support, the Israelis could not have turned the military situation into a tactical and operational success. Interestingly, the airlift would have been much more difficult if Portugal had acted as other U.S. allies in the West did and prevented U.S. Air Force planes from landing on its

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<sup>415</sup> Dinitz, 113-117.

<sup>416</sup> Aker, 33-34.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>418</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israel War*, 39.

<sup>419</sup> Dinitz, 117-118.

soil.<sup>420</sup> Eventually, when Israel went on the offensive, the situation escalated when the Soviet Union alerted its airborne forces into deployment readiness and the United States declared Defense Condition III, the highest alert level at that time. Eventually, the situation de-escalated and the global powers were able to force a ceasefire.<sup>421</sup> This illustrates the commitment that the United States was ready to devote to the situation.

To sum up the use of the instrument of diplomacy, the following aspects are important to note. First, there were almost allied-like relations between Israel and the United States. Second, Israel's political leaders correctly understood and acted accordingly just before and after the surprise attack happened, guaranteeing the support of their primary ally. Third, the United States began funneling material and financial support to Israel almost immediately, using the U.S. Air Force, the fastest means available. This enabled the Israeli military to overwhelm the Arab attackers.

#### Informational Aspects of Israeli Success

In the informational domain, both belligerent sides had successes and failures in the use of the informational instrument. Journalist Terence Prittie highlighted some of them. First, Arab countries released somewhat false information about their successes, as they had done in 1967. Nonetheless, in the overall media domain, they were much better in publicizing their military successes and communicating the idea that they were fighting to regain their territory. Prittie also pointed out that Israeli media messaging, on the contrary, was managed well during the conflict. Appropriate messages were released

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<sup>420</sup> Boyne, xv.

<sup>421</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israel War*, 73.

without lies or emotions.<sup>422</sup> Due to Israel's geopolitical location, the state was always under the threat of attack, a concept well understood by the population. Therefore, when the surprise attack happened, Israeli citizens reacted according to their training without noticeable problems.

If the opposing sides could be assessed as equal in the media domain, then a considerable difference existed in other information domains. Before the war, Israeli intelligence failed to provide early warnings to Israel. Walter Boyne pointed out some reasons. First, Egypt and Syria were remarkably good at conducting deception operations before the war. On the other hand, the Israelis, although having a superior intelligence and reconnaissance network, ultimately failed to interpret the overall situation.<sup>423</sup> Several psychological biases as well as some coincidences played roles in the Israeli intelligence failure. George Gawrych reported some examples of incidents that happened a few weeks before the war. In one instance, a routine air patrol turned into a more significant air battle between Israeli and Syrian fighter planes, establishing conditions for the Israelis to expect a Syrian counter-move. Although a large-scale offense was not expected, it helped to hide a build-up of Syrian forces in the vicinity of the Golan Heights. On the Suez, the Egyptians were able to hide their actions behind an agenda of military exercises. Still, Aman's perceptions and biases were the more substantial obstacle to establishing situational awareness. Six months earlier, similar military exercises had caused the

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<sup>422</sup> Terence Prittie, *The Fourth Arab-Israeli War: The Propaganda Battle* (London: Anglo-Israel Association, 1974), 4-9.

<sup>423</sup> Boyne, 18-20.

Israelis to order a hasty partial mobilization that was an expensive endeavor for the Israeli state, and officials were reluctant to make the same mistake again.<sup>424</sup>

#### Use of the Informational Instrument after Suffering a Surprise Attack

Was situational awareness established quickly. If not, why not?

The answer is in the affirmative. In fact, Israeli intelligence officials had gathered an extensive amount of information and, according to Uri Bar-Joseph, had created an excellent picture of the enemy's locations, plans, and capabilities. Nonetheless, the main problem was the failure to correctly interpret this information.<sup>425</sup> When Israel finally understood the adversary's intent to launch an attack a few hours before the hostilities broke out, it was fairly easy to reassess gathered information in light of the actual situation. Naturally, some smaller flaws remained. For example, in Sinai, Israeli military leaders waited for signs to identify Egypt's main thrust, but there were none; as a result, hours were lost before the Egyptian tactical actions were understood.<sup>426</sup> Additionally, the Syrian air defense locations had changed, which caused the waste of precious air sorties against non-existing targets. Nevertheless, those setbacks did not prevent Israel from providing an adequate overall strategic picture to military leaders who transformed it into tactical and operational success in later phases of the war.

Was a message communicated to an internal audience that supported overcoming surprise?

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<sup>424</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 23-24, 25.

<sup>425</sup> Bar-Joseph, 14-32.

<sup>426</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 20.

The answer is in the affirmative. Because of Israel's location and history, its people were accustomed to mobilizations and the possibility of war. Therefore, the sudden call-up of reserves was not surprising. On the evening of October 6, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir broadcast a message apprising her people of the situation.<sup>427</sup> What surprised the internal audience was the fact that the Israeli military did not win in only a few days, and there were many casualties.<sup>428</sup> Georg Gawrych pointed out that on the third day, the Israeli Chief of Staff David Elazar conducted a press conference that portrayed the situation in a positive light. This changed dramatically on the eighth day after the surprise attack, when Elazar released the first official numbers of casualties on the Israeli side. According to Gawrych, this information simply increased the Israeli people's will to fight and win the war.<sup>429</sup> Golda Meir's continued speeches—assessed as impressive by Walter Boyne—reassured the people of their eventual victory and significantly boosting the morale.<sup>430</sup>

Was a message communicated to an external audience that supported overcoming the surprise?

The answer is in the affirmative. As pointed out earlier, the Israeli political calculation of not conducting a pre-emptive strike guaranteed U.S. support for their

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<sup>427</sup> Jewish Virtual Library, "The Yom Kippur War: Broadcast to the Nation by Prime Minister Meir," (Broadcast to the Nation by Prime Minister Meir, October 1973). accessed February 2, 2020, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/broadcast-to-the-nation-by-prime-minister-meir-october-1973>.

<sup>428</sup> Boyne, 55.

<sup>429</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 52, 59.

<sup>430</sup> Boyne, 124.

cause. The message that Israel was attacked was considered critical communication in the international domain. In the media domain, Terence Prittie pointed out that Israel could have placed more emphasis on the fact that it was under attack. Israelis had always had a “we-handle-it-ourselves” attitude but perhaps this time they could have more strongly described the sequence of events and how they were attacked for the record.<sup>431</sup>

Was national support behind the leadership when the attack occurred? Did it have an impact if there was small or no support at all?

The answer is in the affirmative. As stated earlier, Israel’s geopolitical location and constant conflicts had established an almost existential perception among the population. When the surprise attack occurred—and the Israeli people understood that it resulted in a much bloodier war than expected—they did not break. After the war, when soldiers returned home suffering from post-traumatic stress, the Israeli state began to look deeper for the reasons that led to the surprise through the work of Agranat Commission, resulting in changes to the political leadership.<sup>432</sup>

To sum up the use of the instrument of information, Israel failed to correctly assess the intelligence information and suffered surprise. Nevertheless, after the surprise occurred, the state was united, operated well in external and internal information domains, and processed adequate information both at tactical and strategic levels, which eventually helped it overcome the effects of surprise.

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<sup>431</sup> Prittie, 7-8.

<sup>432</sup> Israel State Archives, “Golda Meir's Government and the Agranat Report, April 1974,” 1974, accessed February 22, 2020, <https://www.archives.gov.il/en/chapter/golda-meirs-government-agranat-report-april-1974/>; Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 75-78.

## Military Aspects of Israeli Success

The Israeli military was battle-hardened in wars fought against Arab countries since 1948. Still, it was significantly outnumbered compared with its neighbors' combined forces. The opposing side, Egypt and Syria, had standing armies of 260,000 and 120,000 men, respectively, with extensive reserves bolstered by Soviet weaponry and training. Israel had an advantage in quality in both the human and technological domains.<sup>433</sup> Frank Aker pointed out that Israel was always facing a threat from its Arab neighbors, therefore the the specter of a potential existential threat was ever-present. In 1973, that threat was overshadowed by the confidence born in the 1967 war. Nevertheless, the threat perception meant that “every Israeli from the age of 18 to 55 was trained as a soldier.” The regular readiness exercises ensured that the military reserve remained competent. From a population of 3 million at that time, Israel had 94,000 active-duty soldiers with a reserve of approximately 180,000. Frank Aker claimed that “the military budget was around 20 percent of the nation’s GDP.”<sup>434</sup>

Raw numbers such as these have rarely decided the outcomes of war. If in 1967 the Arab states escalated the conflict with the assumption that their militaries could match Israel’s, then in 1973, Egypt and Syria were truly prepared and knew what they could or could not do. The underlying idea of the Arab war preparations was the deception that incorporated the following side activities: harass the defensive preparations in the region, hold Israel in a constant state of high alert to place pressure on the Israeli defense budget,

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<sup>433</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 19.

<sup>434</sup> Aker, 10-11.

and “lull the Israelis into a sense of false security.”<sup>435</sup> Before the 1973 surprise attack, military encounters on the Syrian and Egypt fronts were not new. Since 1967, the so-called “war of attrition” was taking place, further helping to hide Egypt’s and Syria’s war preparations.<sup>436</sup> Soviet military assistance to the Arabs played a considerable role in their war plans. This included the provision of better tanks (new T55s and T62s) and the construction of a complete air-defense system, with extensive use of deceptive air-defense sites. Additionally, the Soviets provided advanced bridging assets to the Egyptians.<sup>437</sup>

Egypt’s Minister of War General Ismail, assessing Israeli strengths and weaknesses, stated that “Israelis had four basic advantages: air superiority, technological skill, minute and efficient training, and reliance upon quick aid from the U.S. Primary disadvantages were: long lines of communication, multiple fronts, limited manpower resources, and economic resources (impeding acceptance of) the long fight.”<sup>438</sup> Nevertheless, the Israelis had made preparations.

Both in Sinai and the Golan Heights, Israel prepared its defense with a minefield, bunkers, and anti-tank ditches. In Sinai, the defenses were called the Bar-Lev Line, designed to support “the sparse but vital road network,” with the central idea that

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<sup>435</sup> Aker, 9.

<sup>436</sup> El-Gamasy, 122-126; Aker, 12.

<sup>437</sup> George W. Gawrych, “Egyptian Engineers in the Crossing Operation 1973,” in *Combined Arms in Battle since 1939*, ed. Roger J. Spiller (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1992), 47; Aker, 10.

<sup>438</sup> Aker, 13-14.

whoever controlled the roads controlled the peninsula. The Israeli defensive strategy on the peninsula was to degrade enemy combat power while they moved to the depth of defense.<sup>439</sup>

In 1967, Israel was victorious in the Six-Day War due to intelligence, dominance in the air, and armor. Despite those pillars of success, the Egyptians and Syrians had found a solid new strategy for the 1973 war. All Israeli war plans were based on the assumption that they would receive at least 48 hours' warning. In reality, the Israeli armed forces were prepared for a reprise of the 1967 war, not the war they got.<sup>440</sup>

#### Use of Military Instrument after Suffering Surprise Attack

Was the enemy able to significantly reduce the capabilities of the defender? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. The primary reason was that the Egyptian strategic war plan did not require a reduction in specific capability, inflicting casualties in general and winning the psychological battle instead.<sup>441</sup> It is fair to note that Egypt and Syria were specifically prepared to counter Israeli strengths. Gawrych pointed out that more than half of the Israeli defense budget went to the air force. At the same time, the Arabs, with the help of Russia, built an extensive air defense net to deny that strength of the Israeli military. Additionally, the Bar-Lev defensive line expanded in some places up to

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid., 7-9.

<sup>440</sup> Hassan el Badri, Taha el-Magdoub, and Mohammed Dia el Din Zohdy, *The Ramadan War, 1973* (Dunn Loring, VA: T.N. Dupuy Associates, 1979), 34-38; Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 6, 8.

<sup>441</sup> El-Gamasy, 191; Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 8-13.

40 km inland on the banks of the Suez channel; it was considered a formidable obstacle and Israel believed that opposing forces would need at least 24-48 hours to penetrate it. With innovative engineering preparations combined with infantry assaults, the Egyptians breached the line within hours. That resulted in the Bar-Lev line, which depended extensively on support of armor and air force for its success, an expensive miscalculation for the Israelis.<sup>442</sup> Finally, the Israeli armor superiority was countered with new guided and unguided anti-tank rockets.<sup>443</sup> Again, Egypt exploited the fact that the Israeli army was armor-heavy and lacked supporting infantry and indirect fire support to hold off the enemy's infantry. That enabled Egypt and Syria to use their Russian anti-tank rockets with devastating effects.<sup>444</sup> Those Arab preparations did not prevent Israeli success, but they made it considerably more difficult to achieve.

Was the military plan of the defender to defeat a surprise attack effective? If not, why not?

The answer is in the negative. Professor Stuart Cohen pointed out the following reasons. First, no overall defensive plans existed where troops would have to deploy to a defensive posture. All plans were based on the assumption that pre-warning provided by Aman would provide enough time to launch offensive operations. At that time, Israeli military doctrine foresaw that fighting must be taken to the enemy's land as soon as possible. Defensive actions by regular and conscript forces were simply a prelude to the

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<sup>442</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 7, 16, 18.

<sup>443</sup> el Badri, el-Magdoub, and el Din Zohdy, 61-85.

<sup>444</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 20.

offense. Second, a contingency variant did not exist for one of the offensive plans called “Blue-White,” which was composed just a few months before the outbreak of war. Even that plan required pre-warning for planned execution.<sup>445</sup> Cohen listed other flaws in Israeli planning assumptions. First was the assumption that there would be a pre-warning before the execution of the plan. Second was having a set of primarily offensively minded plans without defensive alternatives. Third was the assumption that the air force could, in any scenario, support the operation of ground forces in full. Fourth was that mobilization could be conducted without friction. All of those planning assumptions turned out to be flawed.<sup>446</sup>

Frank Aker highlighted similar points and added the lack of awareness of the enemy’s possible courses of actions incorporating limited objectives and the capabilities of modern Russian equipment.<sup>447</sup> Israel’s plans, which eventually turned out to be effective enough to achieve battlefield victories, were drafted hastily during the fight and were executed when the chaos while mobilizing during the first few days of the war was overcome.

Did specific military capabilities have an effect on overcoming surprise? If so, what were they?

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<sup>445</sup> Stuart A. Cohen, “Operational Limitations of Reserve Forces: The Lessons of the 1973 War,” in *Revisiting the Yom Kippur War*, ed. P. R. Kumaraswamy (New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 76-82.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-82.

<sup>447</sup> Aker, 15, 23.

The specific military capabilities that had the effect of overcoming surprise were the fighting spirit and will of Israeli regular and reserve soldiers.<sup>448</sup> and the eventual degradation of Arab air defenses that enabled air force support to ground units.<sup>449</sup> Additionally, the Israeli political and military leadership did not collapse and continued to fight even if, at some point, the situation seemed rather dire. Another factor that accompanied the superior training and relentless fighting spirit of Israeli troops was that the enemy never intended full destruction of Israel's military.<sup>450</sup>

When the surprise occurred, were the military units able to resist the attack? If not, why not?

The answer is in the affirmative, for the following reasons. First was the supreme quality and fighting skill of Israel's active and reserve troops.<sup>451</sup> Second was the fact that the attackers had limited objectives, which enabled Israel to build up a fight capability sufficient enough to launch offensive operations. Third was that U.S. military material assistance enabled Israel to turn the tide in Syria and Sinai to at least tactical and operational success.

The reasons for Israeli success are a sum of several aspects. First were the limited objectives envisioned by Egypt and Syria; the attackers never intended Israel's complete defeat but rather sought to exhaust the Israeli Defense Forces. Second, with material

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<sup>448</sup> Cohen, 96.

<sup>449</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 60.

<sup>450</sup> el Badri, el-Magdoub, and el Din Zohdy, 16-23.

<sup>451</sup> Boyne, xv.

support from the United States, Israel was able to achieve operational and tactical victories. However, these victories were accompanied by considerable casualties. Perhaps it is fair to argue that the military instrument was successful but only thanks to effective diplomacy that guaranteed foreign support and because of the limited nature of the attackers' operation. Gawrych pointed out that as a result of the war, Israel changed its military by increasing its overall force, building a more combined armed force with infantry and artillery, and establishing several ways to mitigate threats to its air defense.<sup>452</sup> Those changes clearly reveal that although Israel was successful in this war, the conflict revealed significant deficiencies in the Israeli Defense Forces.

#### Economic Aspects of Israeli Success

From an economic perspective, Israel was not in a favorable position. The economic leverage was on the attacking side. For example, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat wanted to use an economic instrument in the form of an oil embargo but failed to secure enough support from other oil-producing Arab states. Nonetheless, the threat of lowering oil production was perceived in the West.<sup>453</sup> The oil-producing Arab states eventually enforced an embargo in support of Egypt and Syria, helping to involve the global community in pressuring the Israelis to stop their counteroffensive.<sup>454</sup> From

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<sup>452</sup> Gawrych, *The Arab-Israel War*, 79.

<sup>453</sup> Giuliano Garavini, "Completing Decolonization: The 1973 'Oil Shock' and the Struggle for Economic Rights," *The International History Review* 33, no. 3 (2011): 473-487, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2011.595593>; Gawrych, *The Arab-Israel War*, 11, 14.

<sup>454</sup> El-Gamasy, 312; Gawrych, *The Arab-Israel War*, 71.

Israel's perspective, there was no leverage to use against attackers. Furthermore, the Israelis themselves suffered critical constraints. Their economy depended on reserves called to duty; therefore, the country was incapable of waging a protracted war. This was well-known to attackers, who could continue fighting much longer than Israel. However, Israel was able to resist thanks to \$2.2 billion in emergency military aid provided by U.S. President Nixon.<sup>455</sup>

#### Use of an Economic Instrument after Suffering Surprise Attack

Was there economic leverage in the hand of a defender? If yes, was it used and was there an effect?

The answer is in the negative. Egypt and Syria, the attacking countries, were not economically tangible to Israel. The economic instrument, due to the limited time span when Israel was able to field an army, was, in fact, not in favor of Israel.

#### Leadership Aspects of Israeli Success

Leadership played a crucial role in Israeli's initial failure but also eventual success. At first, the leadership and their unquestioned support of Aman established conditions that enabled Egypt and Syria to conduct a surprise attack. On the other hand, the actions of Israel's leaders after the surprise enabled it to recover from the initial loss. For example, the decision not to launch pre-emptive strikes guaranteed support from the United States. The negative aspect of this decision was that the military leaders had not foreseen this option, and their planning was based on a bias that early warning with a pre-

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<sup>455</sup> Dinitz, 117.

emptive air strike option was definite. The Israeli leadership had to overcome many obstacles. First, they were surprised, and their intelligence failed. Second, the enemy was much harder to subdue than assessed before the war. That naturally led to a rise in tensions and the clash of characters.<sup>456</sup> Still, those problems did not paralyze the Israeli command system.

### Leadership Actions after Suffering Surprise Attack

Did the national leadership act decisively, establishing clear intent and a plan of action when the attack occurred?

The answer is in the affirmative. First, the political leadership correctly calculated the requirements to guarantee U.S. support and therefore ruled out the pre-emptive strike option. Gawrych pointed out that initially, the “political and military leadership remained confident of a victory in quick order.” On the second day of the war, when the losses of airplanes, tanks, and manpower became apparent, the Israeli leadership was stunned, resulting in Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan’s proposal to use nuclear weapons.<sup>457</sup> Prime Minister Golda Meir showed remarkable insight and vetoed the use of nuclear weapons and any kind of dramatic press releases.<sup>458</sup> Gabriel Sheffer pointed out that there was, at some level, a mistrust between political and military leadership. This was related to the failure of military intelligence to assess the likelihood of the war and the

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<sup>456</sup> el Badri, el-Magdoub, and el Din Zohdy, 123-127.

<sup>457</sup> Gawrych, *The Arab-Israel War*, 39-41; Boyne, 58-59.

<sup>458</sup> Boyne, 62-63.

unexpectedly tough fighting that occurred when it had been presented by the military to be a swift victory.<sup>459</sup>

The larger mistrust was between high-ranking military officials. Many disagreements arose between Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and Chief of Staff David Elazar, and only Golda Meir's insightful actions resolved them.<sup>460</sup> During military operations, a disconnect between military high- and mid-level commanders did not change the overall result of the war but did lead to unnecessary, avoidable casualties.<sup>461</sup>

Interestingly, throughout the war, Israeli military leaders, although stunned by Egyptian and Syrian fighting capabilities, continued to underestimate their enemy and produce overly optimistic battle plans.<sup>462</sup> Even though there were some personality clashes inside the military organization and some low points when the situation seemed especially dire, the overall approach to solving problems by the leadership remained positive.

After the war, Israel established a special inquiry board called the Agranat Commission to examine reasons for the war and possible Israeli mistakes. This report concluded that several high-ranking military commanders and military intelligence leaders were to blame for Israel's surprise. The wartime political leadership was not blamed in the report, but media coverage of their mistakes led to their eventual political

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<sup>459</sup> Gabriel Sheffer, *Revisiting the Yom Kippur War*, ed. P. R. Kumaraswamy (NY: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 166.

<sup>460</sup> Boyne, 26-27, 47, 51, 84.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

<sup>462</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 60.

loss. As a result of the 1973 war, Israel re-evaluated many aspects of its preparations for countering possible surprise attacks.<sup>463</sup>

#### Common Themes from Case Studies Related to Successes of Countering a Surprise Attack

The consolidated results of the success case studies are presented in Table 2. The table provides an overview and a comparison of the success case studies and the DIME-L elements that enabled states to successfully overcome the effects of a surprise attack. Overall, the table depicts a consolidated result of the case studies. Each factor is described as either positive or negative, with remarks indicating the most important reasons for its analysis. In some instances, the additional remark was added to see how relevant the incline seemed. “Positive” means the answer is yes or seems to incline toward yes, and “negative” refers to the opposite. Overall, the table helps compare the effect of various DIME-L instruments on each case.

When analyzing the diplomacy instrument of countering surprise in success case studies, several aspects become noticeable. First, in all observed case studies, effective communication with the international community was apparent. Second, only in the case of Egypt was there a direct alliance treaty. Regardless of the existing agreement, Egypt did not want help. Third, in all cases, foreign assistance was available, and this could be assessed as the most crucial factor that helped to overcome the effects of surprise. In the case of Korea, it meant direct involvement of U.S. military forces. In the case of the Suez Crisis, it was in the form of intense diplomatic pressure, and in 1973 the United States

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<sup>463</sup> Gawrych, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, 74, 77-78.

provided significant material assistance to Israel. What united all three cases was the haste with which foreign assistance was made available. In direct comparison, the failures of foreign aid were more indirect or aid was not available in a timely manner.

The information instrument when countering surprise was used extensively in all cases of success. Similarly, with failures in case studies observing successes, the situational awareness of the state's leadership could be assessed to be sufficient. What stands out is that also in the success cases, the states struggled with understanding the real intentions of the attacker. Both in 1956 and 1973, both Egyptian and Israeli leaders were struggling to understand the true intent of the attacker. Only in the case of Korea was the intent of the attacker clear. In all observed success case studies, the internal and external information exchange worked well, and national support was behind the leadership.

The assessment of the effectiveness of the military instrument in the cases of success is a challenging task. A common theme was that in all cases, the military instrument fought back against the attacker. Nevertheless, the only case where the military instrument could be considered a more or less complete success was in the case of Yom Kippur. Even then, some caveats remain regarding the question of whether the Israelis would have been as successful as they eventually were, crossing the Suez, if they lacked material assistance from the U.S. military. In the cases of Korea and Egypt, the military suffered significant capability losses as a result of surprise. On the other hand, in Israel, the enemy never intended to completely take down specific Israeli capability.

Nevertheless, there were plans against possible attack in all cases. Regardless of those plans, none was executed as planned due to the enemy's surprise effects. In short, in none of the cases observed had the defender considered the way the attack was

eventually executed by the attacking side as being likely. The factors that seemed to hinder the defensive sides' ability to be successful in the use of the military instrument were poor training levels, lack of military equipment, and poor leadership skills. These factors enable parallels to be drawn to the cases of failures. In the case of Yom Kippur, the quality of troops and effective leadership enabled the military to hold its ground while foreign material aid turned the tactical and operational situation into victory. Still, it took several weeks to achieve that victory.

The economic instrument was used in one case out of three, but its effects for countering surprise were minimal. The author assesses that the reason is likely related to the fact that it takes time to activate economic elements, and their impacts are not as immediately effective as those of the military instrument.

From the perspective of leadership, all case studies indicate that the leaders maintained control over the situation. Specifically, political leaders acted decisively in all observed cases, although in cases of Korea and Egypt, military leaders had problems controlling the situation. This reflects the failure of the military instrument as well. Eventually, the source of all success has its roots in leadership. Case studies about success revealed a clear connection between primary political leadership actions and eventual results.

Table 2. Similarities and Differences of Case Studies Where State Succeeded to Overcome the Effects of Surprise Attack				
Element	1950 Korea War	1956 Suez Crisis	1973 Yom Kippur	
D	Surprise through time and strength	Surprise through location and strength	Surprise through method	
	Diplomatic message communicated with effect?	POS – imminent effect	POS – good effect	
	Treaties, arrangements that could mitigate the effects?	Within days UN resolutions passed with UN forces involvement following	Active communication with neighbors, request for support from the US	Active communication, especially with the US
	Foreign assistance available with effect?	POS – indirect effect	POS – no effect	POS – indirect effect
	Situational awareness established quickly?	No significant agreements requiring some other state to intervene, still the US supported with military intervention	President Nasser himself declined support offered from allies	No significant agreements requiring some other state to intervene, still the US-supported with military material aid
	Message communicated to the internal audience with effect?	POS – crucial effect	POS – crucial effect	POS – crucial effect
	Message communicated to an external audience with effect?	Material assistance and troops involved primarily from the US, the reason for the success	Political pressure from the US and Soviet in the UN	Financial aid from the US, extensive material assistance from the US
	National support behind leadership?	POS	POS	POS
	Any capabilities lost due to enemy surprise?	Mainly the political situational awareness was good	Situational awareness good, foresaw the intervention of the UK and France	It took time to understand the Egyptian limited objectives plan
	Plan to counter surprise effective?	Continues information flow from President Rhee to people	Nasser initiated publicity with nationalism agendas fighting against attackers	Leadership made announcement multiple times
M	Critical capabilities helping or denying the ability to overcome the effects?	POS – good effect	POS – good effect	POS – good effect
	Was military successful in resisting the attack? If not why?	Most of the world publicity supported South Korea as the state under attack	Especially the Arab support rise through messaging	State with "fewer words more actions attitude."
	Economic leverage used with effect?	War united people behind not-so-popular leader	Population felt under attack	The society organized in the way that war was expected, leadership supported
	National leadership decisive action?	POS	POS	POS
		More than 50% of units lost due to surprise within the first few fighting days	Air force lost through the UK and French attack	Attackers plan did not require destroying capabilities
		Due to surprise, enemy moved too fast and plan became obsolete quickly	Assessed Israeli attack chance low, focus on the coastal area	Ad hoc planning combined with excellent quality soldiering
		Denying: lack of anti-tank weapons, poor training level, no heavy weapons.	Denying: intelligence assessment, poor training with the Soviet equipment, poor high military leadership	Supporting: Quality of Israeli forces
		Military resisted with huge losses, successful later due to the US troops intervention	NEG	POS
		NEG	NEG	NEG
		NEG – no effect	POS – little effect	NEG – no effect
E	No economic leverage existed	Closing Suez Canal	No economic leverage existed	
L	National leadership decisive action?	POS	POS	
		President Rhee decisive, military leadership less	Especially the political leadership held up the situation, military leadership less	Good political assessment combined with military leadership

Source: Created by author.

## Summary

Chapter 4 presented analysis of six case studies—three failures and three successes—where the state was or was not able to overcome the effects of surprise. The chapter also compared the failures and successes to identify similarities and differences in the use of DIME-L elements. Next, the final chapter of thesis summarizes the results and concludes the thesis.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Overview

The likelihood of a Russian military attack on Estonia is low, as Russia does not want a military conflict with NATO, but the escalation of Russia's confrontation with the West anywhere in the world could trigger a rapid change in Estonia's threat situation. Russia may opt for a preventive military offensive in the Baltic region if it anticipates the escalation of a conflict, even if this occurs in another region.

—Mikk Marran, *International Security and Estonia 2020*

This chapter analyses the data gathered in the thesis and places it into the context of Estonia. Chapter 5 examines the answer to the primary research question, "What are the key factors that help a nation overcome the effects of a surprise attack initiated suddenly by another nation or force?" Finally, the chapter concludes the thesis.

#### Results

The case studies observed in the thesis indicated the following. First, from a broad perspective, the study again confirmed ideas presented in Chapter 1 that all instruments of national power are intimately interlinked and used cohesively in time of crisis. Therefore, none of the instruments was single-handedly responsible for either failure or success when overcoming the surprise attack. However, the analysis also indicated that a direct relationship was observed in case studies regarding leadership actions. If leadership failed, the state did not overcome the effects of surprise, and if leadership (especially political leadership) succeeded, the state was able to overcome the effects of surprise. Therefore, decisive and well-executed leadership actions can be considered central in overcoming the effects of surprise.

From the perspective of diplomacy, the most important factor was foreign assistance. If foreign assistance was available quickly and in the form of direct military intervention, military material assistance, or thorough diplomatic pressure, the state was likely to recover, as the success case studies illustrated. If the foreign aid was late, or if it arrived in a weaker form, the state was likely not to overcome the effects of surprise, as the failure case studies demonstrated.

The informational instrument seemed to have a reinforcing effect for diplomacy, helping decision-makers achieve situational understanding. Consequently, they were able to inform the internal and external publics and gain or lose support to overcome the effects of surprise. In Egypt in 1967, the government's internal communication failed, resulting in delayed situational awareness. In almost all cases, the national support was behind the leadership. Only in Ukraine was support for leadership divided within the nation.

Interestingly, the military instrument and its effectiveness had only a supporting effect in overcoming surprise. In almost all cases, except in Crimea in 2014, the military resisted. Nevertheless, in the case of Yom Kippur in 1973, this resistance had the effect of turning the stalemate into a tactical and operational victory. Even then, that victory was likely due to foreign material assistance provided by the United States. Examining the case studies, it seems the most important military element was the troops' will to fight. If that was broken (or absent, as in Crimea), the enemy's objectives were reached swiftly. If there was resistance for a few days before the retreat order, as in South Ossetia and in the Six Days War, the enemy encountered difficulty reaching its objectives. Furthermore, if the military continued to resist even when losing considerable numbers of

personnel and equipment, as with all cases of success, the enemy faced difficulties meeting its planned timelines or objectives.

From the viewpoint of how to overcome surprise, the analysis indicated that only the economic instrument seemed to be irrelevant. This is probably due to the swiftness with which the effects of surprise are achieved or not achieved, before economic leverage is effective.

### Implications for Estonia

Estonia can definitely learn some lessons from the analysis presented in this thesis. Although no possible scenario is completely similar to the conflicts observed, some noteworthy thoughts can be drawn. First, Estonia enjoys membership in NATO, probably the most important and historically successful military alliance in the modern world. The alliance has provided deterrence unprecedented in Estonia's history. Still, the determined enemy (as highlighted in the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service report) could plot surprise actions and act advantageously if an opportunity presented itself.<sup>464</sup> In this hypothetical scenario, the following actions should be taken immediately:

1. Apply for foreign assistance (D): Use all available diplomatic means to apply for foreign assistance from cease-fire to direct military intervention within existing treaty organizations.

2. Communicate (I): External communications should include diplomatic means, memberships in various organizations, and the foreign media. Internally, clearly

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<sup>464</sup> Mikk Marran, *International Security and Estonia 2020*, 5th ed. (Tallinn, Estonia: Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, 2020), 1-3.

communicate without enemy interference so citizens are aware and the state can harness the power of united and resisting citizens.

3. Resist (M): All military actions make it harder for the enemy to achieve its objectives. Therefore, however desperate and difficult the situation is, the military should continue to fight.

4. Act decisively (L): The state leadership cannot wait if there is an attack. Key political and military officials should exercise decisive leadership and use all available instruments in their decision-making.

What would serve the interests of Estonia to mitigate the threat of a surprise attack? First, from the perspective of diplomacy, a major power (such as the United States) would need to be interested in either maintaining the status quo in the region or in intervening through direct military involvement or assistance. The latter should happen with extreme haste. Basically, it would mean that the global powers should recognize that their interests are aligned with the defense of Estonia. This was applicable in the cases of Korea, Egypt, and Israel, where the interest of the United States was aligned to maintain the status quo.

Second, the military must be ready. In the case studies examined in this thesis, the military instrument was initially defeated in most instances. However, the importance of resisting to delay or disrupt the enemy's surprise plans cannot be under-emphasized. All case studies revealed that militarily well-trained troops who did not lose their morale became significant obstacles to the attacker in achieving its objectives. In the cases of Yom Kippur, Suez, Korea, and in the Six Days War, the ground-force resistance, even if it was local and operating within collapsed military leadership conditions, significantly

hindered the attackers' plans and won time for the diplomacy instrument to have an effect. Furthermore, all observed cases revealed gaps in military planning and a lack of understanding that the enemy could mount a surprise attack. Therefore, effective military defense plans must include several contingency plans for surprises that take multiple forms.

What could play against Estonia when countering a surprise attack? As the case study from Crimea indicated, the cracks in society exploited by the enemy during prolonged escalation are especially dangerous, particularly when those possible developments are accompanied by low military readiness and the failure of decisive leadership. Yet, herein lies another area of danger. Key political and military leaders must delicately balance international diplomatic and public support with their own actions. The cases of South-Ossetia in 2008 and Egypt in 1967 present a dangerous example of state leaders gambling on self-established escalation while their opponents were quick to exploit this flaw. Consequently, the militarily tempting idea of gaining the initiative could actually be in dark contrast to political needs. The beginning of the Yom Kippur War is a prime example of that type of disconnect between militarily wishful thinking and political requirements.

Another interesting observation from the case studies relates to operational reach. It seems that in most of the cases, except Korea, the side that was surprised encountered difficulties with identifying the exact limit and objective of the attack. This ambiguity created additional stress for the leadership. In cases of failure, such as in Georgia and Ukraine, that added additional ambiguity to the situation and helped further paralyze the

leadership. Perhaps, in the case of surprise, it is worth counting the numbers to determine what the enemy actually could achieve with its forces massed together.

### Future Research Ideas

Future research could look deeper into the fields of leadership, diplomacy, and military action against surprise. First, the leadership actions as the primary factor in countering surprise could be researched through the prism of when and why leaders tend to make bad decisions and whether there exists a way to mitigate that threat. Another angle for a leadership study could be the dynamics between political and military leadership. On multiple occasions, the case studies revealed a disconnect between military plans and political requirements. From the perspective of diplomacy, further studies could seek to identify reasons and ways to guarantee direct support from a major power to a smaller state in a time of surprise attack. Finally, further research could be done to observe the military instrument in more detail regarding how to build more solid measures for countering a surprise attack. Several academic works highlight opportunities for post-surprise measures that could be applied to mitigate the effects.<sup>465</sup> Future research could observe those measures in light of the specific Estonian situation.

### Summary

Chapter 5 concluded the research thesis and answered the primary research question: “What are the key factors that help a nation overcome the effects of a surprise attack initiated suddenly by another nation or force?” To achieve this objective, the study

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<sup>465</sup> The author refers to James J. Wirtz’s and Michal I. Handel’s works regarding post-surprise measures.

utilized a case study methodology and examined six case studies of conflicts that occurred after 1945. Three failures and three successes were analyzed and compared to establish what DIME-L factors were most important to overcome the effects of a surprise attack. Through this analysis and comparison, the author determined that leadership actions are most critical to successfully overcome the effects of a surprise attack. In addition, the diplomacy element, especially the provision of foreign assistance, was deemed to be necessary to succeed during the time of the surprise. The analysis of the military instrument showed that the military instrument played a role in disrupting the enemy's plans. However, this analysis also indicated that as a single instrument, the employment of the military had in most cases only supporting role in overcoming the surprise. The informational instrument was found to have both an enabling and a supporting role for other instruments of power when countering surprise. Lastly, the research determined that the instrument of the economy did not have an important role in overcoming the effects of surprise.

The last part of the chapter analyzed the lessons that Estonia should learn when planning and preparing for a possible surprise scenario. Finally, the chapter provided some guidelines to follow to overcome the effects of a surprise attack, as well as ideas for possible future research.

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