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SADAT
AND
THE ART OF STATECRAFT
"GREAT MEN DEDICATED TO PEACE AND PROGRESS"

CORE COURSE 5601 ESSAY

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INTRODUCTION

This essay examines the 1972-1974 period of Anwar Sadat's foreign policy leadership as President of Egypt, focusing on his abilities as a statesman and his skill as a practitioner of the art of statecraft. It shows Sadat was an adept statesman, particularly during the key major policy event of this period of his Presidency -- the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War. He successfully created and harnessed this event, using all the means of statecraft, to secure the national interests and objectives he perceived for his country. While the Arab-Israeli war is a dramatic event to highlight Sadat's skill as a statesman, this event covers more than just the war. Perhaps better stated, it was the 1973 Arab-Israeli peace that shows the true expertise of Sadat's statecraft, because war was only one tool used by Sadat to reach his overall objective of a better peace.¹ In this case the art of war worked closely with the art of diplomacy to fashion a synergistic Egyptian foreign policy to attain a better state of peace. Examining the construct and success of Sadat's grand strategy begins by looking at Egypt's national interests, and threats to those interests. Following this is an assessment of Sadat's perception of Egyptian power. Third, is a look at opportunities available to Sadat in the context of the environment he faced. Leading fourth, to the objectives, priorities, and end state he desired. This essay then looks at his "grand strategy," a plan orchestrating the tools of statecraft to achieve a desired end state. Finally, this leads to an assessment of Sadat's effectiveness in adapting to the unexpected and marshaling the tools of statecraft to secure a better peace. Lastly, this essay concludes with a look at lessons for the American statesman.

NATIONAL INTERESTS, THREATS, OPPORTUNITIES, RISKS, & POWER ASSESSMENT

As the leading Egyptian statesman in 1972, President Sadat's fundamental national security concern was finding a stable peace with Israel. However, peace was only one of Sadat's national security concerns on the eve of the 1973 October war. These national security concerns came

from his assessment of Egypt's national interests. Egypt's national interests from 1972-1974 broke out into political, economic, and military components. Politically, Egypt sought defense of its homeland. Economically, Egypt sought the well-being of its people. Militarily, Egypt sought to be a strong, stable, and respected regional power. Also, using the argument that leaders view national interests through the lenses of political and economic aspirations in world politics.² Sadat's evaluation of national interests included a strong element of nationalism. This manifested itself in Sadat's belief that it was the destiny of his Egypt to be the regional leader of the Arab countries, and a bridge to the Western world.³ President Carter described Sadat as "strong and bold, very much aware of world public opinion and his role as the most important leader among the Arabs. He looked on himself as inheriting the mantle of authority from the great pharaohs and was convinced that he was a man of destiny."⁴ These national interests in their political, economic, and military components, rooted in Egypt's historic heritage, formed the basis of Sadat's foreign policy. In 1972 these national interests were threatened on several fronts.

Two threats to Egypt's national interests stand out. First, is Sadat's primary concern with the threat posed to Egypt's prime "survival" interest -- defense of the homeland by Israel.⁵ Egypt had lost much blood, treasure, and land, in 25 years of war with Israel. These wars, like the 1967 war, threatened to strike without warning and with devastating impact. Also, Egypt kept a watchful eye on the often hostile Libya. Second, was the threat to Egypt's "vital" interest of economic well-being, a situation that was quickly degrading into a survival interest due to 25 years of warfare.⁶ Particularly harmful were revenues lost by the closing of the Suez canal, central to the Egyptian economy. In the face of these threats, Sadat recognized the opportunity to protect his homeland by establishing a new Egyptian-Israeli balance of power.⁷ This new balance of power could neutralize the regional threat from Israel, facilitate the rebuilding of Egypt's economy, add credibility to Egypt's military institutions, and finally secure Egypt's place in world leadership (by balancing USSR-U.S. power in the Mideast). These opportunities were not without great potential costs.

Egypt risked expending a great deal of blood and treasure in a war with Israel, only to lose at great cost. Further, Egypt could lose Arab politico-economic-military support if it broke tradition and made peace with Israel. Also, any shift from East to West risked losing the support of the USSR without gaining the support of the United States. In sum, if Sadat miscalculated his grand strategy, he risked the very destruction of Egypt. These threats, opportunities, costs, and risks appeared at a time in 1972 when Egypt's political, economic, and military institutions were relatively weak. Egypt's weak power position, relative to strong threats from neighbors, directly impacted Sadat's strategic objectives and their priorities.

ANWAR SADAT'S OBJECTIVES, PRIORITIES, & MEANS

Sadat's objectives and their relative priority came from the collision of Egypt's national interests with the environment described above, and constraints on his actions. Constraints came from the international community and the Cold War,⁸ limits on Egypt's resources, and the urgency to act or risk national instability.⁹ Out of this caldron, Sadat's general national interests became specific and prioritized, political, economic and military objectives forming his desired end state. Further, Sadat's assessment also included the political, economic, and military components of the means to reach this end state.

Sadat actively assessed Egypt's national interests during his 18 years of tutelage under Nasser, building a set of national objectives.¹⁰ By 1972, Sadat specifically linked his objectives and desired end state to his perception of national interests. Overall, he sought an end state of peace and prosperity, based on a balance of power. His first end state objective was political peace, specifically peace with Israel. Second, he sought return of the occupied land -- specifically the Sinai.¹¹ Third, he desired economic prosperity. More specifically he had two objectives supporting prosperity, first, reopening the Suez Canal to Egyptian profit, and second, opening trade with the West.¹² Fourth, he sought a strong, stable, and respected military, both internal and

external to Egypt. With these four objectives prioritized he set about assessing the available means to reach his end state.

The means available to Sadat in 1970 were in poor shape. Politically, he was weak. Externally, the Arab countries often squabbled. Internally, many Egyptians saw Sadat as weak and did not expect him to last in power in the turmoil following Nasser's death.¹³ Economically, he was also weak. Nasser's actions to cut off trade with the West and the closing the Suez canal as a prime source of capital after the 1967 Israeli war left Egypt in poor economic condition.¹⁴ Militarily, Sadat was also weak. His military machine had been repeatedly beaten in battle. Nonetheless, latent potential power did exist in all these areas. Potential political power centered on a united Egypt-Arab front, economic power existed in the form of the oil weapon,¹⁵ and military power could be rebuilt with Soviet help. All these could help reach the end objectives if Sadat could improve his relative power and harness this power in a "grand strategy."

GRAND STRATEGY - THE WAY AHEAD

Facing a strong external politico-military threat and internal politico-economic threat, armed with weak political, economic, and military power, is the dilemma Sadat faces by 1972. Sadat considered the diplomatic and military options available in the context of the Cold War and regional threats.¹⁶ Against this he balanced his perception of Egypt's power, opportunities, costs, and risks to reach objectives sustaining Egypt's national interests. He preferred finding a purely diplomatic solution, but by 1972 it was clear to him that this would not attain his objectives. Thus, Sadat made the decision to reach his objectives with war as the centerpiece of his grand strategy, but war was only part of his well thought out strategy. In testimony to Sadat and his grand strategy during this period, Dr. Kissinger said: "Rare is the statesman who at the beginning of a war has so clear a perception of its political objective, rarer still is a war fought to lay the basis for moderation in its aftermath."¹⁷

Sadat's grand strategy consisted of five steps to create a balance of power with Israel. They created the opportunity to bring asymmetrical political power, in the form of the United States, against Israel, leveraging the fulfillment of his objectives. Specifically, his plan is first to build up his defenses, blocking Israeli politico-military power; second, to prepare for war; third, to conduct it; fourth, to consolidate his gains in war termination; and finally, use diplomacy to create a better peace. This better peace leads to a secure homeland able to pursue economic well-being of his people. These five steps use war to rebuild the psychological perception of Egypt in the eyes of his people, Israel, and the United States, and diplomacy to gain U.S. support for Egyptian peace and economic progress.¹⁸ He saw integrated use of diplomacy and war as the "way" to his end state of a better peace. Throughout these five steps he focuses the instruments of statecraft to shift the psychological balance between Egypt and Israel, to exploit this shift diplomatically, leading to a peace built on Egyptian-Israeli balance of power. In executing his grand strategy he used a combination of the tools of statecraft to include public diplomacy, negotiations, international organizations, trade policies, sanctions, deception and surprise, military coercion, and warfare. He used these tools before, during, and after the October 1973 war.

Sadat began implementing his military plans using diplomacy in early 1972 by traveling to Moscow seeking war materials and support for shifting the Mideast balance of power in favor of Egypt. In the face of détente these negotiations did not succeed. The USSR's history of keeping commitments was dismal,¹⁹ growing tired of this Sadat expelled all 15,000 Soviet advisors from Egypt.²⁰ While this was a snap decision, it served his strategy well. This decision became an integral part of his plan to build-up the nationalist psychology of the Egyptian people. Further, using public diplomacy, this move simultaneously projected the false message that Egypt had abandoned any intent of war with Israel. Meanwhile, Sadat was laying the ground for post-war Egyptian-U.S. relations by having his national security advisor, Hafiz Ismail, meet in secret negotiations with Henry Kissinger.²¹ Sadat used these meetings to plant the seed of Egypt's desire for peace and economic progress. Meanwhile, Sadat was working hard to strengthen his multilateral and bilateral position with the other Arab states. Multilaterally he negotiated with

other countries to build a public diplomacy position against Israel. These efforts bore fruit at the 4th conference of non-aligned countries with a public call for retaking the occupied territories. Bilaterally, in support of his war plans, Sadat secretly negotiated with Syrian President Assad for combined military operations against Israel in 1973. Before the war there was no need to change Egyptian-Arab trade policies with Israel because complete sanctions were already in place. To block the Israeli politico-military threat and build the psychological confidence of his nation, Sadat also began to build-up Egyptian defenses. In 1972 he also directed his staff to prepare for offensive military actions against Israel. By late 1972, when Sadat was ready to shift from defensive preparation to offensive action, he was stunned to learn his staff had taken little action defensively or offensively. Unsatisfied, Sadat changed military leadership, delaying his offensive plans until 1973. By mid 1973 Sadat was back to his military leadership asking if they were ready for war. With the support of his politico-military leadership, Sadat built an Egyptian consensus for a limited war with Israel. With Syria agreeing to also conduct war on Israel's northern border Sadat was ready to act. Egypt, having successfully orchestrated the diplomatic and military tools of statecraft, was ready to initiate a war to occupy and hold a portion of the Sinai, and sue for peace. The details of this last portion of his plan he failed to fully share with Syria.

Sadat initiated his war plans in a directive articulating his objectives to the military leadership, a first for Egypt. This shows he carefully considered the use of this instrument of statecraft. It was Sadat's intent to win a quick ground war, regaining land and dispelling the myth of Israeli military superiority. Specifically, he believed his success or failure would be determined in the first 24 hours of the conflict.²² Believing "warfare is the way of deception" his success keyed on the element of surprise.²³ He built deception and surprise into his plan in three ways during the prewar period. First, using public diplomacy and the military tool of statecraft he conducted two extensive exercises to lull the Israelis into inaction when war did come.²⁴ Second, he built a war plan without the use of a strong air force, judging rightly that no one expected him to fight a modern war without air power.²⁵ Third, he reinforced his deception and surprise using diplomacy. One example of this is Sadat's private meeting with an unspecified west European

foreign minister in October 1973. At this meeting he passes a message of his travel plans to the United Nations (UN), knowing this will reach Israeli ears and disarm them.²⁶ Thus, in these ways he orchestrated the diplomatic and military tools he needed to secure surprise on the battlefield. Having surprise in hand, he initiated the war on 6 October 1973. Throughout the war he kept diplomatic channels open. Ambassador Kosygin approached Sadat on three separate occasions during the war to negotiate a cease fire and Sadat refused.²⁷ The reason for his refusal was simply the success of his troops in the Sinai. However, on the fourth meeting Sadat took advantage of the Soviet cease fire initiatives because by this time, with U.S. help, the Israelis had turned the tide of battle against Egypt.²⁸ Since Egypt was now losing ground in the Sinai, it was time for Sadat to consolidate his winnings and implement his war termination plan.²⁹ Sadat could afford to terminate the war for three reasons. First, he succeeded in breaking the myth of Israeli invincibility by winning the early portion of the war and regaining land. This in-turn showing the superpowers that he has evolved into a strong military force. Third, he did this while convincing his people they had won a great military victory. In short, the war shifted the politico-military psychological perception of Egypt for all three groups, in favor of Egypt. This new psychological balance allowed Sadat the leverage to implement the post war diplomatic portion of his grand strategy from a position of strength.

With the shooting war over, Sadat continued to use the tools of statecraft to reach his desired end state. After agreeing to a cease fire, he used public diplomacy to call for a combined U.S.-USSR peacekeeping force in the Sinai to help protect his consolidated gains. On 22 October 1973, President Nixon rejected Sadat's call for a combined U.S.-USSR peacekeeping force on the grounds it could cause a superpower confrontation.³⁰ Sadat accepted Nixon's rationale and contacted the UN for assistance. Nixon's position caught Sadat off-guard, however, it solidified Sadat's trust in his decision to shift to the United States. Sadat perceived Nixon's move as showing his interest in peace without impinging on Egyptian sovereignty.³¹ Sadat now met with Kissinger to negotiate a six-point program leading to peace and economic progress for Egypt.³² Eight months after these negotiations, President Nixon's paid a state visit to Egypt. At the end of

the visit the two national leaders announced the opening of diplomatic relations between their countries³³ Sadat left the USSR sphere of influence for peace with Israel, and the promise of immediate U S economic aid (military aid followed in 1977)³⁴ In this bold diplomatic move -- switching his alliance to the United States -- he attained his end state of a balance of power, peace with Israel, return of occupied land, putting Egypt on the road to economic progress, and establishing a strong regional military This end state directly linked to his perception of national interests defense of the homeland, economic well-being, and a respected regional military.

ASSESSMENT OF SADAT'S GRAND STRATEGY -- EFFECTIVENESS & EFFICIENCY

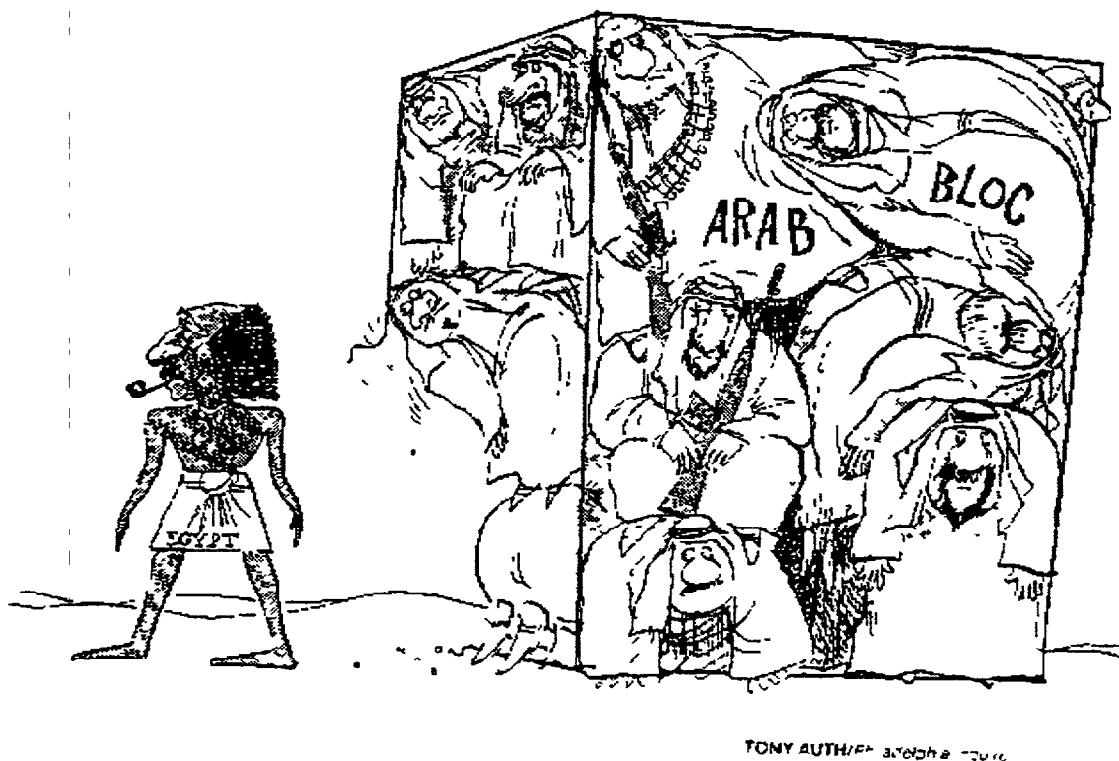
Sadat's full use of diplomacy and war in an integrated grand strategy to secure the national security and economic well-being, shows him to be a bold and realistic statesman, skilled in the art of statecraft The overall result of his foreign policy was to achieve the end state he desired Politically, in its broadest sense, he achieves a balance of power between Egypt and Israel. For Egypt, this balance of power secures peace, return of occupied land, and stability Economically, Sadat's strategy put Egypt on the road to progress The peace opened the Suez Canal, brought economic and military aid from the U S , and opened trade with the West Militarily, Sadat's strategy left the country with a respected military Sadat had used the military tool of statecraft, turning his tactical military defeat into strategic diplomatic victory While Sadat's grand strategy was focused, it was flexible He reacted well to the unexpected from 1972-1974, capitalizing on the situation when he could Two examples show his flexibility First, he had originally planned to implement the war portion of his grand strategy in late 1972 but was foiled by the unpreparedness of his military³⁵ While Sadat disliked delaying the war by a year, it gave him time to improve his chances of achieving his objectives in 1973 ' Second, was his response to President Nixon's refusal to send a combined U S -USSR peacekeeping team into the Sinai at the end of the war Sadat capitalized this unexpected move by cementing relations with the United States and changed his public diplomacy to a UN call for peacekeepers He knew from this point

forward he could trust the United States to honor Egyptian sovereignty. However, Sadat also had his share of failures. Of particular note, was his unilateral ending of the war with Syria still engaged on the battlefield. This left Syria with ill will toward Egypt, and distrust of Egypt by other Arab countries. As important as this failure was, it is eclipsed by the failure of Egypt to sway the minds of the Arab countries to accept the state of Israel, and establish peace with it. These failures opened the door to more radical elements of the Arab world, leading finally to Sadat's assassination in 1981.³⁷ Nonetheless, one must conclude that overall Sadat was successful in securing Egypt's national interests through the skilled use of the tools of statecraft. He did this with a well conceived and implemented foreign policy. Finally, this brings us to look at what lessons, if any, Sadat's example, as a practitioner of the art of statecraft, has for U.S. foreign policy decision makers.

LESSONS FOR U.S. FOREIGN POLICY DECISION MAKERS

Lessons for the U.S. statesman are found in Sadat's success and failures. Sadat found success in the synergistic orchestration of the instruments of statecraft, implemented through a well conceived grand strategy. To build this grand strategy he successfully identified his national interests and translated these into a desired end state with specific objectives. He then completed the process by bringing together ways and means, through the integrated use of diplomacy and war, to reach his desired ends. He successfully did this in the context of the international, regional, and national environment. Sadat was "one who knows the enemy and knows himself," and using this power, strategically beat his opponent.³⁸ It is the conceptualization and use of this process in the foreign policy arena that is the first lesson U.S. statesman should take away from Sadat's example. Correctly thinking through foreign policy issues helps avoid the danger of confusing knowing with understanding.³⁹ A process described in more modern terms by Dr. Deibel's foreign policy analysis model helps avoid such dangers.⁴⁰ Ambassador Gallucci has a more prescriptive model. He describes a foreign policy process of conceptualizing U.S. interests,

objectives, opportunities, and risks, building a consensus strategy, executing strategy with available resources, and finally, selling this policy and incorporating feedback.⁴¹ Sadat's failures are also instructive for the foreign policy decision maker. Sadat failed to conceptualize the Arab world accepting his peace with Israel. He failed to build a flexible Arab consensus moving from the 1973 war to peaceful balance of power, and he was unable to sell this shift in thinking on Israel to the Arab countries. Thus, in addition to conceptualizing, foreign policy makers must be skilled in implementing policy. This is the second lesson for U.S. statesman -- learning to implement policy through the integrated use of the instruments of statecraft focused at the desired end state. In summary, U.S. statesman would be wise to consider Sadat's successes and failures in light of these lessons. If U.S. statesmen can master the art of statecraft using the lessons above, they will maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of U.S. foreign policy. In Sadat's case, despite his failures he was successful in securing his country's national interests. Sadat's success as a practitioner of the art of statecraft was captured in a banner strung across a Cairo street during President Nixon's 1974 state visit. It read, "Great Men Dedicated To Peace And Progress"⁴²



ENDNOTES

- ¹ Richard M. Nixon, *Leaders* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1982) p. 295 "For Sadat the strong Arab showing in the Yom Kippur War was actually a step toward peace."
- ² Donald E. Nuechterlein, *America Overcommitted: United States National Interests in the 1980s* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1985).
- ³ Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978) p. 1012.
- ⁴ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982) p. 328.
- ⁵ Donald E. Nuechterlein, *America Overcommitted: United States National Interests in the 1980s* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1985) pp. 6-14. Dr. Nuechterlein defines "survival" and "vital" national interests. He and describes "defense of the homeland," as a "survival" national interest for the U.S. In this essay I describe Egyptian "defense of the homeland" as internal and external (within the region of the Mideast), peace and stability.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Terry L. Deibel, "Strategies Before Containment: Patterns for the Future," *International Security*, Vol. 16 (Spring 1992): p. 83. Here the author states, "balance of power policies have been honored in practice when the nation has felt weak or vulnerable." I argue that Sadat perceived Egypt in these terms.
- ⁸ Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978) p. 885.
- ⁹ Donald E. Nuechterlein, *America Overcommitted: United States National Interests in the 1980s* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1985) p. 10. "Another way to measure the intensity of an interest is to use the time dimension: survival interests require the immediate attention of the President."
- ¹⁰ Richard M. Nixon, *Leaders* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1982): pp. 294-296.
- ¹¹ Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978) p. 1011. Sadat sought return of the occupied territories and resolution of the Palestinian question on the West Bank. However, these interests were subordinate to Egyptian survival and major interests.
- ¹² Richard M. Nixon, *Leaders* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1982) p. 295. "Sadat wanted to end Egypt's economic isolation. Peace with Israel meant new trade, uninterrupted income from shipping through the Suez Canal."
- ¹³ Ibid. p. 294.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 290-296.
- ¹⁵ Bard E. O'Neill, "The October War: A Political-Military Assessment," *Air University Review* (July-August 1974) p. 31.
- ¹⁶ Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978) p. 924. I believe Sadat realized that the U.S. would never abandon Israel and had thus eliminated the option of destroying Israel. It was in this fundamental decision that he determined that he needed to find a way to make peace with Israel to further the national interests of Egypt.
- ¹⁷ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1982) p. 460.

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- ¹⁸ Ibid
- ¹⁹ Richard M. Nixon, *Leaders* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1982) p 295. This decision was a reaction by Sadat to what he perceived as a Soviet attempt to subjugate Egypt
- ²⁰ Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) p 230
- ²¹ Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978) p 922 Secret meetings were originally planned for fall of 1972, but schedule delays pushed this meetings until February 1973
- ²² Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) p 244
- ²³ Ralph D. Sawyer, *Sun Tzu, Art of War* (Oxford: Westview Press Inc., 1994) p 168
- ²⁴ Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) p 241
- ²⁵ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1982) p 460
- ²⁶ Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) p. 244
- ²⁷ Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) pp 252-260
- ²⁸ Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978) p. 930
- ²⁹ Ibid, p 941 "Once they realized that military victory was now beyond their reach for at least the next several years, the Egyptian and Syrian leaders were ready to try the path of negotiation."
- ³⁰ Ibid, pp 937-940
- ³¹ Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) p 231 This was radically different from the USSR desire to put its forces back into Egypt, an occupation Sadat viewed as no different than the British through WW II.
- ³² Ibid, pp 291-292
- ³³ Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978). pp 1011-1012
- ³⁴ Anne O. Krueger, *Economic Policies at Cross-Purposes: The United States and Developing Countries* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1993) pp 44-46
- ³⁵ This was a disappointment to him since he had hoped to conduct war with Israel immediately after the U.S. presidential elections if U.S. public diplomacy did not indicate the opportunity that the U.S. would diplomatically force the Israelis to meet Sadat's desired end state
- ³⁶ Another example was his flexible reaction to the Soviet private negotiations to remove all of their citizens prior to the October war. His agreement to allow the Soviets to land aircraft and remove its citizens threatened to reveal his war plans. Landing the aircraft at military installations lessened the chance of signaling the coming war and retained Soviet military aid support limited as it was through the war
- ³⁷ Richard M. Nixon, *Leaders* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1982) p 298
- ³⁸ Ralph D. Sawyer, *Sun Tzu Art of War* (Oxford: Westview Press Inc., 1994) p 179
- ³⁹ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1982) p 467 "We knew every thing but understood too little "

⁴⁰ Terry L. Deibel, "A Design for Grand Strategy," Lecture Outline. 1995

⁴¹ Robert Gallucci. Convocation, The National War College, Class of 1997, August 1996

⁴² Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978): 1011

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