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Sadat & The Yom Kippur War: Luck or Brilliance?

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Sadat & The Yom Kippur War: Luck or Brilliance?

In the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Anwar Sadat masterfully employed a national security and national military strategy to achieve his immediate goal of breaking the political stalemate and increasing Egypt's leverage at the bargaining table. On the whole, he carefully matched ends and means and employed the tools of statecraft in a synergistic manner. By limiting his military objective and using strategic deception, Sadat overcame Egypt's vulnerabilities and Israel's strengths. However, he incorrectly assessed the interests and capabilities of Syria and the United States (US) and failed to follow through on the opportunity presented by superpower conflict. These omissions increased the risk of Sadat's strategy and prolonged the achievement of his ultimate goal—regaining the territory lost in the 1967 War. Examining the international and domestic environment, means and ends, and the plans developed from both a national security and national military strategy standpoint will illuminate the conclusions drawn above.

National Security Strategy

International and Domestic Context. Sadat accurately recognized most of the actor interests, threats, and opportunities present in the environment. Israel was the dominating threat; it occupied the lands Egypt wanted returned. Nevertheless, Sadat sensed a fissure to exploit. Israel needed to balance its physical security with the demographic concern posed by the large Arab population that came with the territories it gained in 1967. This dilemma caused considerable controversy inside Israel and allowed room for negotiation.¹ Unfortunately, while Israel was willing to return some land, it wanted to keep key points along the Jordan River,

¹ Bard E. O-Neil, "The October War: A Political-Military Assessment," Air University Review 25 (July-August 1974): 27.

Sharem Al-Sheikh, Golan, Gaza, and East Jerusalem—a position inconsistent with Egypt’s demand to return all occupied areas.² The stalemate resulting from these conflicting positions, combined with Israel’s perceived military invincibility, led Sadat to try to burst this invincibility, and resolve the issue on terms favorable to the Arabs.

Sadat also recognized another threat—his reliance on Soviet arms. Sadat was a nationalist and wanted to deal with the USSR on his own terms.³ Yet he realized that they were the only arms suppliers he could turn to and he vigorously pursued Soviet support.⁴

While these threats were serious, Sadat realized he also had opportunities. Historically, Arabs bickered with one another.⁵ Rather than view this as a problem, Sadat saw the present circumstances as an opportunity to unite the Arab community. Israel’s predilection not to believe in Arab unity would further work in Sadat’s favor.⁶ Arab unity would, in turn, help Sadat use oil as further leverage on the US. Besides Arab support, Sadat saw the possibility of obtaining political backing from non-aligned and African countries. Most important, Sadat understood the dynamic of the superpower relationship. Détente was the current watchword, yet the US and USSR maintained a vigorous rivalry. Sadat would make this work to his advantage.

² Ibid., 30.

³ The Insight Team of the London Sunday Times, “Sadat Decides on War,” The Yom Kippur War (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1974): 49.

⁴ Ibid., 51.

⁵ O-Neil, 31.

⁶ Hassan El Badri, Taha El Magdoub and Mohammed Dia El Din Zohdy, “Decision and Concept,” The Ramadan War 1973 (Dunn Loring, VA: T.N. Dupy Associates, Inc, 1978): 22.

In addition to international context, Sadat had to deal with domestic pressures. The 1967 war left Egypt humiliated.⁷ The psychological impact on the Egyptian people was heavy due to the importance of honor and dignity in the Arab culture.⁸ Sadat understood this issue and had promised since 1971 to confront the Israelis militarily. Failure to follow through on this promise led to increasing pressure from domestic hawks to fight.⁹ The state of Egypt's economy added another trouble; it could not continue to sustain the military burden.¹⁰ The combined effect of these pressures meant that Sadat's regime would not likely last the year (1973) if he did not make some substantial progress.¹¹ Therefore, Sadat had motivation to take decisive action.

Despite an excellent grasp of interests, threats, and opportunities, Sadat made two major mistakes. First, he assumed that Syria's main interest was the return of Golan. While regaining Golan was undoubtedly in Syria's interest, Assad's immediate concern was maintaining his regime. Assad's grip on power was not firm. He assumed power in a 1970 coup, one of 13 Syrian coups in the previous 21 years.¹² Also, Assad was an Alawite, a minority sect looked upon as 'non-Moslem' from the majority Sunni population.¹³ To gain credibility, Assad espoused pan-Arabism and anti-Zionism, but his main purpose was maintaining power. Sadat's misinterpretation of Syrian interests caused problems later as he matched means to ends.

⁷ O-Neil, 28.

⁸ Ibid., 32.

⁹ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰ The Insight Team, 58.

¹¹ Ibid., 58.

¹² Daniel Pipes, "Syria's Imperial Dream: Foreign Adventures Shore up Assad's Dream," *The New Republic* V194 (June 9, 1986): 13.

¹³ Ibid., 13.

Another error was the failure to foresee the extent to which the US would aid Israel. The US wanted a stable Middle East (ME) to ensure the flow of oil, and a strong Israeli state was critical to the region's balance of power. US could not allow a threat to Israel's existence.

Means and Ends. Based on his assessment of the domestic and international context, Sadat had a clear concept of Egypt's national interests, the risks faced, and the means available to him. With the exception of Syria's capabilities, he carefully matched means and ends and formed an excellent basis for his subsequent strategy.

Sadat's view of national interests contained three important facets. First was territorial integrity. Having Egyptian land under Israeli control was not tenable. Second, Egypt had to regain the national prestige lost during the 1967 defeat. Third, Egypt needed to show that Israel was not omnipotent. Long term success in the Arab world required some balance of power. The dictation of peace terms by Israel would erode Egypt's importance in the region.

The brilliance of Sadat was realizing that his limited means would prevent the attainment of his national interests in one smashing blow. In terms of absolute power, Egypt could not compete with Israel from an economic or military standpoint. However, Sadat might gain limited objectives (towards his ultimate interests) by leveraging his relative power over Israel. Specifically, using diplomacy and the economic tool of an oil embargo could shape the political environment in Sadat's favor. Moreover, he knew the limitation of such diplomacy—Israel would not roll over and hand Sadat victory. Therefore, Sadat needed limited military action to tip the scales in Egypt's favor.

In matching means to ends, Sadat also considered the costs and risks involved. He knew the high risk involved with a military operation. The fractious nature of Arab politics also presented problems. Inability to obtain Soviet arms introduced another complication.

Rather than accept these risks, Sadat decided to lower them through several approaches. He capitalized on his relationships with Arab leaders to overcome discord. To offset lack of arms, Sadat kept his military aims limited. Egypt was prepared to fight with the weapons in place.¹⁴ Mostly, Sadat paid for reducing risk with time. It took over two years for Sadat to fully implement his plan in October 1973. Much of this time was spent on building support through diplomacy and preparing the armed forces. Yet using time had limits because its opportunity cost—the appearance of doing nothing—meant Sadat might not be around to fulfill his vision. When the time bank account went dry, he had to act decisively. In the end, Sadat greatly lowered his overall risk, though the risk associated with force remained relatively high.

The need to decrease risk and deal with limited means forced Sadat to limit his immediate political objective. Regaining all lost territories continued to serve as his ultimate aim. However, the genius of Sadat was realizing that he would have to get there through negotiations. The problem was Israel held all the power, especially in the eyes of the superpowers, and this led to a negotiating stalemate. Therefore, Sadat's main aim was "changing the existing political and military balance in the Middle East by undermining the basic concepts of the Israeli national security doctrine."¹⁵ Essentially, Sadat wanted to break the stalemate and gain leverage at the bargaining table. Conquering Israel militarily was not the objective. Sadat wanted to change the attitudes of the parties involved (Israel, US, USSR) and dispel the idea that Israel was invincible.¹⁶ Achieving this objective would enable Egypt to gain its ultimate goal. Another immediate political objective was re-establishing the pride of the Egyptian people and Arabs in

¹⁴ Anwar Sadat, In Search of Identity (New York: Harper & Row, 1978): 238.

¹⁵ El Badri et al, 17.

¹⁶ Henry Kissinger, "Why We Were Surprised," Years of Upheaval (Boston: Little, Brown, Inc., 1982): 460.

general. Though unstated, this objective was important since it would help Sadat at home and serve as a source of Arab energy in negotiations.

Despite careful analysis, miscalculation of Syria's interests and capabilities caused Sadat to assume he had more military means than actually present. The assumption, made by both Sadat and Assad, that Syria need to regain most of Golan in the upcoming campaign nearly proved fatal. A much more limited military objective for Syria would have met Assad's immediate need to shore up his regime. He then could have relied on negotiations for his remaining aims.

National Security Plan. Sadat masterfully orchestrated instruments of power towards his political objectives, although his estrangement with the Soviets was inconsistent with the overall strategy. He integrated diplomatic, economic, and military tools in a mutually reinforcing manner. All actions were congruent with the objective of breaking the political stalemate.

On the diplomatic front, Sadat pursued a three-pronged approach: the isolation of Israel, playing on fears of superpower confrontation, and extensive bi-lateral arrangements with Syria.

Sadat attempted to make Israel a pariah in the international community in many ways. First, he united the Arab world, by appealing to the ties that bound Arabs together, saying, "We should be committed to one thing only—our Arab character pure and simple."¹⁷ Sadat also capitalized on his personal relationships with Arab leaders to garner Arab support. Second, Sadat made use of alliances and International Organizations. During the Organization for African Unity (OAU) conference in May 1973, Sadat pushed through a resolution condemning Israel.¹⁸ Within the United Nations, Sadat raised the issue of the assassination of three Palestinians by Israeli soldiers. The Security Council passed a resolution in Egypt's favor

¹⁷ Sadat, 239.

¹⁸ Ibid., 239.

condemning this action. Finally, Sadat gave a speech at the September 1973 Non-Aligned Summit Conference citing the need to fight Israel, which drew the support of most of the nations attending the conference. As a result of this diplomacy over 100 nations supported Egypt's cause by October 1973. In addition, 80% of all African countries severed relations with Israel.¹⁹

Why isolate Israel? To begin with, Sadat wanted to legitimize his military action. Broad international support would lend moral support to his side and set the stage for other actions like an oil embargo. Squeezing Israel would also improve Egypt's negotiating leverage. Isolating Israel formed the basis for employment of the other instruments.

Sadat also sought negotiating leverage by playing off the superpower relationship. The ME was a Cold War battleground, extremely important due to its oil production. Though the superpowers were competitive, neither wanted a big confrontation in the area.²⁰ Détente made avoiding a clash more imperative. Sadat used this dynamic to his advantage by trying to get the superpowers, the US in particular, to lean on Israel. He planted the fear of war in the Soviet's mind and made overtures to the US. Since neither the US nor USSR wanted war, Sadat assumed they would make every effort to "break the political stalemate." Essentially, this was a "stop me before I hurt myself—and by extension you" technique.

However, Sadat failed to see his plan, that of leveraging the world's superpowers, through to its logical conclusion. He led the Soviets along, even renewing their maritime facilities agreement to show good faith after some difficult arms discussions.²¹ Yet, Sadat embraced Kissinger's assistance at the end of the war, permanently harming his USSR ties. This decision

¹⁹ Ibid., 240.

²⁰ The Insight Team, 53.

²¹ Sadat, 236.

was not consistent with his idea of playing the superpowers against one another. The US relationship did produce a peace plan, but Sadat might have increased his negotiating leverage over the next three to five years by keeping the US and USSR at odds with each other. Putting all of his eggs in the US basket limited future options.

Another diplomatic effort concerned bi-lateral relations with Syria. In an effort to open up a two front war, Sadat assiduously courted Syria's Hafez al-Assad. Egypt and Syria conducted many meetings with the idea of coordinating their strategies. Eventually, they set up a Supreme Joint Council to coordinate their strategy.²² The aspirations of Sadat and Assad concerning Syria's contributions exceeded capabilities, but at least planning was coordinated.

The economic instrument employed by Sadat complimented his diplomatic efforts. Realizing that the West was heavily dependent on Persian Gulf oil, Sadat used the "oil weapon."²³ Indeed, the use of oil was one outcome of his Arab unity efforts. By the eve of the war, an Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil embargo caused the price of oil to double (it quadrupled by January 1974).²⁴ Their energy resources in danger, Japan and most of Europe consented to the Arab stance.²⁵ Thus, the embargo provided a further catalyst for the US to help negotiate some mutually acceptable deal in the ME. In addition to looking outward, Sadat also understood his internal economic vulnerabilities. To mitigate these

²² Sadat, 241.

²³ O'Neil, 31. Whether the embargo was due to Sadat's direct influence or merely OPEC taking advantage of the situation can be argued. However, the point remains that Sadat new the worth of the oil weapon and actively tired to unite the Arab community to use this weapon.

²⁴ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Oil Embargo" [on-line]; available from <http://search.eb.com/>; internet.

²⁵ O'Neil, 31.

weaknesses, he developed back up uses for factories and power stations.²⁶ Sadat's main shortfall in applying the economic weapon was failing to really lean on Europe. Europe was very dependent on Persian Gulf oil. Sadat could have indirectly pressured the US by initiating an Arab embargo on Europe earlier, then tying release of oil to limitations of arms supplied to Israel. Such an action might have help retard the flow of weapons from the US to Israel.

The most crucial tool employed was military force, and much of the diplomatic and economic work enabled the effective use of force. One of Sadat's most important acts was to limit his military objective; he only wanted a toehold in the Sinai. Achieving some military success against Israel would show the world that Egypt could fight. A credible threat of force combined with other instruments of power would allow Sadat to seize negotiating leverage.

Statecraft Summary Analysis. In sum, Sadat developed a bold, well thought out national strategy. His assessment of the international and domestic context and limited means he possessed caused him to select appropriately limited political objectives. While his means were limited, Sadat did include the most essential diplomatic, economic, and military tools available. Moreover, he integrated these tools in a synergistic matter. He wove these tools together to squeeze Israel into making a deal at the negotiating table. The isolation of Israel set the stage, playing on fears of superpower confrontation and denying oil helped bring increase pressure on Israel, and military action served as the catalyst for breaking the political stalemate.

However, Sadat's strategy was not perfect; it had several defects. The miss-assessment of Syrian interests and capabilities caused both Sadat and Assad to overreach in setting military objectives for Syria. Furthermore, Sadat was surprised by the extent to which the US supplied arms to Israel once the war began. He should not have been surprised and could have used the

²⁶ Sadat, 241.

oil embargo earlier against the Europeans to apply indirect pressure to the US. Finally, Sadat's choice to move completely into the US fold was inconsistent with his previous strategy of playing the superpowers against one another. By working with the US, Sadat did set in motion a peace process. One wonders whether Sadat could have done better by keeping the Soviets in the game. Without the USSR, Sadat limited his options in the long term.

National Military Strategy

Egypt's political objectives of regaining lost territories and restoring national prestige, while simultaneously destroying the myth of an 'invincible Israel' forced military action in October 1973. Clear political objectives (ends), linked to an accurate assessment of military capability (means), led Sadat to develop *limited military objectives* for the war. In developing this military strategy, Sadat did a masterful job of balancing ends/means, and risks/costs while avoiding the 'war of attrition' that proved so disastrous in 1967.²⁷ His strategic concept of a surprise attack enabled him to obtain most of his political aims, but he took unnecessary risks in this regard. By the end of the war Sadat nearly lost the negotiating advantages he gained at the start. An inaccurate assessment of Syrian military capabilities and the adverse effect United States military support to Israel ultimately detracted from the accomplishments he hoped for at the outset of war.

Means and Ends. Sadat limited his military objective to a Sinai toehold based on his political aims and his analysis of military means. In terms of *capability (means)*, there was little evidence that Cairo or Damascus believed they could militarily accomplish the goal of retaking

²⁷ The Insight Team, 55 and El Badri et al, 17.

the occupied territories immediately or easily. Rather, the strategy emphasized the intermediate objectives of retaking and holding part of the Sinai and Golan Heights, inflicting heavy human and material losses on Israel, and heightening the concern of the major powers with conditions in the region.²⁸ Indeed, Sadat knew accomplishment of limited military objectives would have the same political impact a near total victory would yield—that of influencing Israel to return to the bargaining table. Sadat set two major military objectives: 1) “inflict the highest losses possible on the enemy,” and 2) “liberate the occupied territory in progressive stages according to developments and the abilities and potential of the armed forces.”²⁹ This was not a call to annihilate the Israeli Army and liberate the entire Sinai. Sadat’s intent was clear:

I used to tell Nassar that if we could recapture 4 inches of Sinai territory (by which I meant a foothold, pure and simple), and establish ourselves so firmly that no power on earth could dislodge us, then the whole situation would change – east, west, all over.³⁰

Crushing the myth of Israeli invincibility and securing a small amount of territory would provide Sadat the negotiation leverage he desired.

Unfortunately, the judicious selection of Egyptian military objectives was not duplicated in selection of Syrian military objectives. Syria was to break through Israeli defenses and open gaps through which their armored divisions might pass across the River Jordan into the Galilean hills and beyond—a task they proved incapable of handling.

²⁸ O’Neil, 31.

²⁹ Mohammed Abdel Ghani El-Gamasy, **The October War** (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1993): 191.

³⁰ Sadat, 244.

Achieving these military objectives required defeating Israeli forces on the battlefield. Sadat planned to use the strategy of a surprise attack to accomplish this feat. The strategy of surprise arose from Sadat's view of military capabilities and vulnerabilities.

To protect critical vulnerabilities, and minimize Arab risks, Sadat took several precautions. He knew Israel was extremely strong along the natural defenses of the Suez Canal and along the man-made fortifications of the Bar-Lev Line. He also knew that Israeli defenses along their border with Syria, although less formidable, represented a significant obstacle to Syrian attacks. To mitigate these strengths, Sadat had to rely on convincing Israel that he was *not* going to attack, and in so doing gain the element of "total surprise" so critical to success. He was certain that "Israel would start the war and take the initiative if it realized we were preparing to attack."³¹ Sadat devoted tremendous energy in this regard, including development of "*wolf tactics*,"³² maintaining strict Operational Security (OPSEC) measures, and purposefully leaking bogus information to "reliable" sources, that he knew would get back to Israel in near real time.³³ Additionally, the international community interpreted Sadat's dismissal of all Soviet military advisors from Egypt as another indication he was not going to fight.³⁴ Lastly, President Sadat knew he must show a militarily "relaxed" attitude on his borders, and thus resorted to a particularly Egyptian trick of having his soldiers relax on the edge of the canal, sunning

³¹ El Gamasy, 186.

³² "Wolf tactics" was the Egyptian tactic of running combat forces under cover of air up to the canal, in battle formation, in order to elicit a military response from the Israelis. Done six times in the months preceding the 9 Oct attack, Egyptian forces caused full Israeli mobilization at a cost of \$20 million against attacks that never came. Major General A.H. Farrar-Hockley, "The October War," **Arab-Israeli War, October 1973: Background and Events**, Adelphi Paper #111, (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies IISS, Winter 1974-75): 16.

³³ Sadat, 245

themselves and sucking on sugarcane as happily as though they were on holiday.³⁵ These measures all worked to perfection, as Egypt enjoyed almost total surprise, by “overwhelmed Israeli leadership with (bad or misleading) information—while they drew all the wrong conclusions as to Egypt’s true intent.”³⁶ At the end of the war, when asked why he hadn’t mobilized in October 1973, Moshe Dayan replied, “Sadat made me do it twice, at a cost of 10 million dollars each time. So when it was the third time round I thought he wasn’t serious, but he tricked me!”³⁷

Another Egyptian vulnerability Sadat had to mitigate was the superior Israeli air force and reserves of armor and mechanized forces. To compensate for this vulnerability, Sadat did several things. First, he targeted Egypt’s initial air attacks against Israeli airfields, destroying vulnerable Israeli air assets that were still on the ground. Second, he made sure his ground assaults in the Sinai did not maneuver outside the Air Defense and surface-to-air missile umbrella (10-15 kilometers) he carefully built into his Canal-assaulting formations:

Sadat was well aware of Israeli superiority in the air, thanks to hundreds of American built Phantoms and Skyhawks, (so) a deep offensive beyond missile cover was ruled out from the very start.³⁸

Additionally, Sadat saw an opportunity to display Arab unity and offset Israeli ground and air force strengths by forcing Israel to fight on a second front with Syria. This strategy precluded Israel’s ability to “mass” counter-attacks in a single direction toward Egyptian forces in the

³⁴ Ibid., 232.

³⁵ Ibid., 251.

³⁶ Kissinger, 459.

³⁷ Sadat, 242.

³⁸ El Badri et al, 17.

Sinai. If fighting on the Golan went well, Arab forces would severely stretch Israeli capability and nullify Israel's previously (1967) demonstrated battlefield decisiveness.

A final measure to negate the technological superiority of Israeli Armor -- especially in open terrain -- was to deprive Israel of their capability to deliver a "counterblow." Sadat wanted to impose battle upon Israel before Israel could complete combat preparations and concentrate troops. In so doing, Egypt had to strengthen its anti-tank (AT) defenses, especially with AT weapons and missiles.³⁹

Sadat learned, in prior combat on similar terrain, the destructive ability of Israel air and armor attacks and he would not make the same mistakes again. Surprise, targeting of Israeli airfields, integrated air and anti-tank defenses, and opening a second front with Syria, were all key components of offsetting Arab vulnerabilities and negating the air and armor superiority Israel enjoyed at the outset of the war.

Strategic Concept. The results of President Sadat's study of Arab and Israeli military capabilities led to a carefully crafted offensive concept for war. A massive surprise attack on 6 October 1973, coinciding with the 10th day of Ramadan, against Israeli forces from Egypt and Syria was the result of an exhaustive Arab strategic analysis and study. Surprise, preplanned massive air and artillery prep fires, rapid advances to breach prepared defenses, and an ability to withstand armor counterattacks while inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, was all part of this strategic concept.

On the Sinai front, Egypt planned innovative techniques of integrating infantry, air defense, and engineer assets to breach massive obstacles along the Suez Canal and Bar-Lev Line.

³⁹ El Badri et al, 20.

Combined arms rehearsals at all levels were emphasized, with every commander encouraged to conduct reconnaissance of objectives set for his unit prior to their attack.

On the Golan, Syria's objectives were set against the rolling terrain and boulder-strewn advances to the Jordan River. Although they did not have to overcome a water obstacle as formidable as the Suez, an anti-tank ditch 15 ft deep, banked 12 feet high, and laced with anti-tank mines lay directly astride their path.⁴⁰ Successfully attacking 'to the Jordan River' was a huge mission as compared to Egypt's limited objectives in the Sinai. Syria had similar vulnerabilities as Egypt, but the astute analysis Egypt made of Israel capabilities was missing from Syrian military planning.

Key to success throughout this concept was pursuit of *limited* objectives over *limited* terrain, with speed of execution and combined arms effects. Sadat knew the element of surprise would quickly erode, yielding advantage to "he who wins the first 24 hours".⁴¹ Once the initial 24 hours were decided, the strategic concept was to hold their ground, allow Israel to attack into the teeth of their integrated defenses, and request negotiations on terms favorable to Arab objectives.

In all, Arab strategy was a credible balance of ends and means, risks and costs. The key risk, that of incomplete attainment of intermediate objectives by Egypt or Syria—and the resulting abandonment of the "limited objectives" for the war—almost proved disastrous to the Arab war effort. The limited military means/objectives of Egypt and Syria, clearly understood by Sadat, had to be maintained to maximize the attainment of the political objectives.

⁴⁰ A.H. Farrar-Hockley, pg. 22.

⁴¹ Sadat, 261.

Military Strategy Analysis. An analysis of Sadat's military strategy reveals two key problems. First, he incompletely considered the military and political effects if either Egypt or Syria could not maintain surprise or accomplish their initial objectives in the early part of their attack. Second, Sadat did not accurately assess the effects US military assistance to Israel would have on his forces.

Once they conquered limited territory, Egypt needed to avoid expansion of their military objectives; Arab forces very much needed to affect consolidation and move into prepared defenses prior to strong Israeli counterattacks. Despite strong convictions in this regard, Sadat failed to assess the impact a Syrian defeat would have on Egypt's military course of action. Syria's defeat by Israel on the Golan, and Israeli penetration across the Syrian plain to within 35 miles of their capital, caused Damascus to plead for offensive action in the Sinai. Keeping to the spirit of the alliance, Egypt felt compelled to renew their attack.⁴² Egypt abandoned its defensive strategy and shifted to open warfare with disastrous results.

The fog of war emerged to compound Egypt's mistake of expanding its military objective. Israel exploited a weakness in the front between Egypt's Second and Third Armies. Poor communication among senior Egyptian commanders allowed Israel to break through the Egyptian bridgehead and move to the west bank of the Suez, cutting off the Third Army's lines of supply.⁴³ Had Egypt kept to their original toehold objective and focused on consolidating their position and improving communication, Israel forces might not have broken through.

A second problem of Sadat's development of military strategy was miscalculating the effects of early US arms supplies to Israel. The US responded quickly to the "Save Israel"

⁴² Farrar-Hockley, 27.

⁴³ Farrar-Hockley, 30.

message by supplying tanks and high technology weapons.⁴⁴ US actions appeared to catch Sadat off guard. He should have foreseen such assistance and taken appropriate military and political countermeasures. Denying US use of Al Arish (the supply air-bridge), expansion of SAM coverage through Soviet support, and using the oil weapon sooner and to a greater extent, might have retarded US aid to Israel.

Fortunately, Clausewitz's concept of chance came to Sadat's aid before his strategy completely fell apart. Worried that Israel might drive towards a dominating victory that would ruin a lasting peace settlement, Kissinger worked with the USSR and the warring parties to arrange a cease-fire and ultimately a peace process.⁴⁵ Certainly Sadat was lucky, but the groundwork laid earlier prepared him for this opportunity. Isolating Israel, reducing the supply of oil, and exploiting the unwillingness of the superpowers for major confrontation opened the door for Kissinger's diplomacy. In the end, Sadat carried the day.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Sadat's national security and military strategies proved successful based not on luck, but a clear conception of means, ends and how to integrate instruments of power to achieve his ends. Sadat knew his long-range end state, the return of territories taken in the 1967 war. Recognizing limited means, he set achievable objectives as stepping-stones to the final end state. Conquering Israel militarily was not realistic, but Egypt could gain limited military objectives and attain long-term goals at the negotiating table. Obtaining negotiating leverage required that

⁴⁴ Sadat, 260.

⁴⁵ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Oil Embargo" [on-line]; available from <http://search.eb.com/>; internet.

Sadat include all major tools at hand: diplomatic, economic, and military. Using diplomacy among Arabs, Africans, and non-aligned countries isolated Israel. An oil embargo pressured the West and Japan and further isolated Israel. Playing off fears of a superpower conflict provided additional impetus for the US to initiate a peaceful solution suitable to all parties involved. Finally, decisive military action served as a catalyst to break the existing political stalemate. Military success showed Israel was not invincible, demonstrated Arab resolve, and made Egyptian forces confident in battle. Sadat skillfully applied each instrument of power in a mutually reinforcing manner.

However, Sadat's strategy did suffer from several defects. First, a misunderstanding of Syria's domestic situation and military capabilities caused Sadat and Assad to set unrealistic objectives for the Golan military thrust. Sadat felt the consequences of this mistake when political pressures forced him to abandon his limited military objective. Second, Sadat failed to comprehend the extent to which the US would aid Israeli militarily. Third, Sadat's virtual abandonment of the USSR at the end of the war was not consistent with his previous technique of using superpower confrontation to his advantage. It perhaps limited Sadat's flexibility in the long term. Nevertheless, the first two mistakes were critical; they compelled execution to veer from the plan, nearly unraveling Sadat's overall strategy.

Despite these problems, Sadat's strategy did not unravel. Chance came Egypt's way in the form of a Kissinger led cease-fire and peace plan, just at the right time. The true brilliance of Sadat's strategy lay in this action. Sadat's diplomatic and economic efforts combined with his willingness to fight *created* this opportunity. He developed a bold strategy that included a safety net of sorts. While much time would pass before Egypt realized its ultimate goals, Sadat's strategy made everything subsequently achieved possible.