

**Special K Diplomacy during the October War:
A reexamination of Henry Kissinger's diplomacy**

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On the basis of this thesis
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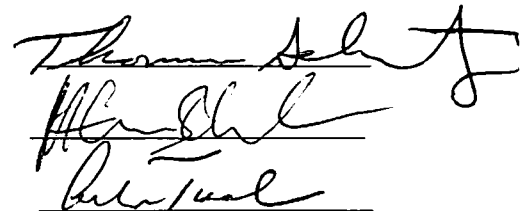

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Egyptian bombs reigning down on Israeli airfields at 2:00 p.m. the afternoon of October 6, 1973, announced the beginning of the fourth Arab-Israeli war. Launched by a joint Egyptian-Syrian command, Operation Badr ended the bitter stalemate that had developed after the June 1967, Six Day War between Israel and her Arab neighbors.¹ Like the 1956 Suez and the Six Day wars, the October War was initiated by a sneak attack. However, unlike the other two wars, this time it was the Arabs and not the Israelis who launched the surprise attack. The initial air assault of Operation Badr was the opening stage of an offensive by Egyptian armies on the West side of the Suez Canal and Syrian armies on the Golan Heights. The element of surprise captured by Operation Badr allowed for early Arab military successes that served to shatter the aura of invincibility that had surrounded the Israeli military [Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and Israeli Air Force (IAF)], from victories in the three previous wars.

From the outset of the October War, the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, were intimately involved, each with a vested interest in the outcome. The Middle East had long been a superpower battleground. Before Greece and Turkey the opening stage of the Cold War occurred over Soviet troop withdrawals from Iran in March 1946.² However, it was not until the 1956 Suez war that Cold War began to heat up in the Middle East. America's rebuke of Britain and France for their staged war to reclaim the Suez Canal had effectively ended the European sphere of influence in Egypt and Palestine. Britain and France's retreat from the region had created a power vacuum that the superpowers sought to fill. They expanded their influence by developing a set of rival client relationships within the region. Using promises of political support, economic

¹ Walter Isaacson. *Kissinger* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992). 513.

aid, and military hardware, the United States had cultivated relationships with Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, while the Soviet Union had worked to draw Egypt, Syria, and Iraq into its orbit. Superpower goodwill was an effort by the United States and Soviet Union not only to gain allies, but also to gain direct influence over their patrons. However as is typical with client states as opposed to satellite states and colonies neither the United States nor the Soviet Union proved able to exert total control over their Middle East allies. This client independence combined with Cold War realism, led to the events of the Yom Kippur War steering out of the superpowers' control. Ultimately, it took the threat of nuclear war to calm the situation.

This thesis examines the diplomacy that enabled the United States to emerge out of the October War as the dominant power in the Middle East. In his joint role as the Secretary of State and National Security Advisor to President Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger had tremendous influence in formulating and conducting American foreign policy. During the October War the negative consequences of a presidency under attack for the Watergate scandal and the resignation of Vice President Spiro Agnew combined to give Secretary Kissinger unprecedented and almost exclusive control over day-to-day diplomacy. It has been suggested that in effect, American foreign policy during the October War was Henry Kissinger's foreign policy.³ This thesis seeks to examine his role in American-decision making and his diplomacy, which placed the United States as the central foreign power in the Middle East, and offered the United States' a unique opportunity to play conductor in peace talks with a real chance for success. Playing a game of realpolitik he paved the way for the first official meeting between Israeli and

² George Lenczowski. *American Presidents and the Middle East* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1990) p. 7-13.

Egyptian officials October 28, 1973 at Kilometer 101 in the Sinai, disengagement agreements first between Israel and Egypt and then Israel and Syria, the 1978 Camp David Peace Accords, and the signing of a 1979 peace treaty by Egypt and Israel.

While there is a wealth of literature on both the Arab-Israeli conflict and the superpower conflict, much of it fails to take into account how intertwined the two rivalries became, especially during the October War when the regional conflict led to a nuclear showdown between the superpowers. Benny Morris provides an excellent history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and provides a detailed survey of the October War in *Righteous Victims*, but he fails to adequately address the importance of the superpowers, shielding and resupply of the belligerents.⁴ In *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crisis*, political scientist Russell J. Leng does a better job of examining the superpower impact on the Arab-Israeli conflict, but it remains on the periphery of his analysis and he does not consider the reciprocal.⁵ H.W. Brands' *Into the Labyrinth* traces the United States' increasing involvement in the Middle East, but sacrifices depth for breadth.⁶ He devotes just seven pages to the conflict which is better than the paragraph George Lenczowski gives the October War in *American Presidents and the Middle East*. What all of these manuscripts have in common is that while they focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict or the American role in the Middle East, none are focused around Henry Kissinger and none go into depth about American diplomacy during the October War

³ Dobrynin 287

⁴ Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A history of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2001)

⁵ Russell J. Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crisis*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000.)

⁶ H.W. Brands, *Into the Labyrinth*. (New York: McGraw Hill Inc, 1994)

Indeed, the focus they do give to American diplomacy largely revolves around President Nixon's decisions instead of Kissinger's diplomacy. There is however, a wealth of scholarship on Kissinger, but his diplomacy during the October War has long been overlooked. The main reason is that Nixon and Kissinger were deeply involved in other areas of foreign policy that receive the lion's share of examination, such as US-Soviet détente, China, and Vietnam. Even when scholarship does focus on the October war, the diplomacy that occurred during the war takes a back seat to the shuttle diplomacy that followed the war. Moreover, much of the scholarship about Kissinger's role in the October War was written in the years immediately following the war, often by members of the press, like Marvin and Bernard Kalb or by former policy-makers, such as William Quandt. All of the main participants during the October War have released memoirs which serve to provide bits and pieces of the decision-making process, while this material has been very beneficial to scholars, much of it is stale. In recent years many documents from the Nixon administration have been declassified providing primary documents that allow for a reanalysis of Kissinger's role as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State.

Walter Isaacson's *Kissinger*⁷ made use of extensive interviews, some of these documents, and many of Kissinger's private documents. However, even Isaacson's analysis is now twelve years old. During those years the Nixon Presidential Materials Project at the National Archives has routinely declassified an increasing number of documents. On May 26, 2004 20,000 pages of telephone transcripts were released by the national archives. Jussi Hanhimaki's *The Flawed Architect* was published too early to

⁷ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 15

make full use of these documents.⁸ The only author to make full use of the telephone documents during the October War is Kissinger himself in his newest memoir, *Crisis*.⁹ Kissinger provides the transcripts to many of his telephone conversations during the crisis, making the book an important primary source. but in some cases the conversations were edited by him or the National Security Council. Furthermore, it overlooks events such as his meetings about the cease-fire in Israel October 22, 1973. Moreover, the fact that Kissinger is the only one to write extensively about his telephone conversations cries out for another pair of eyes to evaluate the material. This is one area where I advance the scholarship on Kissinger.

During my 2004 Thanksgiving Break from school I flew to Washington D.C. to visit the National Archives a short train trip away in College Park, Maryland. At the archives I was able to view many of the newly released telephone conversation transcripts (telcons). These conversations capture the American thought process, decision-making, and negotiation strategy during the war. They show that American diplomacy was moving ahead of normal communication channels. William Burr from the National Security Archives provides a wide array of primary materials in, *The October War and Cold War Policy*.¹⁰ These include meeting minutes from the Special Action Group (WSAG) set up during the war to deal with Middle East issues, memoranda of conversations (memcons) between top American officials and foreign diplomats, and intelligence estimates from the field. Together with the telcons, they

⁸ Jussi Hanhimaki. *The Flawed Architect* (New York: Oxford University Press. 2004) p. xx

⁹ Henry A. Kissinger.. *Crisis*. (New York: Simon & Schuster. 2003)

¹⁰ Willaim Burr, *The October War and U.S. Policy*, (October 7, 2003:
< <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB98/index.htm>> April 11, 2004.

show Kissinger's evolving thought process, and that telephone diplomacy was well ahead of messages sent through other means.

What I am interested in, is how with the United States' geopolitical position at a low-point because of a balance of power shift vis-à-vis the Soviets, Vietnam, and a resurgent Congress, Henry Kissinger was able to advance American interests during the October war. Building on secondary works, using telcons, and the other materials provided by Burr, I seek the answer to the question, "Did Henry Kissinger pursue an effective or ineffective foreign policy during the October War?" Unlike Hanhimaki, I do not consider the morality of Kissinger's policy as central to my argument. Instead, I try and place Kissinger's actions in context of both the regional and superpower conflicts. Simply put, both conflicts impacted Kissinger's diplomacy in different ways. The decisions made by the regional actors had a resounding impact on not only diplomacy between the superpowers, but on American diplomacy within the Middle East as well.

The picture that emerges from my analysis is that a strong Secretary of State took control of American diplomacy into his own hands while a distracted President wallowed in despair. Kissinger successfully protected the president, by not allowing the Soviets or Arabs no how weak his hold on power was and by routinely writing and sending letters in his name. Kissinger used a two-pronged strategy of telephone diplomacy, and détente to maneuver the United States into the dominant foreign power in the Middle East during the war. Closely connected to how Kissinger performed his diplomacy is measuring the success of his actions.

This raises the question, of how to measure his success? Should it be judged in the short term or the long term? William Quandt, former Middle East expert for the

National Security Council (NSC) in *Decades of Decisions*, takes a short term approach judging Kissinger's success based on his crisis management during the period.¹¹ Quandt is critical of Kissinger's prewar diplomacy. He argues that Kissinger missed opportunities to avoid the fourth Arab-Israeli war, but credits Kissinger for his actions during the War. In particular, Quandt credits Kissinger for quickly altering the US perspective of the Middle East after prewar presumptions were proven wrong, and with the US emerging out of the conflict in a strong position relative to USSR.

Finnish historian Jussi Hanhimaki in *The Flawed Architect* judges Kissinger on what he deems are the long-term effects of Kissinger's policy. From this perspective he deems the Yom Kippur War a diplomatic failure because it damaged détente and did not promote American morals.¹² He argues that Kissinger did not react to the crisis itself, but treated it as an extension of superpower diplomacy which was "limiting and, ultimately, counterproductive."¹³ in that his unilateralism during the Yom Kippur War inspired the Soviet Union to act unilaterally in other third world regions, especially North Vietnam.¹⁴

Hanhimaki also argues that "triangular diplomacy," as the diplomatic triangle the United States, the Soviet Union, and China is nicknamed, played an important role in blinding Kissinger toward the regional conflict because he viewed it only as an extension of big power politics and not as a regional conflict. "Triangular diplomacy" did play an important role in Cold War relations during the Nixon administration, but relations were not very triangular during the October War. Kissinger's delaying his visit to Moscow to attend a dinner at the Chinese Ambassadors (and to stall for time) is the one time when

¹¹ William Quandt, *Decades of Decisions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977)

¹² Jussi Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 326

¹³ Jussi Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), xviii

true “triangular diplomacy” played an important role in the carrying out of American diplomacy during the October War. American discussions with the Chinese throughout the conflict took the form of reports as opposed to negotiations, whereas with the Soviets the Americans were in almost constant negotiations.

This is in stark contrast to the opinion held by Victor Israelyan, a member of the fourteen person Soviet task force, similar in style to Washington Special Actions Group, which met during the October War. His assessment of Soviet leaders is very different from that of Hanhimaki. He wrote, “The Kremlin leaders...evaluated the outcome of the war in the Middle East in October 1973 as a triumph of Soviet foreign policy and diplomacy as a political victory for the Soviet Union.”¹⁵

In regard to “triangular diplomacy,” Victor Israelyan’s *Inside the Kremlin during the Yom Kippur War*, again provides a different perspective of events than Hahimaki. Israelyan, who worked in the Kremlin, provides strong evidence that “triangular diplomacy” was an important diplomatic factor, but more so on Sino-Soviet relations because of an ideological dispute over who should be the flag-bearer of Communism than American-Soviet relations. According to Israelyan this led the Soviets to taking a more pro-Arab view than they would have otherwise.¹⁶

I am judging Henry Kissinger on a different scale of success than Hanhimaki, one similar to Quandt’s. I judge him on his effectiveness after taking into account the diplomatic and military realities of the situation. In order to do so, I provide a history of

¹⁴ Hanhimaki. *Flawed Architect*, xviii

¹⁵ Victor Israelyan. *Inside the Kremlin During the Yom Kippur War*, University Park, Pennsylvania: The Penn State University Press, 1995), 211

¹⁶ Victor Israelyan. *Inside the Kremlin During the Yom Kippur War*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Penn State University Press, 1995). 37

the Arab-Israeli conflict and the growing Cold War conflict in the Middle East. I do this in order to provide a backdrop for the diplomatic situation at the outbreak of the war. This is necessary because it provides a frame of reference from which to assess Kissinger's performance. Secondly, it is necessary to understand the different motives that drove the other main participants in the conflict; the Soviet Union, Israel, Egypt, and Syria. Kissinger's success should be judged by what he was able or unable to accomplish based on the diplomatic realities of the crisis. For instance, I do not think it would be fair to blame Kissinger for not stopping the war, once it had broken out, while both Egypt and Israel still wanted to fight. As a principal player but not a direct belligerent in the conflict, Kissinger's diplomacy was constrained by the realities on the ground. This thesis highlights many of these constraints and Kissinger's reaction to them.

This thesis consists of an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter is in two parts. The first part traces the three wars prior to the Yom Kippur War. The second part delves deeper into the conflict and peace process from after the Six Day War, until the hours before the inception of Operation Badr. This history is meant to place American diplomacy in the context of the setting. The war itself from October 6-October 25, 1973 is broken down into four different sections. The first chapter on the war, Chapter 2, begins with the hours leading up to the outbreak of war. The chronology then pauses in order to elucidate the specific goals of: Egypt, Syria, Israel, the Soviet Union and the United States before resuming the chronology until the end of October 8. The third chapter witnesses the deepening involvement of the superpowers in the Middle East, while still searching for a cease-fire. This stage lasted until the cease-fire was rejected by the Egyptians on October 13. The fourth chapter, October 13 to October 19

witnesses a period of open confrontation between the superpowers as the regional war continued unabated, before a restoration of a mutual desire for a cease-fire and Kissinger's trip to Moscow. Chapter five traces Kissinger in Moscow, Israel and through the nuclear alert of October 25. By using newly released primary documents, and by focusing on the inter-connectedness of the regional and superpower conflict in the analysis of the Kissinger's diplomacy I show that Kissinger's diplomacy during the conflict was success, although not without its flaws. During the crisis, Kissinger managed to eliminate Egypt, the most belligerent nemesis of Israel from the ongoing Arab-Israeli dispute, protected Israel's security, drew Egypt out of the Soviet orbit, limited Soviet influence in the region, and paved the way for Egyptian-Israeli reconciliation.

Chapter 1

The regional and superpower conflict 1948-October 1973

The Yom Kippur War did not occur in a vacuum. Instead, it took place within the dual context of the Arab-Israeli conflict (1948-present) and the Cold War (1946-1991). These two conflicts converged from the middle 1950s through the end of the Cold War. The Yom Kippur War is an example of how a regional dispute exacerbated the Cold War. In the war, a wide coalition of Arab states, with Egypt and Syria at the head, started a war with American backed Israel and pulled the superpowers into a confrontation that neither desired. The turbulent nature of Middle East relations led President Nixon to call the region an “explosive powder keg” in 1969.¹⁷ In 1971 he told Congress that due to the potential for a superpower confrontation, the Middle East was the most dangerous region in the world.¹⁸ American diplomat and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger shared similar concerns about the Middle East. In a 1970 background briefing from the White House West (Nixon’s California home in San Clemente, Ca) Kissinger said, “What they are doing in the Middle-East ... poses the greatest of threats in the long term for Western Europe and Japan and therefore, to the US.”¹⁹ Later in the same briefing, he described the dangers of the Middle East:

¹⁷ Jussi Hanhimaki, The Flawed Architect. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). 305.

¹⁸ William Quandt, Decade of Decisions. (Berkeley: University of California, 1977). 137.

¹⁹ Kissinger in a background briefing, San Clemente, August 24, 1970 pg. 11 cited in David Landau, Kissinger: the Uses of Power, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 120

The situation in the Middle East is that you have two groups of countries with intense local rivalries and with an overwhelming concern for their grievances or their security, or both, both backed by major countries, but not fully under the control of the major countries confronting each other.

This is the sort of situation that induced WWI.²⁰

In October 1973, a spark lit the cold fuse of the “powder keg” threatening not only to spread the conflagration through the Middle East, but to envelop the superpowers as well.

Because the October War occurred within the dual context of the Cold War and regional tensions, it is beneficial to elucidate the history of the regional conflict and its relation to the Cold War in order to gain a better understanding of American diplomacy during the war. Regional discord in the Middle East started before the region became a Cold War battleground and played an important role in how the Cold War played out in the Middle East. For the purposes of this thesis, I start the Arab-Israeli conflict with the Provisional State Council’s Proclamation of Independence and the formal establishment of Israel on May 14, 1948.²¹ Although tensions already existed between the Arabs and Jews of Palestine, the birth of Israel was the first time Arab umbrage was sufficient to drive Israel’s neighbors to war.²² The Arabs were driven to war for many different reasons. Religion was a common unifying factor among the Muslim Arabs but the related forces of anti-colonialism and Pan-Arabism were also at play. Jockeying for

²⁰ Kissinger in 8-24 1970 text of background briefing. San Clemente. pg 14
Landau. *Uses of Power* 23-24

²¹ The Provisional State Council was a precursor to the modern Israeli Parliament the Knesset

²² Walter Lacquer and Barry Rubin Ed., *The Israel-Arab Reader: a Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict* (New York: Penguin Books. 2001), 81. This source provides primary documents from the Middle East conflict.

Benny Morris. *Righteous Victims: A history of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001.*

(New York: Vintage Books. 2001) 37-66. Benny Morris argues that the conflict began with the

power between Arab nations and amongst their leaders further fueled the fire. The Arab-Israeli conflict before the October War is highlighted by three wars that occurred between 1948 and 1967, followed by six years of stalemate marked by a series of failed peace efforts. Reflecting the increased relevance of the diplomacy immediately prior to the October War the history of the stalemate is told in greater detail. The background of the regional conflict and the creeping escalation of involvement in the region by the superpowers builds the framework for reaching a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in American diplomacy during the October War. Ultimately this allows for a deeper understanding of how Secretary of State Henry Kissinger guided American policy during the war.

And So It Begins...

On May 14, 1948, Zionist leader David Ben Gurion proclaimed the birth of Israel from Tel Aviv. In New York at the United Nations General Assembly Israel was immediately recognized by both the United States and the Soviet Union. The Arab states on the other hand, refused to recognize Israel as a country. Far from recognizing Israel, the Arab states were determined to crush nascent Israel before she established a foothold. A product of anti-colonialism and anti-Semitism the Arab hatred of the idea let alone the establishment of Israel was strong.

The anti-colonialism which led to *Al-Nakbah*, “the disaster”, as the war became known to the Arabs, developed out of five centuries of foreign domination in the Middle East, first by the Ottomans and then by the British and French.²³ During World War I and

birth of the Zionist movement and the first waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine before World War I.

²³ Michael B. Oren *Six Days of War, June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003) 6.

the Ottoman Empire's destruction. Britain and France divided the Middle East into spheres of influence in the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916.²⁴ However the colonial powers soon found that they were not able to establish the control over the region that they desired. In a wartime attempt to weaken the Ottoman hold over the region the British had supported nationalist movements during World War I. Along with the French, the British soon found out that they could not control the nationalist forces they had unleashed. This led to increased Arab sovereignty from their protectorates. In 1932 Iraq not only achieved independence from British hegemony but also gained entry into the League of Nations. Egypt too managed to achieve more freedom from the British first in 1922 and then in 1936. A tumultuous French rule in Syria came to an end after World War II with Syria gaining independence in 1945.

Religious differences between the Arabs who lived in the Middle East and the European Jews settling in Palestine played an important part in the growing anti-colonialism. With the largely Muslim Palestine under European guidance floods of European Jews continued to immigrate to Palestine raising the Jewish population considerably. While not overtly hostile towards native Palestinian Jews, Arab leaders were very hostile towards Jewish immigration, and the notion of a Jewish state in the middle of Dar-al-Islam was anathema. President Roosevelt reported as much to an aide after meeting with Saudi King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud in February 1945. Roosevelt said, "Ibn Saud made the point that he had no trouble with native Palestine Jews, but the immigration from Europe was more than he could cope with," if a Jewish state in Palestine was established, "the millions of Arabs might easily proclaim a Holy War."²⁵

²⁴ Morris, Righteous Victims, 68-69, Rubin and Lacquer "The Sykes-Picot Agreement"

²⁵ see Oren, Six Day War, 22

Furthermore, Jewish immigration and the creation of Israel were viewed as yet another extension of the colonial powers Arab nationalists had been fighting against.

The result of these feelings was that the next day May 15, 1948 Arab armies from five countries bent on its annihilation marched on Israel.²⁶ Secretary General ‘Abd al-Rasham Azzam Pasha of the Arab League phrased the operation a “War of extermination” declaring, “It does not matter how many [Jews] there are. We will sweep them into the sea.”²⁷ Unfortunately for the Arabs, despite Pasha’s assurances and initial Arab successes the Israelis rebounded and within a few weeks managed to push their enemies out of Israel. The Israeli armies did not stop at the borders established by the UN, a policy that became a pattern of Israeli military behavior. During the fighting Israel managed to expand its borders by capturing Galilee and the Negev.²⁸ Egypt and Jordan, though defeated by Israel, expanded as well at the expense of non-Jewish Palestinians. The Egyptians captured and held the Gaza strip while Jordan took the West Bank leaving, what has become a 60 year old problem, displaced Palestinian refugees.

In the years following the 1948 war, Egypt began to emerge as the leader of the Pan-Arab and anti-Israel movement. In a 1952 coup, General Gamal Abdel Nasser seized power in Egypt and sought to expand both his personal power and Egypt’s international power by playing the superpowers off one another, while also taking lead of the Pan-Arabist movement.²⁹ He was able to do this because both the Soviet Union and the United States desired to gain influence with Egypt. Nasser was also trying to cement

Benny Morris, Righteous Victims (Random House, New York, 2001)

²⁶ Morris, Righteous Victims, 219

²⁷ Cited in Morris, Righteous Victims, 218-219

²⁸ Russel J.Leng, Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crisis (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 124

²⁹ Pan-Arabism can be understood as the desire for a greater Unified Arabia.

Egypt's newly awarded independence from colonial rule and had no desire to move too close to either superpower. Nasser's game had serious consequences. From the Eisenhower administration's perspective, Nasser kept drifting closer to the Soviets. This view was strengthened when Nasser kicked the British military out of the Canal Zone in 1954. The view was further entrenched one year later when Nasser signed an enormous arms deal with the Soviet Union.³⁰ In response, Washington withdrew promised funding for Nasser's pet project, the Aswan Dam. Nasser responded to the message announcing the canceling of funds by calling it an "attack on the regime."³¹ and by nationalizing the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956 in order to pay the construction costs.³²

The British who had owned the canal were outraged at Nasser's gall. He had already damaged them militarily by kicking troops out of the Canal area the year before, but now he was threatening them economically as well. The British allied with the French, who were upset with the Nasser over his support of Algerian rebels, in a plan to retake the Suez Canal. In order to carry out their plan the Europeans decided they needed a regional cohort. They decided to contact the Israelis in August about forming a military alliance. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion was hesitant at first to accept the offer, but after some initial wavering he agreed to the alliance on September 23, 1956 in exchange for military and political support.³³ For the Israelis the war was also a preemptive one.

³⁰ Lenczowski, *American Presidents*, 49

³¹ H.W. Brands *Into the Labyrinth: The United States and the Middle East 1945-1993*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994) 62.

³² Russel J.Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crisis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 135-6.

³³ Leng, *Bargaining and Learning*, 136. The French gave Israel 100 tanks and provided air cover for Israel's operations.

They feared that Soviet arms from the 1955 arms sale would shift the balance of power in the Middle East and attacked to keep the balance in their favor.³⁴

The IDF invaded Egypt on October 29 and headed for the Canal. The plan was for the British and French to intervene under the guise of separating the warring parties by seizing the canal. The operation was proceeding according to plan except it contained a fatal flaw. The Europeans took for granted that the United States would stand idly by as they took back the Canal. The Eisenhower administration viewed the events in the Middle East as blatant colonialism, which the United States had long opposed, and split with the Europeans over the issue. President Eisenhower also opposed the Anglo-French invasion out of Cold War concerns. Not only did he want to contain Soviet influence, but the war also occurred as the Soviets were putting down an uprising in Hungary and the actions of the European allies were making it difficult for him to properly chastise the Soviets over their brutal quashing of the uprising. Under American pressure a cease-fire was signed on November 6, 1956 and UNEF separated the belligerents in the Sinai. The cease-fire marked the end to the British and French sphere of influence in the region, creating a power vacuum which the United States and Soviet Union each sought to fill.

The two superpowers became increasingly more active in the Middle East after the Suez War, but in moving to fill the power vacuum left by the British and the French the United States found itself frozen out of relations with Nasser's government. Nasser emerged as the big winner of the Suez War, gaining in both popularity and power as defeating the British and French legitimized Nasser's anti-imperialist claims.³⁵ After the

³⁴ Leng, Bargaining and Learning, 135

³⁵ Leng, Bargaining and Learning, 135

Suez war Nasser continued to push a revolutionary course and although he sought to keep Egypt independent, it fell further and further into the Soviet orbit.

In 1958 Nasser demonstrated the seriousness of his pan-Arabist ideals. After a coup by Pro-Nasserite forces in Syria, Egypt and Syria merged forming the United Arab Republic. After another Syrian coup in 1961, Syria withdrew from the union, but remained close with Egypt. During President John F. Kennedy's short term in office, American-Egyptian relations improved, and wheat from the United States accounted for thirty-percent Egypt's total supply.³⁶ However, American-Egyptian rapprochement was cut short by General Nasser's support of pro-Nasserite forces in the Yemeni civil war which began in 1962.³⁷ Ultimately, Egyptian involvement in the war damaged relations with the United States and cost Nasser valuable military units and supplies.³⁸

The Soviet Union became Egypt's chief supplier. However, despite Soviet aid, Egypt was not able to update its weapons systems as fast as Israel. The IDF benefited from the developing "special relationship" with the United States. In 1962 the Kennedy administration agreed to sell advanced Hawk anti-aircraft missiles to Israel and the Johnson administration sold Israel 200 tanks in 1965 and A-4 Skyhawk attack aircraft the next year.³⁹ Nasser realized that he needed a coalition of Arab forces in order to achieve military superiority over Israel. The mutual defense pact signed with Syria in 1966 was a step in this direction. It was also an effort to ensure that Israel did not attack Syria. The

³⁶ Burton I. Kaufman, The Arab Middle East and the United States (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996) p. 32.

³⁷ Leng, Bargaining and Learning, 149

³⁸ He eventually sent 50,000 soldiers to Yemen. See Brands, Into the Labyrinth, 85.

³⁹ Brands, Into the Labyrinth, 88-93

Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was launching terrorist attacks against Israel from inside Syria.⁴⁰

Nasser took other aggressive actions towards Israel in the build up to the Six Day war. On May 16, 1967 he ordered the United Nations Emergency Forces out of the Sinai.⁴¹ Then on May 22, Nasser made the fateful move of closing the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli traffic and increased troop levels in the Sinai.⁴² However, there is strong disagreement over whether Nasser really desired war with Israel or whether instead he was demonstrating “fraternal resolve” by taking an aggressive position to deter Israel from attacking Syria and the PLO. Whatever his true intentions, the growing tensions unnerved the Israelis.

On June 5, Israeli decision-makers decided they had watched enemies mounting on Israel’s borders long enough. Facing 100,000 enemy soldiers on their borders, Israeli leaders decided they must attack before Israel’s enemies made the first move.⁴³ The IAF launched a preemptive attack that destroyed the Egyptian air force and much of the Syrian air force before they could launch. The sneak attack initiated the third Arab-Israeli war, what would become known as the Six Day war. After the IAF crippled Egyptian and Syrian defenses, the IDF pounded the combined forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. By wars end, just six days later, Israel managed a four-fold increase in territory capturing the Golan Heights, Gaza Strip, West Bank and the entire Sinai at the expense of the humiliated Arabs.⁴⁴ Israel’s military prowess, demonstrated in three consecutive

⁴⁰ Morris, Righteous Victims, 303

⁴¹ Brands, Into the Labyrinth, 103. They left two days later.

⁴² Brands, Into the Labyrinth, 103

⁴³ H.W. Brands, Into the Labyrinth, 103-113

⁴⁴ Leng, Bargaining and Learning 164

Arab-Israeli wars, developed into an aura of invincibility after the Six Day war and humiliated the Arabs.

The Middle East after the Six Day War

The Arab armies never accepted their defeat in June 1967. In a meeting in Khartoum in September 1967, the Arab states met and decided on a policy of “three nos”. They declared: no peace, no recognition, and no negotiation until all of the territories Israel occupied after the Six Day War were returned.⁴⁵ In the aftermath of the Six Day War the United Nations adopted U.N. Resolution 242 on November 22, 1967, which led to a diplomatic stalemate that lasted for six years. The resolution called for Israel to withdraw its military from the lands it had recently occupied, but Israel interpreted the diplomatic jargon to mean that it only had to make minor border adjustments. On the other hand, the Arabs interpreted the language to mean that Israel must withdraw from *all* of the occupied territories.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Israel maintained control of the occupied territories despite several diplomatic initiatives aimed at solving the Middle East situation.

After hostilities ended, Egyptian and Israeli armies entrenched themselves on opposite sides of the canal where they would remain for the next six years engaged in a War of Attrition.⁴⁷ Several different peace initiatives aimed at unlocking the stalemate were floated by US Secretary of State William Rogers but failed. The first of these was led by the United Nations appointed mediator to the conflict Gunnar Jarring of Sweden in 1969. His effort did not leave the ground because the Arabs had demands that Israel return the occupied territories before they would agree to negotiations much less

⁴⁵ Leng, *Bargaining and Learning*, 166

⁴⁶ Full text of resolution 242 in endnotes

recognition, while the Israelis demanded on recognition in order to hold negotiations. Furthermore, in 1969 the war of attrition had heated up. Cross-canal shelling of military positions became commonplace. The Israelis escalated the situation further when the IAF began “deep penetration” attacks well inside of Egypt.⁴⁸ Nasser was not willing to consider a ceasefire while Israeli jets had complete control of the sky. However, after the Soviets provided Nasser SAM-3 surface to air missiles and “advisors” to operate them, he felt secure enough to agree to a ninety day ceasefire proposed by Secretary Rogers in July 1970.⁴⁹ Secretary Rogers was successful in implementing a ninety day ceasefire along the canal. Even this peace effort was considered a failure because as soon as it went into affect, Nasser cheated by moving his newly acquired SAM-3, surface to air missiles, closer to the Suez Canal.⁵⁰

Despite tense relations between Israel, Egypt, and Syria the largest military crisis during the interwar years occurred in Jordan. In September 1970, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked four airlines and took three of them to an old World War II airstrip in the Jordanian desert, before blowing them up on live television.⁵¹ This prompted King Hussein of Jordan to kick out the many terrorist organizations that had made Jordan their home including Yasser Arafat’s PLO and *al-Fatah*. The Palestinians were not eager to leave their bases and Arab versus Arab fighting broke out in Jordan. The guerrillas were backed by the Syrian government which sent armor divisions to help. King Hussein needed outside assistance so he called the United States.

⁴⁷ Leng, Bargaining and Learning, 170, also Morris Righteous Victims, 347-386

⁴⁸ Leng, Bargaining and Learning, 170

⁴⁹ Kaufman, The Arab Middle East, 73

⁵⁰ Edward R.F. Sheehan, The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger: A Soviet History of American Diplomacy in the Middle East, (Readers Digest Press, New York, 1976) P. 20

⁵¹ Richards, Dai. The 50 years war [videorecording] Israel and the Arabs, Alexandria, VA. PBS DVD Video. 2000

The Nixon administration did not want to intervene, but the Israelis were chomping at the bit for the opportunity to fight the Palestinians. The IAF launched F-4 phantoms to perform maneuvers over the Syrian armor in order to scare them into retreat. The ploy worked, the Syrians retreated and the crisis was coming to a close. As Hussein's forces closed the circle around Arafat, King Numeiry of Sudan and other prominent Arab leaders found Arafat and snuck him out of the country as a part of their entourage.⁵² Despite damaging Jordan's relations with other Arabs states, the Jordanian Conflict was important because it established Israel's importance in the eyes of the Nixon administration, both as a pillar of democracy and as a strategic asset.⁵³

The years of the stalemate witnessed changes in the governments of Israel, Syria and Egypt. In 1969 Golda Meir was elected Prime Minister of Israel. She pursued the strategic status quo, seeking to keep the lands that Israel had occupied in 1967.⁵⁴ Two decades of coups and countercoups ended in Syria when Hafez Al-Assad assumed power in a two-stage coup 1969-70.⁵⁵ In Egypt, General Nasser's reign ended with his death in 1970 and it was General Anwar Sadat who emerged from the ensuing power struggle as head of state. Sadat, although still relatively hawkish, proved to be more moderate towards Israel than his predecessor.

This moderation did not stop Sadat from embarking on his "Year of Decision" 1971 for the recovery of the lost territories.⁵⁶ Sadat sought to use both war and diplomacy to get back the lands. On the war front, Sadat signed a Treaty of friendship and

⁵² Richards, Dai. The 50 years war [videorecording] Israel and the Arabs, Alexandria, VA, PBS DVD Video, 2000

⁵³ Kaufman, The Arab Middle East, 77

⁵⁴ Leng, Bargaining and Learning, 168

⁵⁵ Morris, Righteous Victims, 345

⁵⁶ Leng, Bargaining and Learning, 170

cooperation with the Soviet Union in May in an attempt to expedite promised arms deliveries.⁵⁷ The Soviet Union sold Egypt more defensive SAM-3s but refused to sell the Egyptians Mig-25s unless Moscow retained control of how and when they would be used.⁵⁸ Refusing to give up sovereignty over his army, Sadat refused. He also tried India for weapons, but the Soviet Union was able to get the deal nixed.⁵⁹ Deprived of offensive weapons, Sadat was unable to exert any real pressure on Israel. Sadat grew frustrated with the Soviets for not selling him weapons.

On the diplomatic front, Sadat proposed a peace initiative in February 1971, but discussions broke down during the summer months.⁶⁰ Sadat's "Year of Decision" amounted to a diplomatic failure. On January 1, 1972, the day after Sadat's "Year of Decision" came to a close, Secretary of State Rogers taunted Sadat. During an announcement of further arms sales to Israel, he included that no "Year of Decision" had occurred.⁶¹ Sadat's initiative was not only a failure for Egypt, but also a personal failure.

After Sadat's humiliation from his impotent "Year of Decision" Egypt began to drift from the Soviet orbit. After continued arms shipment delays, Sadat expelled 15,000 Soviet advisors from Egypt in July 1972. There is much scholarly debate about what this signal meant. Was it a signal of a willingness to negotiate with the US and Israel; a signal of rapprochement with the US; just a minor flare-up in relations with the Soviets; a permanent break in Soviet-Egyptian relations; or a combination of two or more of these? William Quandt, a former NSC staffer and Middle East expert, argues that

⁵⁷ Ismail Fahmy, Negotiating for Peace in the Middle East, (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1983)

⁵⁸ Anwar el Sadat, In Search of Identity, (Harper Colophon Books, New York, 1979) P. 221

⁵⁹ Sadat, Identity, 212

⁶⁰ Leng, Bargaining and Learning, 170

⁶¹ Sadat, Identity, 227

Kissinger missed a prime opportunity to improve US-Egyptian relations by not responding with a diplomatic initiative aimed at breaking the deadlock. The reason: the Nixon administration did not want to take on the Middle East issue during an election campaign.⁶² Kissinger acknowledges as much. He felt that because of upcoming elections in both Israel and the United States, and the fact that the Israelis were unwilling to make concessions while they held such a dominant position.⁶³ Nixon agreed and the United States did nothing.

Egyptian memoirs show that the Nixon administration did in fact miss an opportunity to improve relations with Egypt. Ismail Fahmy, who became Sadat's acting Foreign Minister during the October war, says the move was made in part because of a reevaluation of Egyptian foreign policy at the Centre of Political and Strategic Studies in May 1972. During the discussion a consensus emerged that rapprochement with the US was desirable.⁶⁴ Sadat himself made an announcement designed to demonstrate his independence from the Soviet Union and aimed at the United States saying, "whoever wishes to talk to us should come over and do it."⁶⁵

It appears that the Nixon administration did miss an opportunity to improve relations with Egypt in 1972, but whether this would have avoided the 1973 war is doubtful. Sadat gives no reason to believe that the war would not have occurred had Egyptian-American relations improved. He explained his actions as meaning that Egypt would go to war, not avoid it.⁶⁶ By expelling the Soviets any Egyptian victories

⁶² William B. Quandt, Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967, (Brookings Institution Press: Washington, D.C., 2001) p. 103

⁶³ Henry, A. Kissinger, Crisis: the Anatomy of two Major Foreign Policy Crises, (Simon and Schuster: New York, 2003.) p. 12.

⁶⁴ Fahmy, Negotiating for Peace, 7

⁶⁵ Sadat, Identity, 231

⁶⁶ Sadat, Identity, 232

necessarily have to be credited to Egyptian forces and not the Soviets, and this would help the Egyptians regain pride and be able to negotiate as equals.⁶⁷ Although preparing for war, Sadat was doing so with more limited goals in mind than Arab leaders of the past.

What blame should be placed on Henry Kissinger for the missed peace opportunity. Seymour Hersh believes that a lot should be. He blames Kissinger for undermining William Roger's initiatives because of bureaucratic rivalry. He quotes one National Security Official as saying, "I got my marching orders, destroy this thing. It's got to be destroyed. Henry wants it cut down."⁶⁸ Kissinger did oppose Roger's plans, but as stated above it served to miss an opportunity to improve relations with the Soviets instead of an opportunity to avoid war. Moreover, relations with Egypt did improve because of Kissinger's back channel with Hafiz Ismail in the years before 1973.

Until after the Six Day War, both Egypt and Syria had sought to wipe Israel from the face of the Earth. This began to change after the Six Day War when Israel's gains in the Sinai made her a political reality for the Egyptians. By 1973, Sadat no longer wished to "push Israel into the sea," instead he had two more limited goals. First he desired to recover the lands Egypt had lost during the 1967 war. Secondly and more important, Sadat wanted to change the psychological balance in the Middle East.⁶⁹ The Six Day War had humiliated the Arabs and emboldened the Israelis to a point where effective negotiations could not occur. The Jarring talks and the Rogers initiative both went nowhere. Nixon hoped that the back channel initiated between Hafiz Ismail,

⁶⁷ Sadat, *Identity*, 230

⁶⁸ Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power*, (New York: Summit Books, 1983) p. 412

⁶⁹ Victor Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin during the Yom Kippur War*, (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995) 45

Sadat's National Security Advisor, and Henry Kissinger in September 1971 might be used to defuse Arab-Israeli tensions in 1973.

The Kissinger and Ismail backchannel resulted in two unfruitful meetings between the two first at Pepsi CEO Donald Kendall's house in Connecticut in February 1973 and then in Paris in May, but served to establish friendly relations between the top decision makers in each country. After unproductive talks at Kendall's in February it was announced while Ismail was still in transit to Egypt, that the Nixon administration had agreed to sell 36 new Skyhawks, and 48 phantoms to Israel.⁷⁰ If Sadat still hoped to avoid a war when he sent Ismail to talk with Kissinger in February, this move cast any doubt from his mind that it would work.⁷¹ In April Sadat told Newsweek the "time has come for a shock"⁷² and "If we don't take our case into our own hands, there will be no movement... the Americans have left us no other way out."⁷³ In May, Egyptian and Syrian military officials finalized a war plan scheduled for early October. The Kissinger-Ismail talks in Paris did nothing to change Sadat's mind. Kissinger made it clear that the Egyptians would not win back at the negotiating table what they had lost during war. Lamenting over the situation, Ismail hinted at Sadat's growing impatience with the status quo,

So if this is not the solution that Egypt wants, what is left for her? To accept the status quo? Or to go to War? I don't call it war; it is not war.

We have been in a state of war for 25 years. As I said to you in

Washington the ceasefire is a burden to everybody, even to the Israelis

⁷⁰ Sheehan, The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger, 25

⁷¹ Sheehan, The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger, 25

⁷² quoted in Marvin and Bernard Kalb, Kissinger, (Little, Brown, and Company: Boston, 1974) p 452.

⁷³ quoted in Sheehan, The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger, 26

themselves. There will come a point when we say that whatever positions we have offered are in the past tense, and have no meaning.⁷⁴

Ismail left the discussions of May 20, 1973, convinced that Israel “would not budge unless it felt threatened” by armed forces.⁷⁵ He confirmed Sadat’s belief that the only way to restore the psychological balance in the region, and therefore real negotiations, was through war. Sadat thought this could be achieved by recapturing “even four inches of Sinai territory...then the whole situation would change.”⁷⁶

Nevertheless, Sadat sent one more envoy to Kissinger before October. Kissinger met with Iranian ambassador, Aredeshir Zahedi, another participant in the Egyptian-American backchannel, in August. When the conversation turned to the question of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories as a precondition for negotiations, Kissinger gave a clear answer, “It is...senseless for a country which lost a war to demand it (withdrawal a precondition) as a precondition. It could be the end result, but as a precondition...”⁷⁷ The message was clear; the United States would not pressure Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. In an unnamed paper handed to Zahedi for delivery to Sadat, Kissinger expressed his understanding of the Egyptian position. The paper acknowledged that “Egypt (was) losing more by being frozen into the present situation than it would lose if it could begin to move Israeli forces back.” and “any move

⁷⁴ Burr, The October War and U.S. Policy, Document 2A, “Memorandum of Conversation [Memcon] between Muhammad Hafez Ismail and Henry A. Kissinger”, 20 May 1973, 10:15 a.m. Source: RG 59, Records of Henry Kissinger, box 25, Cat C Arab-Israeli War, p. 11

⁷⁵ Leng, Bargaining and Learning, 171

⁷⁶ Leng, Bargaining and Learning, 170

⁷⁷ Burr, The October War and U.S. Policy, Document 6, Harold Saunders. NSC Staff. to Kissinger, “Memorandum on Your Talk with Zahedi.” 19 September 1973, enclosing memorandum of Kissinger-Zahedi conversation, 15 September 1973, and untitled paper handed to Zahedi on 13 August 1974 Source: NPMP, HAKO, box 132, Egypt-Ismail Vol. VI May 20-Sept 30, 1973

from the present ceasefire lines will necessarily create a more fluid situation.”⁷⁸

Although Sadat’s mind was already decided on war, Kissinger’s paper could only have convinced Sadat his decision was right because it makes clear that Kissinger was aware that it would take a war to change the situation. In late September and early October Egyptian and Syrian troops massed on Israel’s borders under the guise of performing military maneuvers. Although the backchannel talks did not help to avoid war, they represented vastly improved Egyptian-American relations. The frank discussions served to build trust between the two countries and laid the foundation for Kissinger’s policy of turning the Egyptians during the war.

US-Soviet relations after 1967 and the beginning of détente

Parallel to and sometimes intertwined with the Arab-Israeli conflict the superpower relationship continued to evolve outside the region often playing an important part in their diplomacy within the region. The most important change in US-Soviet relations was the process of détente, or the relaxing of tensions between the two countries that lasted from October 1969- the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Both countries had complex reasons for desiring détente, but above all was the mutual desire to avoid nuclear holocaust. This basic desire resulted in four bilateral summits, eleven joint commissions, and 150 agreements from human rights to strategic arms limitation.⁷⁹ Closer relations and the shared desire to avoid nuclear war did not mean an end to the Cold War. Both the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in the process

⁷⁸ Harold Saunders, NSC Staff. to Kissinger, "Memorandum on Your Talk with Zahedi." 19 September 1973, enclosing memorandum of Kissinger-Zahedi conversation, 15 September 1973, and untitled paper handed to Zahedi on 13 August 1974

Source: NPMP. HAKO. box 132. Egypt-Ismaïl Vol. VI May 20-Sept 30, 1973

of détente in order to pursue their national interests without the fear of nuclear escalation. The net effect was that both countries embarked on foreign policies based on limited restraint. The Basic Principals agreement on détente signed at the first bilateral summit in May 1972 contained two clauses that apply to the October War. The second principle said “the USA and the USSR attach major importance to preventing the development of situation capable of causing a dangerous exacerbation of their relations.” The third principle said “the USA and the USSR have a special responsibility...to do everything in their power so that conflicts or situations will not arise which would serve to increase international tensions.”⁸⁰

The Nixon administration’s desire for détente was a result of President Nixon and Henry Kissinger’s shared realist perspective of foreign relations. This led them to view international politics as a zero-sum game of winners and losers. Gains for the Soviets were losses for the Americans and American gains resulted in Soviet losses. Nixon and Kissinger did not break the world into “good guys” and “bad guys” but instead into opposing state interests.⁸¹ To pursue this policy President Nixon and Henry Kissinger worked to centralize control of foreign policy in the White House, at the expense of the State Department. During the late 1960’s and early 1970’s several events led to Nixon and Kissinger adopting détente mainly the Soviet military reaching parity with the United States’. Vietnam played an important role in this because American forces were bogged down in the quagmire and Congress was growing increasingly reluctant to involve American troops in the third world. One result of this was the Nixon doctrine, a policy of

⁷⁹ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 21

⁸⁰ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 387

⁸¹ Steven W. Hook and John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy since World War II*, (CQ press. Washington D.C., 2000) p. 153

looking to third party proxies to insure the interests of the United States. In the Middle East this developed into increased support of Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Another result of the balance of power shift was a reevaluation of the policy of containment. They decided on détente.

It is also important to note what détente was and was not to the Nixon administration. Even though Nixon oversold the policy of détente using terms as the “era of negotiation” and promoting the elements that contributed to peace détente was not a peace effort. Instead it was a way to secure national interests at a time when strategic superiority had been compromised.⁸² In his memoirs Nixon wrote of détente, “the Soviet Union will always act in its own self-interest; and so will the United States. Détente cannot change that. All we can hope from détente is that it will minimize confrontation in marginal areas and provide, at least, alternative possibilities to the major ones.”⁸³ Even in 1970 Nixon said “détente does not mean the end of danger....detente is not the same as lasting peace.”⁸⁴ Kissinger himself thought of détente as a tool, a means rather than an end. “détente is a means of controlling the conflict with the Soviet Union.”⁸⁵

The Soviets pursued détente for strategic concerns as well. The view from within the Politburo was that “peaceful coexistence does not mean the end of the struggle between the two world social systems⁸⁶” American Cold War expert Raymond Garthoff argues that Soviet détente amounted to an attempt to gain influence without being able to use military forces and that by using a doctrine of “peaceful coexistence” among states

⁸² Hook and Spanier, American Foreign Policy, 154-5

⁸³ Richard Nixon Memoirs, 491

See also Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation, 26

⁸⁴ Quoted in Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation, 28

⁸⁵ Quoted in Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation, 30

⁸⁶ Politburo member Fyodor D. Kulakov quoted in Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation, 41-2

the Soviet Union hoped to spread revolution in the absence of war.⁸⁷ Soviet sources place increased importance on Brezhnev's desire for peace, but also show détente was used as a means to an end, and not an end in itself. Long-time Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin lists five reasons for the Soviet pursuit of détente all of them relating to strategic position: the Cuban missile crisis (demonstrated nuclear confrontation was not acceptable); means to reduce military expenditures; protect Ostpolitik (improving relations with West Germany); neutralize collusion between Washington and Beijing, and the enhancement of Brezhnev's personal prestige.⁸⁸ All of these reasons are realist reasons for pursuing détente and serve to demonstrate that the Soviet Union, like the United States, was under no illusion that détente meant the end of the superpower conflict. Instead it can be viewed as creating "rules of the game" for the conflict.⁸⁹ The fact that neither side viewed détente as an end in itself would have an unsettling effect on the development of diplomacy after war broke out between the Arabs and Israelis in October 1973.

⁸⁷ Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation, 40-50

⁸⁸ Anatoly Dobrynin, In Confidence, (Times Books: New York, 1995) p 194

⁸⁹ Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation, 33.

Chapter 2

The Outbreak: October 6-8

In the days leading up to the October war Egyptian and Syrian troops massed near the borders. Once Sadat had decided for war, he took the appropriate steps to fight one. In a series of moves, Sadat armed Egypt for war, strengthened his alliances, and mobilized his troops without giving away his plans for war. He acquired Scud missiles and other armaments from the Soviet Union, finalized the plans for the sneak attack in August, patched up relations among allies, Syria and Jordan, in September, and embarked on “military exercises” in late September. Egypt’s decision to place its military on high alert on September 26 led Kissinger to ask the CIA for an estimate as to the likelihood of an Arab-Israeli war. On October 5, just a day before the opening of hostilities, Kissinger received the CIA assessment he had asked for. The CIA estimated that “the military preparations that have occurred *do not* (italics mine) indicate that any party intends to instigate hostilities.”⁹⁰ This assessment was in line with both Kissinger’s intuition, and more importantly, with estimates coming from Israel intelligence. Sadat’s plans were still secret.

The Israeli assessment was much the same as the CIA’s. Israel feared that Egypt and Syria thought for some reason that Israel was going to start a war, and Washington feared an Israeli sneak attack as well. Golda Meir worked quickly to assuage fears of a preemptive attack by repeatedly stating to its spokesman, the United States, that it did not want war. Israeli Deputy Chief of Mission Mordechai Shalev phoned Kissinger on the

afternoon of October 5. In regards to rumors of an impending Israeli attack on Syria he told "such apprehensions are completely without foundation."⁹¹ Indeed they were, the rumor of the Israeli attack was a ploy by Sadat and Assad to provide a diplomatic smokescreen over who started the war.⁹²

During the night of October 5 and the morning of October 6 Israeli leaders became increasingly unsettled that Egypt and Syrian meant to invade Israel. While Kissinger was asleep in Washington. US Ambassador to Israel Kenneth Keating was meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir. She reported that despite intelligence estimates to the contrary just twelve hours before, Israel now had sufficient evidence that her enemies were planning an attack.⁹³ During the night a Mossad spy had met with a source that divulged the secret Arab war plans.⁹⁴ It was this piece of intelligence that led Meir to call on Keating. She also asked ambassador Keating to relay that Israel was not preparing to attack Egypt or Syria, but if attacked Israel would be victorious.⁹⁵ She wanted Israel to appear strong, too strong to attack, while also trying to defuse the crisis. Keating passed the message on to Washington, where it fell to Assistant Secretary of State in Near Eastern Affairs and South Asian Affairs, Joseph Sisco, had the unpleasant task of waking him and delivering the news.

⁹⁰ Kissinger, Crisis, 167

⁹¹ Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Brent Scowcroft to Kissinger, 5 October 1973, enclosing message from Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir (passed through Israeli chargé Shalev) Source: NPMP, HAKO, box 136, Dinitz June 4, 1974 [sic]-Oct. 31, 1973

Mordechai Shalev was the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

⁹² Morris, Righteous Victims, 397

⁹³ Memorandum "Arab-Israeli Tensions" Memo for Brent Scowcroft. From William P. Quandt
The White House, October 6

⁹⁴ Morris, Righteous Victims, 400

⁹⁵ U.S. Embassy Israel, Cable 7766 to Department of State, 6 October 1973, "GOI Concern About Possible Syrian and Egyptian Attack Today" Source: NPMP, National Security Council Files (hereinafter NSCF), box 1173, 1973 War (Middle East) 6 Oct. 1973 File No. 1 [1 of 2]

After his rude awakening Kissinger jumped into action working to prevent a war in the Middle East. In many ways Kissinger was not only Secretary of State and National Security Advisor; he also assumed the role as Israel's international spokesperson during the war. This was not simply because Israel was a client of the United States but because the Arab world refused to acknowledge Israel. Therefore Israel needed a third party to put forth its position, and this became the United States and more precisely Kissinger. An impact of this is that the Soviets, Egyptians, and Syrians all expected the Nixon administration to be able to exert more influence in Israeli decision-making than it really could.

His chief tool for this task was the telephone. The first of Kissinger's sixty-one telephone calls on October 6 was to Soviet Ambassador to the US Anatoly Dobrynin, whom he thought could help cool the situation.⁹⁶ Kissinger had a strong professional relationship with Dobrynin, and Dobrynin was the person to pass messages to Egypt, Syria, and the Kremlin. In the spirit of détente he was the natural first person to call. Secretary Kissinger duly passed along Meir's message, essentially the same as the day before, regarding Israeli intentions.

It is a testament to the strength of détente that Kissinger's first call was to the Soviets in an effort to work cooperatively to ease the situation. Although the fruit of détente showed by the fact that Kissinger's first call was to the Soviets, Kissinger warned Dobrynin that the Middle East situation "is very important for our relationship, that we

⁹⁶Kissinger-Dobrynin, 6:40 a.m. October 6, 1973 Nixon Presidential Materials Project (NPMP). HAK TELCONS TRANSCRIPTS (HAK TELCONS), chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park Maryland.

do not have an explosion in the Middle East right now."⁹⁷ Kissinger was dropping early hints that détente may be in danger because of the war. He was already using what became a main strategy, the double use of détente. On one hand he sought to work within détente to undermine the Soviet position, but on the other wanted to work outside détente to achieve the same purpose.⁹⁸ By threatening détente, he was working outside the "spirit of détente," trying to gain leverage over the Soviets, which he correctly perceived to be more important to the Kremlin than to the White House.⁹⁹ He hoped to induce the Soviets to "cooperate;" first in helping to help avoid a Middle Eastern war, and then once war broke out, in getting an early cease-fire. While Kissinger was trying to enlist Soviet cooperation by threatening détente, Ambassador Dobrynin maintained, "The Soviet Leadership got the information about the beginning of military actions in the Middle East at the same time as you [the United States] got it."¹⁰⁰

The Soviets may have gotten news of the opening of hostilities around the same time as the United States, but they knew of Arab plans ahead of time. Victor Israelyan states that Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and the Kremlin were informed of the specifics on October 4.¹⁰¹ The Soviets had actually learned of the plans a day before that, October 3, when Sadat told Ambassador Vinogradov.¹⁰² Kissinger, however, did not

⁹⁷ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 16.

⁹⁸ Kissinger, Crisis, 66.

⁹⁹ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 3

¹⁰⁰ Kissinger, Crisis, 54.

Message from Soviet Government to Nixon and Kissinger, 6 October 1973, called in at 2:10 p.m.

Source: RG 59, SN 70-73, POL 27-Arab-Isr

¹⁰¹ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 2

¹⁰² U.S. Interests Section Egypt, Cable 3243 to State Department, "Soviet View on Causes and Timing of Egyptian Decision to Resume Hostilities," 26 October 1973 Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1175, 1973 War (Middle East) 26 October 1973-File No. 21

have access to this information at the time. He told White House Chief of Staff, General Alexander Haig that he thought the Soviets were surprised.¹⁰³ Despite the lack of these pieces of intelligence, Kissinger matched the Soviets' job, a reluctant acceptance of Egypt and Syria's invasion, with a job of his own, the threat to détente.

After talking with Dobrynin, Kissinger called two of the Middle East parties to the conflict, the Israelis and the Egyptians; he relied on the Soviets to contact the Syrians.¹⁰⁴ He spoke with Deputy Chief of Israeli Mission Mordechai Shalev to confirm the guarantee that the Israelis were not preparing a preemptive strike.¹⁰⁵ After getting his confirmation, Kissinger resumed his role as Israeli spokesperson. He called Mohammed El-Zayatt, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, to relay Meir's message that Israel was not planning to attack Egypt or Syria.¹⁰⁶ At this time he did not know that the whole crisis over a rumored Israeli attack was a product of Sadat's war plan, and that Israeli assurances were irrelevant.¹⁰⁷ In his memoirs Kissinger states he "knew that no diplomacy would work if an Arab attack was premeditated,"¹⁰⁸ but he spent the next hour and fifteen minutes urging restraint on all sides. His third conversation with Zayatt at 8:15am confirmed his fears that war could not be avoided because the Egyptian had called to report that the war had started.¹⁰⁹ Zayatt claimed that the Israelis had launched a

¹⁰³ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 28.

¹⁰⁴ The United States had no relations with Syria during the October War.

¹⁰⁵ Kissinger-Mordechai Shalev 6:55 a.m. October 6, 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park Maryland.

See also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 18. Henry Kissinger-Mordechai Shalev 6:55 am.

¹⁰⁶ Kissinger-Mohammed El-Zayatt 7:00 a.m. October 6, 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park Maryland.

See also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 18

¹⁰⁷ Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 397

¹⁰⁸ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 14

¹⁰⁹ Kissinger-Mohammed El-Zayatt 8:15 a.m. October 6, 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park Maryland.

See also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 24

naval action supported by planes in an area south of the canal, but Kissinger heard a contradictory report that he thought more plausible from the Israelis within minutes. They claimed the Egyptian and Syrians started the war by “aerial bombardment along the borders.”¹¹⁰ We know now that it was the Egyptian’s who launched the attack, but at first it was unclear who started the war. Kissinger decided not to worry about who was at fault for the war. To him the important thing was to urge restraint and getting an early cease-fire. His next conversation, with Al Haig, at 8:35 a.m. shows that he had quickly perceived it was the Egyptians who started the war. Referring to Zayatt’s message of an initial Israeli naval attack he told Haig, “Now it is not conceivable that the Israelis would launch an attack with [a] single action in the Gulf of Suez. That has to be the prediction.”¹¹¹ Despite the fact that he quickly perceived it was the Egyptians who started the war, Kissinger did not publicly blame them while he fought for an early cease-fire.

Based on the IDF’s apparent invulnerability and supreme fighting skill both superpowers thought Israel would quickly defeat the Arab coalition.¹¹² However, it would become clear within days that this war would be a replay of previous ones. For the first time in an Arab-Israeli war, Israel looked vulnerable. As Arab prospects of ultimate victory waxed, the Soviet Union moved closer to its Egypt and Syria, and the United States moved closer to Israel. Before long, the Soviet Union and the United States were not just acting as international spokesmen for their clients; they were also initiating resupply efforts. This marked the failure of détente diplomacy to halt the

¹¹⁰ Kissinger-Mordechai Shalev 8:29 a.m. October 6, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park Maryland.

¹¹¹ Kissinger-Alexander Haig 8:35 a.m. October 6, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park Maryland

¹¹² Israelyan, 2-3 provides excellent insight into Soviet motivations for pursuing a policy of cooperation early in the war.

conflict. Resupply also meant that the conflict was no longer a regional conflict, and that it had escalated into an international battle for hegemony over the Middle East between the Soviet Union and the United States. In placing détente in jeopardy, the October War, not only threatened to turn the Cold War hot, but also resulted in a nuclear standoff between the superpowers.¹¹³

Did the outbreak of war October 6 mark a failure in Kissinger's pre-war diplomacy? The traditional argument is yes. William Quandt argues it failed because foreign policy was too broad. He argues "Nixon and Kissinger remained insensitive to the regional trends leading to war."¹¹⁴ Kissinger biographer Jussi Hanhimaki also criticizes the Nixon administration for not paying closer attention to regional trends.¹¹⁵ While this is true, Nixon and Kissinger did focus on the global situation more than a regional one, Nixon and Kissinger "inherited a Middle East poised for further bloodshed."¹¹⁶ The "three nos" from Khartoum laid the foundation for the October War. Sadat's actions prior to the war demonstrate that although he was interested in rapprochement with the United States his position vis-à-vis Israel had not changed. War was going to happen. However, in September 1973 Kissinger was Secretary of State and his job was to protect the status quo. From this point of view, the outbreak of war demonstrates his failure.

However, the reality of the situation is that Sadat had been planning war against Israel since he took office. He was unable to in 1971 because he lacked the arms for a war, but in 1973 he had acquired the necessary weapons to launch his war. I argue that

¹¹⁴ William B. Quandt, Decade of Decisions, 164

¹¹⁵ Hanhimaki, Flawed Architect, 306-7

¹¹⁶ Hahimaki, Flawed Architect, 304

the outbreak of war does not mark a failure of Kissinger's diplomacy. Instead it unlocked the stalemate that had stalled diplomacy. Furthermore, the war showed that the back channel successful at building basic trust between the United States and Egypt, which allowed for Kissinger's wartime maneuvering. . The two countries remained friendly throughout the war, showing Kissinger was successful at both building the trust of the Egyptians and building a basis for a lasting relationship between the two countries.

Goals and Interests

With the outbreak of war it is beneficial to explore the wartime aims of both the regional actors and the superpowers because achieving these goals played a central role in the diplomacy that occurred during the war. As noted earlier, Sadat was attacking out of a desire to change the psychological balance in the Middle East and to regain the occupied territories (see chapter 1). Egypt's ally Syria, however, pursued a different goal, one that would serve to complicate the situation. Under the leadership of President Hafez Al-Assad they Syrian goal for the war was the destruction of Israel. The goals he stated to the Soviet ambassador were: to force the complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Israeli armed force from all Arab territories, and a restoration of the legitimate rights to the Palestinians.¹¹⁷ Assad realized that Syrian forces would not be able to conquer Israel, so he embarked on the war with the idea that Syrian troops would be able to surprise Israel and fight for a day or two before the Soviet Union would call a cease-fire in place.¹¹⁸ He hoped this would leave Syria with control of the Golan Heights and depending on the success of the Egyptian armies, at least one-step closer towards the

¹¹⁷ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin. 14

¹¹⁸ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin. 39-46

destruction of Israel. Assad did not share this plan with Sadat even after the Soviets reported it to the Egyptian.¹¹⁹ In the early stages of the war it would become clear that the divergence in strategy would have serious implications as the Syrians desired a ceasefire and the Egyptians wanted to keep fighting.

Israel did not embark on the 1973 war of its own volition, but when war came to her, she pursued her own objectives. Israel's maintenance of the status quo during the interwar years contributed to the war, but above all Israel desired peace. Israel had followed the policy of maintaining the strategic status quo for three reasons. First, Israel was sending settlers to occupy the occupied territories. Second, the land had security values. With control of large parts of the Sinai, and in control of one side of the canal, Israel had increased time to react in case the Arab states tried to attack. Thirdly, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir felt that the land was a potential bargaining chip in further negotiations towards a peace settlement. Israel's desire for the status quo was helped by its special relationship with the United States, especially after the Jordanian Crisis. During the war Israel's chief goal was survival and maintaining long-term security through a close relationship with the United States.¹²⁰

The superpowers responded to the outbreak of war as well. Their interests in the Middle East that included their client states, but were also more complicated. Although the superpowers were both interested in increasing their influence in the Middle East, they also feared a direct confrontation. Neither superpower thought an Arab-Israeli war would serve their interests in this regard, but when the war began both superpowers tried to consolidate their positions.

¹¹⁹ Anwar Sadat, *In Search of Identity* (Harper colophon Books, New York 1979)

¹²⁰ Leng, *Bargaining and Learning*, 173

The Kremlin thought that an Egyptian victory would be the precursor to increased Egyptian independence from the Soviet Union, and that an Egyptian loss would lead to a loss of Soviet prestige and influence in the region argued against the campaign, albeit unsuccessfully.¹²¹ However, once the war started the Soviets developed three primary objectives: to prevent the escalation of the war which might precipitate a Soviet-American confrontation; to limit the effects of the war towards détente; and to accrue all possible positive benefits towards Soviet relations in the Middle East from the war.¹²² Brezhnev also used the opportunity to rid himself of some his enemies in the Politburo and to strengthen his hold on power.¹²³ An ideological dispute between the Chinese and Soviets also played a role in Soviet support for the Arab cause, but above all the Soviet emphasis was on preserving détente and keeping on better terms with the United States.

For the United States war threatened not only the status quo, but American leaders also feared that increased Arab nationalism might undermine American supported Arab moderates like King Hussein of Jordan.¹²⁴ Increasingly dependent on foreign oil, the October War threatened the west's oil supply and served to exacerbate diplomatic differences between the US and its European allies. Diplomatic relations were already strained between the Nixon White House and Europe. Vietnam strained US-European relations and led to a loss of morality for the United States in the eyes of much of the world. As a result, while the United States and USSR were enjoying the fruits of détente an unintended side effect of it was that it further strained cross Atlantic relations.

¹²¹ Victor Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin During the Yom Kippur War, University Park, Pennsylvania: The Penn State University Press, 1995), 2. Israelyan also provides insight into the Kremlin's views of the war on page 17.

¹²² Galia Golan, *Yom Kippur and After*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 74.

¹²³ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin 23.

¹²⁴ Henry A. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, Boston: Little and Brown, 1982. 468

Increased US-Soviet diplomacy and the thaw in the Cold War raised fears in Europe of a creation of a “condominium” of power between the United States and the Soviet Union.¹²⁵ The French under Pompidou and Foreign Minister Michael Jobert were especially hostile towards superpower detente.¹²⁶ The Europeans feared a “concert of the superpowers” believing it would function at their expense. Sensing the decline of President Nixon and fearing a disruption in its oil supply, a nascent European Community beginning to find its collective voice in geopolitics, met US policies toward the Middle East with hostility and resistance.

Furthermore, the October War occurred at a nadir in the United States’ power in the world. Beset by problems with Watergate, Vietnam, and side effects from détente the United States was weak at home as well as abroad. Domestically, President Nixon was crippled by Watergate. He spent the first days of the war trying to escape the scandal in Florida. When he returned to Washington President Nixon had to find a new vice president because Spiro Agnew resigned on the fourth day of the war. The Saturday Night massacre occurred a week and a half later, keeping Nixon out-of-the-loop for most of the war. Nixon’s and therefore the United States ability to act internationally was also restrained by a resurgent Congress led by presidential aspirant Harry Jackson of Washington. and a strong anti-détente coalition. These domestic problems for the president served to constrain, but did not completely halt the Administration’s ability to act decisively in matters of foreign policy. However after the first bombs of Operation

¹²⁵ William Burr and Robert A. Wampler “With friends like These...”- Kissinger. the Atlantic Alliance and The Abortive “year of Europe” 1973-1974, (Draft: August 31, 2004) presented at Vanderbilt University

¹²⁶ William Burr and Robert A. Wampler “With friends like These...”- Kissinger. the Atlantic Alliance and The Abortive “year of Europe” 1973-1974, (Draft: August 31, 2004) presented at Vanderbilt University

Badr were dropped, Henry Kissinger assumed control of American foreign policy and was able to act without many impediments.

Despite these strategic disadvantages, Secretary of State Kissinger was able to conduct a successful diplomacy during the Yom Kippur War by quickly establishing telephone contact with the main belligerents, using détente as both an instrument for peace and as a weapon, and by shielding the president by exaggerating his involvement with the crisis. He viewed the US interests in the region as: ensuring survival and security of Israel, maintaining relations with Arab countries, to take control of peace effort, to limit Soviet influence in the region, to steal Soviet clients, and to block all moves resulting from Soviet backed plans.¹²⁷

Accordingly, once war broke out Kissinger first worked to immediately halt the conflict. Once that proved untenable he worked to maneuver the United States into a position where it was the only interlocutor talking to the main parties in order so the United States could play the central role at the negotiating table after the war. This meant that the United States must push for an Israeli victory, not only to show that aggressors would not be rewarded for their attacks, but also to show the Middle East that American backed clients would be victorious over those depending on Soviet supplies.¹²⁸ However, the United States did not want a total victory by the Israelis; Kissinger instead wanted a stalemate that would allow for a true peace to be possible in the Middle East because he was receptive to the idea that the Arabs needed to regain their pride in order to sit at the negotiating table with the Israelis.

...and it continues...

¹²⁷ Henry A. Kissinger, Diplomacy. (Simon & Schuster: new York, 1994) p. 737-738
Henry A. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval p.468

On the morning of October 6 it became clear that the political and military reality of the situation affected how successful Kissinger could be in his early search for a cease-fire. Kissinger's main problem was that neither of the sides fighting in the conflict desired an immediate cease-fire. The Syrian war plans called for two to three days of operations and Sadat told the Soviet ambassador "I won't have a cease-fire until the main targets of my battle have been achieved."¹²⁹ Sadat planned on fighting until he was satisfied that his goals were achieved, and Israel would not agree to a cease-fire until the IDF was in control of the situation on the ground. As a result of the Arab positions, the Soviet Union was forced into the difficult situation of having to support its clients in a war it did not agree with.

At 9:25 am, Kissinger spoke directly to President Nixon for the first time, and they decided to try to work with the Soviets towards an immediate cease-fire status quo ante, meaning a return to the pre-war lines.¹³⁰ The public reason for this approach was that it was fair. Both sides would return to their pre-war lines and the aggressors would not be rewarded. As usual, Kissinger's agenda was more complex. Kissinger used détente's spirit of cooperation in part to keep the issue of the war out of the United Nations General Assembly. It was likely that the General Assembly would pass a resolution condemning Israel, and the United States would be forced into a position to either abandon Israel or more likely to suffer the wrath of the Arab world by vetoing such a resolution. Kissinger was also worried about any debate in which the United States would have to defend itself. Kissinger told British Ambassador George Rowland Stanley

¹²⁸ Henry A. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval p.468

¹²⁹ Sadat, Identity, 251

¹³⁰ Kissinger, Crisis, 36.

Baring, Earl of Cromer (hereafter Cromer). “I will not give anybody else the full flavor of this: if the General Assembly turns into a propaganda battle, we will be unreachable for the rest of the week... We will not then be as easy to deal with as we are now. On the other hand we are willing to cooperate now to proceed on a neutral line.”¹³¹ The United Nations would most likely call for a ceasefire in place, which would hurt Israel if it was unable to quickly regain its territory. At the same time, Kissinger was in favor of taking the issue to the Security Council in the next few days, but did not want to yet. In the Security Council, the United States could protect Israel and call for cease-fire status quo ante. Kissinger also made sure to get on the record as having favored a return to prewar lines because he still expected Israel to mount a quick and decisive victory. If he was on the record as favoring a return to prewar lines, Kissinger would be able to lean on Israel in the event she once again extended her borders through an Arab-Israeli war.¹³²

Kissinger attempted to appear to follow an evenhanded policy. Nixon and Kissinger decided not to focus on who started to war, but to focus on what they could do to stop it, and benefit from it.¹³³ Thus, Kissinger pursued another objective, keeping the war out of the United Nations General Assembly as long as possible.

In the early hours of the war, Kissinger continued to use telephone diplomacy to keep in touch with all the parties involved. A quick look at his telephone record testifies to this fact. The first day of the war he made 61 phone calls. He spoke with the Israelis twenty-one times, the Soviets eleven times and the Egyptians four times, and Secretary

¹³¹ Kissinger-Lord Cromer, 4:25 p.m. October 6, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
see also Crisis 58

¹³² Kissinger-Haig 10:35 a.m. October 6, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park Maryland National Archives, College Park Maryland, see also Crisis 43

¹³³ Quandt, Decade of Decisions, 170

General of the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim four times. The rest of his calls were to American officials, primarily Alexander Haig who was with Nixon in Florida. The strategy was to remain central to all parties involved in order to play a primary role in the post-war negotiations.¹³⁴ Thus, within hours, Kissinger had developed his initial strategies: to use détente to stop the war; to threaten détente by gradual escalation if failure occurred; to keep the issue out of the General Assembly; to become a central player in postwar diplomacy by keeping in contact with the other nations and pursuing an evenhanded policy.

The rest of October 6, Kissinger followed his strategies and pursued his objectives. In conversations with Dobrynin, he raised the question of what the war might do to détente. After the Soviets delayed joining what Kissinger terms a “neutral” approach for a cease-fire, Kissinger decided it was time to inform Dobrynin of his communications with Zayatt.¹³⁵ This served as notice to Dobrynin that the United States was developing its own communication network with Egypt.¹³⁶ This is evidence of another strategy that Kissinger was pursuing, that of undermining Soviet-Egyptian relations, by building relations with Egypt. The next day President Sadat sent a letter of encouragement to Kissinger through Prime Minister Edward Heath of Britain writing “Please tell Kissinger...He should contact Cairo, not Moscow, in respect to anything concerning Egypt.”¹³⁷ Besides encouraging the backchannel communications, Sadat was also reiterating that Egypt sought to be independent and did not want to have any cease-

¹³⁴ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 738

¹³⁵ Kissinger-Cromer 4:25 p.m. October 6, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland, see also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 58

¹³⁶ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 81

¹³⁷ Sadat, *Identity*, 258

fire imposed on it. This statement also demonstrated how Egypt was slipping out of the Soviet orbit.

October 7 was a day when little happened diplomatically. No side was ready to stop fighting. On the first day of the war 35,000 Syrian troops had attacked from the north, partially breaking through on the Golan Heights.¹³⁸ The Heights were just 17 miles at their deepest, leaving little room for error. Any breakthrough was a big one. On the southern front the Egyptians followed the initial air attack with an assault on the canal. Using pressurized hoses Egyptian engineers cut holes through the 45-foot embankment in order to build the bridges necessary for a crossing as soldiers chanted “‘*Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar*’ [Allah is Great].”¹³⁹ By day’s end the first of 100,000 troops and 1,000 Egyptian tanks had crossed onto the East Side of the Canal. Israeli minister Abba Eban told Kissinger that Israel would need a few days to “restore [its] position.”¹⁴⁰ On the seventh the Israelis were still confident they would quickly expel the Arab armies and categorically refused any ceasefire while “Syrian/Egyptian troops [were] ‘over the line.’”¹⁴¹

The lack of desire to stop the fighting by the participants in the conflict led to increased Soviet stalling as they supported their clients, serving to raise tempers in Washington. The Soviets delayed for most of the day. At 12:40 p.m. Dobrynin told Kissinger that he was waiting for a message from Moscow with instructions on how to

¹³⁸ William Burr, “The October War and US policy” (National Security Archives: Washington D.C., 2003).

¹³⁹ Sadat, *Identity*, 235-7, Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 417

¹⁴⁰ Kissinger-Abba Eban 6:00 p.m. October 6, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

¹⁴¹ William Burr, “The October War and U.S. Policy”, NSA Document #16, Memorandum to Kissinger, initialed “LSE” [Lawrence S. Eagleburger], 6 October 1973 Source: RG 59, SN 70-73, Pol 27-14 Arab-Isr

proceed.¹⁴² In Washington this met with increased impatience, but Kissinger at first expected the message in the next couple of hours. However, as time passed Kissinger detected the delaying tactic. In a conversation with Haig a little after three in the afternoon Kissinger opined “I am beginning to think those sons of bitches in Moscow are schnookering us.”¹⁴³ In the same conversation Kissinger decided that they should finally take the war to the Security Council at 5:00 p.m., even if the Soviets had not yet responded. His next telephone conversation, however, was with Dobrynin who reported that the Soviets did not want to pursue a joint approach in the United Nations, but instead wished to continue “confidential consultations on the whole Middle East problem.” The Soviets wanted the superpowers to solve the problem in order to enhance their position, but Arab intransigence prohibited them from pursuing that approach at that time. Dobrynin told Kissinger in their fourth and final conversation of the day that he was going to visit his granddaughter for the day so he would be out touch.¹⁴⁴ This was a diplomatic way of saying that direct communications would be temporary halted. It was also a signal that the Soviets were planning a diplomatic move of their own. What that move became clear the evening of October 7, when the USSR issued its formal reaction to the war, in which they blamed Israel for the war. As a result the United States and the Soviets did not communicate directly for the rest of the night, and the evening of October 7, the USSR issued its formal reaction to war, blaming Israel for the war.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Kissinger-Dobrynin 12:40 p.m. October 7, 1973. NPMP. HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

¹⁴³ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 96

¹⁴⁴ Kissinger-Dobrynin 04:40 p.m. October 7, 1973. NPMP. HAK TELCONS. chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland. See also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 101

¹⁴⁵ Golan, *Yom Kippur and After*, 78

Unable to act diplomatically through the United Nations because the Soviets refused to play ball, the United States was still able to play a military role on the seventh. On a day characterized by "heavy fighting and major losses" for Israel on both fronts, Kissinger and Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, agreed to a limited resupply of ammunition and sidewinder missiles to Israel provided unmarked El Al planes picked them up.¹⁴⁶ The decision was made in part because of the Soviets were playing to their patrons and because an IAF attack against the Syrian SAM batteries resulted in the loss of six phantoms while only destroying one of the thirty-one batteries.¹⁴⁷ The Middle East task force report estimated that over 500 Egyptian tanks had crossed the canal. On the northern front, 1000 Syrian tanks and 600 artillery pieces were amassed, but the Israelis felt that the Syrian troops were exhausted. Earlier in the day the Syrians were initially successful trying to break through on the Golan Heights, forcing the Israelis to halt their bombing runs of Egyptian SAM sites in order to act as tank-killers on the northern front, after Moshe Dayan directly intervened to tell IAF commander Benny Peled that the Syrians had broken through on the Golan.¹⁴⁸ This decision left Egyptian SAMs in place, resulting in additional aircraft losses, but halted the Syrian offensive.

On the Southern front the situation was more dire, but the desert provided a large barrier from the human population, whereas any movement on the Golan Heights threatened homes. Sixty percent of the Sinai Divisions' tanks were either destroyed or temporarily out of commission.¹⁴⁹ The Bar-Lev line, a string of forts along the canal had

¹⁴⁶ Burr, "The October War and US Policy" document 19 Department of State, Operations Center, Middle East Task Force, Situation Report # 8, "Situation in the Middle East, as of 2300 Hours (EDT, Oct. 7, 1973" Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1173, 1973 War (Middle East) 7 Oct. 1973 File No. 2

¹⁴⁷ Morris, Righteous Victims, 404

¹⁴⁸ Morris, Righteous Victims, 416

¹⁴⁹ Morris, Righteous Victims, 416

been overrun and for the first time many Israeli soldiers were feeling the bitter pangs of defeat. Ariel Sharon, an armor commander was shocked when he saw the Sinai division survivors, exclaiming “these were soldiers who had been brought up on victories...it was a generation that had never lost. Now they were in a state of shock...How is it that [the Egyptians] were moving forward and we were defeated?”¹⁵⁰ Late in the day, as the offensive halted on the Golan Heights, the Israelis began massing their forces in preparation for a counterattack. At days end Kissinger offered some interesting thoughts on the crisis at a WSAG meeting:

Egypt doesn't want a confrontation with us (the U.S.) at the UN and the Soviets don't want a confrontation with us period. Our general position will be a restoration of the cease-fire lines. The Arabs will scream that they are being deprived of their birthright, but by Thursday (October 11) they will be on their knees begging us for a cease-fire... We're trying to get this over with a limited amount of damage to our relations with the Arabs and the Soviets. If we can also put some money in the bank with the Israelis to draw on later in negotiations, well and good.¹⁵¹

Political capital with the Israelis would prove to be vital, later in trying to stop the war, and even more so in the negotiations that followed.

Moscow on the other hand now hoped for a cease-fire along the lines of Assad's original plan. On the morning of the eighth, Dobrynin passed along an oral message from Brezhnev to the President that he had “contacted the leaders of the Arab states on

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Morris, Righteous Victims, 416

¹⁵¹ Kissinger, Crisis, 111

the question of cease-fire.”¹⁵² Sadat, however, was not yet as interested as Assad in seeking a cease-fire. He hoped to still capture the strategic Gidi and Mitla passes in the Sinai, nearly 20 miles from the Canal. This is what he thought it would take to accomplish the psychological shift that would unlock the peace process.¹⁵³ Despite Soviet pressure Sadat decided to fight on. The Soviet Union was forced with either deciding to support the panicky Assad’s ceasefire proposal or the irreverent Sadat. Deciding that their position vis-à-vis Egypt was more precarious than with Syria, the Soviets decided that Egypt was the more important client, and continued the airlift they had started on 6 October.¹⁵⁴

The morning of October 8 Secretary of State Kissinger worked to shore up domestic support for the White House. In a series of phone calls with Senators, Kissinger worked on the text of a resolution of support for the policies being followed by the Nixon Administration. Ever mindful of his boss’s public image, Kissinger encouraged the president to call Senators Mansfield and Scott to thank them for their help.¹⁵⁵

October 8 marked a change in US strategy. A CIA analysis predicted that the Israelis would turn the tide against the Syrians in the Golan Heights by the end of the day. This meant that it was now in the United States’ interests to stall. After two days of harping on a cease-fire status quo ante, when a UN Security Council meeting was held at 3:30 in the afternoon, the US representative to the UN, Joe Scali, never brought the issue to a vote.¹⁵⁶ Not only was the proposal sure to be defeated, but the administration had

¹⁵² Kissinger, *Crisis*, 114

¹⁵³ Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin*, 45

¹⁵⁴ Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin*, 48

¹⁵⁵ Kissinger-Nixon 11:50 a.m. October 8, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

¹⁵⁶ Kissinger-Nixon 01:40 p.m. October 8, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland. See also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 127

also determined that if Israel really was about to turn the tide in the war, a vote was no longer in the best interests of the United States. If Israel was going to be able to expel her enemies, the United States would support her. Unfortunately, the reality on the ground told a different story from the optimistic CIA estimate.

Israel was finally able to launch its first counteroffensive on the 8th. The attack led in part by Ariel Sharon's tank division was meant to sweep at the Egyptian bridgeheads and destroy them,¹⁵⁷ the attack failed, and each division took serious casualties when it tried to approach the Egyptian bridgeheads where the Egyptian forces were consolidated.¹⁵⁸ The failure would have serious affects on the Israeli Chain of Command. Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, already panicky from the day before became even more nervous as it became clear that Israel would have a difficult time fighting its way back to its prewar borders.

On the other hand, in Washington, where intelligence estimates were optimistic, the mood was positive. Nixon's biggest worry when he phoned from Key Biscayne was that the Soviet clients would "get clobbered." In a 7:08 p.m. telephone call, Nixon expressed his worry "that the Israelis, when they [are] finish[ed] clobbering the Egyptians and the Syrians" would be "even more impossible to deal with than before." Nixon also complained, "I am not tough on the Israelis... You and I both know they can't go back to the other [1967] borders. Kissinger's conversations with Nixon often turned into rallying sessions for the two. Later in the same conversation as Kissinger and the President continued to rehash the day's events. it became clear that Nixon's biggest worry was too

¹⁵⁷ Morris, Righteous Victims, 417

¹⁵⁸ Morris, Righteous Victims. 419

big of a victory by the Israelis; he did not yet know that Brezhnev had sent messages to Arab leaders urging them to actively support Egypt and Syria.¹⁵⁹

K: I had a good talk with Stennis [Senator John Stennis, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee].

N: How good? Does he think we're doing the right thing?

K: Oh, he says he's marking it down on this calendar. He said it's a great day.

N: Because why?

K: Because he thinks we're in control and we're handling it well.

N: Right. Good, good, good. That's good. Actually, though, the Israelis are really moving now aren't they?

K: Well, they will be by tomorrow morning. I mean, they're in position now from which they will-

N: They'll cut the Egyptians off. Poor dumb Egyptians, getting across the Canal and all the bridges will be blown up. They'll cut them all off—thirty or forty thousand of them. Go over and destroy the SAM sites. The Syrians will probably go rushing back across now.

K: No, the Syrians—that will turn into a turkey shoot by Wednesday.

N: Yea, Yea --surrender.

K: Either surrender or a terrific shellacking.

N: Just so the Israelis don't get to the point where they say to us: We will not settle except on the basis of everything we got. They can't do that Henry. They can't do that to us again. They've done it to us for four years but no more.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Golan, Yom Kippur and After, 80-81

While Nixon and Kissinger were worried about Israel winning the war too decisively, the Soviets faced a diplomatic crisis of their own. On October 8, President Assad of Syria began to press the Soviets for the cease-fire he had told them was part of his plan.¹⁶¹ Sadat refused the cease-fire, however, because he did not yet feel that he had accomplished the psychological victory he needed to unlock diplomacy. Sadat decided to fight on and the Soviets were forced to support Sadat over Assad because they saw their position in Egypt as more in question than in Syria, and they thought Egypt was the more important country in the region.

October 8 marked the end of the first stage of wartime diplomacy. During the first three days of the war Kissinger's chief instrument of diplomacy was his telephone. He made 125 phone calls to handle the crisis while President Nixon remained in Florida. Kissinger spoke on a regular basis with the Israelis, Dobrynin, the Egyptians, General Haig and the President, 21, 16, 8, 11, and 8 times respectively. Through the telephone Kissinger worked on building relations with the Egyptians and his double use of détente with the Soviets. Previous Kissinger diplomatic biographies, lacking access to the telephone transcripts from the crisis have largely failed to address that the superpower competition was already heating up in the first days of the war, although in a limited fashion.¹⁶²

From the beginning of the war, the regional conflict served to heat the Cold war. The Soviets showed that they were not willing to risk their position in the Middle East for détente. From the newly released telephone transcripts it is apparent that neither was

¹⁶⁰ Kissinger-Nixon 07:08 p.m. October 8, 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland. See also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 138

¹⁶¹ Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 25

¹⁶² Isaacson, *Kissinger and Hanhimaki, The Flawed Architect*

Nixon or Kissinger. As a result, both the Soviets and the Americans conducted their diplomacy so it would benefit their clients. The Soviets stalled the cease-fire initiative and decided to resupply their Arab allies, as had Kissinger and Schlesinger. Despite these decisions, the superpowers were using détente for what it was designed for, expanding influence while practicing limited restraint. This restraint would be tested over the next days as events continued to drift out of the two superpowers' control.

Chapter 3

The Deepening

October 9 would mark a new stage in American diplomacy although it was unknown at the time. The question of American resupply of Israel became a major issue as it became clear that Israel was in deeper trouble than originally thought. Events continued to unfold on the ground making a cease-fire impossible to achieve. Unable to get a cease-fire, the superpowers drifted closer toward confrontation as each scrambled to protect their clients. By the end of October 13, Kissinger decided that confrontation and not cooperation would be the American diplomatic approach towards the Soviet.

On October 9 it became clear that Israel was in deep trouble. The counteroffensive of October 8 failed. Late in the night (in the Middle East) of October 8 into the morning of the ninth the Israeli leadership met to discuss the urgent military situation. The failed offensive had left the cabinet stunned. The very existence of Israel seemed to be in question. That night the Israeli cabinet discussed the possibility of going nuclear, and decided to place its armed Jericho missiles on alert.¹⁶³ The growing Israeli apprehension made the issue of resupply much more urgent.

The day began for Kissinger when Israeli Deputy Chief of Mission Mordechai Shalev called at 1:45 a.m. after receiving instructions from Meir to inquire about getting planes and spare parts.¹⁶⁴ At the beginning of this stage of diplomacy, the Soviet Union and the US were playing a “let’s wait and see” stalling game of diplomacy, but this restraint soon faded as pressures mounted on the superpowers to resupply their clients.

¹⁶³ Isaacson, Kissinger, 517

At this point, however, Kissinger was able to put the minister off until morning.¹⁶⁵ Shalev and Kissinger met a little after 8:00 a.m. to continue their discussion. In that conversation, Shalev gave Kissinger a military estimate of the situation. According to Shalev, the Egyptians had crossed the canal 50,000 strong with about 700 remaining tanks. The Israelis had lost 500 tanks in their defense, many due to mechanical failure from having sped through the desert on the way toward the front lines.¹⁶⁶ Shalev reported that the Israelis had inflicted an equal amount of damage on Egyptian tanks and had destroyed 400 Syrian tanks, but Egypt and Syria were being resupplied by their allies. Iraq donated 48 fighters and bombers with pilots to Syria and was sending an armored division, while Algeria had sent 18 Mig-21's to Egypt.¹⁶⁷ Shalev's objective was to get the same kind of support and more from Kissinger.

If Shalev failed, Golda Meir was willing to leave Israel during a war to go to Washington and plead herself with President Nixon for arms. This was as much a threat as anything else. Golda Meir demonstrated how desperate the situation was by merely being willing to leave the country in the middle of a war and if she came to Washington it would cause a political headache for Nixon. It is likely that some members of Congress including Senator Henry Jackson would make the most of the situation to demonstrate support for Israel and work to undermine détente. Senator Jackson was already leading the opposition to détente by introducing the Jackson-Vanik amendment which would link

¹⁶⁴ Kissinger-Dinitz 01:45 a.m. October 9, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives. College Park, Maryland. See also Kissinger, Crisis, 144

¹⁶⁵ Kissinger-Dinitz 01:45 a.m. October 9, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives. College Park, Maryland. Kissinger, Crisis, 144

¹⁶⁶ Burr, The October War and US Policy. Document 21A. Memorandum of Conversation, The Map Room, The Whitehouse, Tuesday, October 9, 1973, 820-840 a.m.

¹⁶⁷ Burr, Document 21A. Memorandum of Conversation, The Map Room, The Whitehouse, Tuesday, October 9, 1973, 820-840 a.m.

the USSR receiving Most Favored Nation status to increased Jewish emigration.¹⁶⁸ On the 8th, Jackson and Walter Mondale had told Ambassador Dinitz that they could get Israel the weapons it needed.¹⁶⁹

A WSAG meeting was held to discuss the issue of resupply. At the meeting Secretary of Defense Schlesinger warned that a resupply would severely damage US relations with the Arabs.¹⁷⁰ Kissinger however urged for a low key resupply, one that would get the Israelis the arms they needed but not antagonize the Arabs.¹⁷¹

In a National Security Council memorandum, William Quandt addressed questions of Israeli arms requests and the cease-fire.¹⁷² He made the point that the United States had to carry out resupply carefully because there was the possibility that it might act too early or too late, which would damage the American position vis-à-vis the Israelis, Arabs or both.¹⁷³ He also addressed the dilemmas of a cease-fire strategy. Quandt felt that the benefits of pushing for a cease-fire-in-place would outweigh the costs of having to give increased military support to Israel to get it done. Kissinger agreed, and started laying the groundwork for achieving a cease-fire-in-place by sending a back channel message through Ismail that the Sadat had “made his point”.¹⁷⁴

The change in tactic from stalling, but still calling for a cease-fire status quo ante to a cease-fire-in-place was as a result of how Kissinger perceived US interests at this

¹⁶⁸ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 396

¹⁶⁹ Kalb and Kalb, *Kissinger*, 466

¹⁷⁰ Isaacson, *Kissinger: a Biography*, 518

¹⁷¹ Isaacson, *Kissinger: a Biography*, 518 and Quandt, *Decades*, 176-177

¹⁷² Burr, *US policy during the Yom Kippur War*, document 22, William Quandt to Kissinger, "Middle Eastern Issues," 9 October 1973 Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 664, Middle East War Memos & Misc. Oct. 6-Oct 17, 1973

¹⁷³ Burr, *US policy during the Yom Kippur War*, document 22, William Quandt to Kissinger, "Middle Eastern Issues," 9 October 1973 Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 664, Middle East War Memos & Misc. Oct. 6-Oct 17, 1973

stage in the war. To Kissinger, an Israeli defeat was not only a victory for the Arabs, but a victory for the Soviet Union who had armed its clients, and to the Nixon administration this was unacceptable. Although the Israeli ambassador Dinitz, claimed that the situation was dire, the Israelis had already managed to push the Syrians back on the Golan Heights and were shelling Damascus.¹⁷⁵ The Egyptian Second and Third armies had been stopped well short of the strategic Gidi and Mitla passes (20 miles east of the Canal), but a State Department Telegram from US intelligence in Cairo reported that an Egyptian source had indicated that Sadat had broadened his goals due to early successes.¹⁷⁶ A cease-fire-in-place would therefore result in a stalemate, with a limited Egyptian victory. Kissinger believed that either a minor Egyptian victory or a limited Israeli victory would allow for a stalemate to be created. The stalemate that would result from a cease-fire-in-place was one that Kissinger believed would allow for real negotiations over the occupied territories.

On the 9th Kissinger tested the waters with the cease-fire. Quandt was correct in his assessment of Israel. Israel was the first government to refuse the cease-fire-in-place. The Egyptians were willing to accept a cease-fire, but only if their original demand of complete Israel withdrawal from the occupied territories was met.¹⁷⁷ In effect, Sadat had rejected the cease-fire proposal, but he did extend a carrot by promising to resume diplomatic relations with the United States once an Israeli withdrawal had begun. With a cease-fire seemingly not an option, Kissinger adapted the American policy. He favored a

¹⁷⁴ quoted in Quandt, *Decades*, 177

¹⁷⁵ Golan, *Yom Kippur and After*, 84

¹⁷⁶ U.S. Interests Section in Egypt, cable 3942 to State Department, "Current Egyptian Military Position," 10 October 1973

Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 638, Arab Republic of Egypt IX (Jan-Oct 73)

¹⁷⁷ Quandt, *Decades*, 178

“quiet” resupply of Israel.¹⁷⁸ In this way, Kissinger hoped to give Israel some breathing room with which to fight the war and hoped to avoid an Arab backlash that would threaten the oil supply, by not using US military planes. The night of 9 October Kissinger again met with Dinitz, this time to let Dinitz know that the President had approved a list of items for resupply, but that the Israelis would still need to use EL Al planes to pickup the items.

During the day of October 9, Soviet cargo planes had started landing in Egypt loaded with supplies, but would not be until the next day that it became clear in Washington that the Soviets had undertaken an airlift for their clients. The Kremlin had decided on an airlift the opening day of the war but had been delayed during the first three days because like the Americans, the Soviets did not want to escalate the crisis.¹⁷⁹ On 9 October the Soviets delivered 200 tons of ammunition and fuel to Damascus. Kissinger responded to this news by allowing Israel to use charter companies to transfer military supplies from the United States, but still refused to use American military planes to make the deliveries.¹⁸⁰ Israeli Ambassador Dinitz, responded by leaking stories to the press that Israel’s survival was at stake because of a slow resupply.¹⁸¹

Dinitz further complicated Kissinger’s diplomacy by calling Senator Henry Jackson, who was leading the charge against détente. By calling Jackson, Dinitz hoped to apply additional pressure on Kissinger in order to expedite the supplies that Israel desired. This marked the beginning of a divergence of interests between Israel and the White House. Kissinger and Nixon were still trying to use restraint, but Israel on the

¹⁷⁸ Kissinger-Schlesinger, no time given, October 9, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, folder 10 October 9-11, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

¹⁷⁹ Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin*, 57

¹⁸⁰ Quandt, *Decades*, 179

other hand was trying to ensure it had enough weapons to mount a clear victory campaign.

October 10 was a day of “sparring and regrouping” on the ground.¹⁸² A Department of State situation report shows that Israel had fought back to the 1967 lines on the Golan Heights and was now consolidating its positions. While increased Syrian air activity was met by the loss of 19 aircraft to only one for the Israelis. On the southern front, the Egyptian air force remained inactive while the second and third armies remained positioned under the SAM umbrella on a line 6-10 kilometers east of the canal.

This again became problematic for Kissinger after both Israel and Egypt had rejected the calls for a cease-fire-in-place and it was evident the Soviet Union had started a resupply to Egypt and Syria. Kissinger thought that an Arab victory aided by a Soviet resupply would be disastrous. He was sure that the “Arabs would become convinced that they could break every negotiating deadlock with a new assault.”¹⁸³ The situation now dictated not only the Israelis mount an offensive in order to show the Arabs the uselessness of the Soviet Union as an ally. The offensive also had to begin quickly, before a situation arose where the United States would have to block a resolution in the UN General Assembly calling for a cease-fire-in-place while the Arab armies were “over the line.”

Meanwhile the diplomacy between the superpowers was stalling, but showed signs of hope. On the morning of October 10 Soviet ambassador Dobrynin passed along

¹⁸¹ Isaacson, Kissinger: a Biography, 520

¹⁸² Department of State, Operations Center, Middle East Task Force, Situation Report #18, "Situation in the Middle East, as of 1800 EDT, Oct. 10, 1973" Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1174, 1973 Middle East War - 10 October 1973 File No. 5

¹⁸³ Kissinger, YOU, 498

a message from the Politburo which indicated that the Soviet Union would no longer block a cease-fire resolution and would instead abstain.¹⁸⁴ The message cited the Soviet decision as being guided by “broad interests of the maintenance of peace” and the maintenance of détente. Despite this news of the renewed possibility of coordinated action by the US and USSR, Kissinger stalled. In part, he needed time to decide how to respond to the message, and in part he was dealing with the Nixon administration’s crisis in leadership. About the same time Kissinger was informed that three Soviet airborne divisions were placed on alert in Eastern Europe, raising the question if the Soviets were going to intervene.¹⁸⁵ It appears that the Soviet decision to urge for a cease-fire was typical of how the game of détente had been played through the opening days of the crisis. They pushed for a cease-fire while also escalating tension by increasing the alert level. Nevertheless, Kissinger alerted Israel of Moscow’s renewed interest in a cease-fire, but Prime Minister Meir refused to discuss it.¹⁸⁶ Despite knowing this, Kissinger decided to stall and not create an official response until the next day, in order to give Israel more time to improve its situation.

Kissinger’s stalling tactics were aided by a “major domestic problem.”¹⁸⁷ Vice President Agnew submitted his resignation to Secretary of State Kissinger, thus further distracting President Nixon who now had to fend off not only Watergate, but find a new vice-president. The first conversation between Kissinger and Dobrynin that afternoon was dominated by a discussion over Agnew’s resignation. The Soviet Ambassador

¹⁸⁴ Yuli Vorontsov, Minister-Counselor, Soviet Embassy, to Scowcroft, 10 October 1973, enclosing untitled paper, delivered 11:15 a.m. Source: NPMP, HAKO, Dobrynin/Kissinger Vol. 19 (July 13, 1973-Oct 11, 1973)

¹⁸⁵ Kalb and Kalb, *Kissinger*, 470

¹⁸⁶ Quandt, *Decades*, 179

stroked Kissinger's ego telling him that the resignation "makes you the second, perhaps first, most powerful man in the country."¹⁸⁷ The Soviet would fail to realize how accurate his statement was. Their second conversation was about the Middle East war and shows that the mood of cooperation resulting from détente was fading. Kissinger was becoming increasingly frustrated with what he viewed was a double game by the Soviets. They were pushing for a cease-fire while also encouraging the Arabs diplomatically and by resupply. During a tense exchange Ambassador Dobrynin chided the Secretary of State for delaying a reply to the Soviet proposal not to block a cease-fire. He stated, "I understand. You are playing quite well. Don't overplay the theme of Russian irresponsibility."¹⁸⁸ Precisely as both superpowers had feared the strains of détente were becoming increasingly evident as the war continued.

October 11 was a relatively quiet day on the battlefield and diplomatically. Having fought within miles of Damascus, Israel began to shift its forces from the Syrian front and to redeploy them in preparation for an attack against the Egyptians while keeping the Syrian front was to remain static. The Israelis estimated that they were facing 800 Egyptian tanks east of the Canal.¹⁹⁰

As Israel was facing war on two fronts, the divergence in interests between Meir and the Nixon administration led her going on a diplomatic offensive against the administration's interests. During the morning, news reached Nixon's ears that the

¹⁸⁷ Kissinger-Dobrynin 11:45 a.m. October 10, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland, folder 10. See also Kissinger. *Crisis*. 165

¹⁸⁸ Kissinger-Dobrynin 05:40 p.m. October 10, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives. College Park. Maryland., folder 10

¹⁸⁹ Kissinger-Dobrynin 09:45 p.m. October 10, 1973, NPMP. HAK TELCONS, chronological file. Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland., folder 10.
See also *Crisis* 167

¹⁹⁰ Kissinger-Dinitz 03:05 p.m. October 10, 1973, NPMP. HAK TELCONS, chronological file. Box 22, National Archives. College Park, Maryland., folder 10.

Israelis were putting out messages indicating that he was failing to help the Israelis. This was designed to increase Congressional pressure on Nixon to speed up the airlift. Nixon was going to help the Israelis, but he was not going to let the Jewish lobby or Israel bully him. In an 11:00 a.m. telephone conversation with Kissinger, Nixon instructed Kissinger to “lean very hard on the Israeli ambassador....I will not tolerate this, and if I hear any more of this, I will hold him responsible.”¹⁹¹ He also wanted Kissinger to make clear, “The Israelis have to trust us or there is no game.” The Israelis took one other action against the United States’ interests. The Israelis were openly talking about their success, the bombing of Damascus, while the United States was providing the diplomatic cover for Israel to continue the war.¹⁹² This would increase diplomatic pressure on the United States to influence Israel to accept an immediate cease-fire. Kissinger was particularly worried that the Arabs may employ the oil weapon.

The night of October 11 demonstrates how President Nixon was not operating at the peak of his ability during the crisis. British Prime Minister Edward Heath called the White House switchboard to talk to President Nixon about the Middle East, a few moments before 8:00 p.m. Kissinger’s deputy, Brent Scowcroft, was informed of the request and called Kissinger about how to proceed. Kissinger told Scowcroft that the President was “loaded” when he had last spoken to him.¹⁹³ Kissinger does not include this part of the conversation in *Crisis*. At 8:00 p.m. Kissinger took what should have been

See also *Crisis* 185

¹⁹¹ Kissinger-Nixon 11:00 a.m. October 10, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland., folder 10

See Kissinger, *Crisis*, 181-182

¹⁹² Kissinger, *YOU*, 504

¹⁹³ Kissinger-Scowcroft 07:55 p.m. October 11, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland., folder 10. see also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 188

the President's call. Heath wanted to see if the United States could apply pressure to the Israelis over Jordan not to attack Jordan.¹⁹⁴

On the 12th, the resupply issue was still unresolved as the Soviets continued to pour in supplies to their clients. The Israelis had trouble finding private charters to deliver the promised aid, and 14,000 Iraqi troops with 240 tanks were trying to get to the war zone in Syria. The IAF slowed them down by destroying a bridge sixty miles northeast of Damascus.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the Israelis would have to fight these troops, and needed to be resupplied in order to keep their offensive into Syria going.

During most of the day President Nixon was uninvolved in the crisis because he was picking his next vice-president, but he found some time to deal with the Middle East war. In a morning conversation with Kissinger the President discussed the major development of the last twenty-four hours. King Hussein of Jordan had sent word through the British that he was being pressured to send an armored division into Syria. The pressure on Hussein was immense. He had just restored relations with the Egyptians and Syrians in September, after they were severed following the 1970 Jordan conflict. In order to keep on decent terms with his Arab brethren Hussein had to donate some troops. Not wanting to fight a war with Israel, Hussein sought to gain an assurance that despite moving an armor division into Syria that Israel would not attack them. The Israelis for their part were facing fighting that was tougher than in any of the three previous wars and were not looking to fight anyone else. However, they refused to allow the Jordanian

¹⁹⁴ Kissinger-Heath 08:00 pm 10/11/73, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22 National Archives, College Park, Maryland. See also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 189

¹⁹⁵ Kenneth W. Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy (Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin, and the quest for Arab-Israeli Peace)* (Routledge: New York, 1999) 77

armor division into the battle area.¹⁹⁶ To Hussein's dismay the Israelis informed the US that they would indeed attack the Jordan armor division.¹⁹⁷ The Israelis also informed Nixon that they were willing to accept a cease-fire-in-place, but now Sadat wanted to press on.¹⁹⁸

The President and Kissinger also discussed Kissinger's upcoming press conference to be held at noon. The president was concerned with inflaming the Arabs and wanted Kissinger to state that the president was concerned with keeping the balance of power in the region. At the press conference, he said that the United States did not view the Soviet encouragement of Arab unity during the crisis or the Soviet airlift as helpful,¹⁹⁹ but he went out of his way not to offend or upset the Soviets. He mentioned several times the relative restraint they had shown throughout the crisis. When asked about reports that the Arabs would employ the oil weapon he responded "we have made a very serious effort, in this crisis, to take seriously into account Arab concerns and Arab views. On the other hand, we have to pursue what we consider the right course; we will take the consequences in pursuing what we consider to be the right course."²⁰⁰ This is an example of how Kissinger placed more importance on the Cold war conflict than on oil. He was well aware of what the consequences of his policies might be, and tried to minimize them as best he could.

¹⁹⁶Kissinger-Nixon 08:38 a.m. October 12, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file. Box 22, National Archives. College Park, Maryland., folder 11.

¹⁹⁷Kissinger-Dinitz 08:35 a.m. October 12, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives. College Park, Maryland., folder 11.

¹⁹⁸ Sheehan, The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger. 32

¹⁹⁹ Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press conference by US secretary of State Dr Henry Kissinger 12 October 1973

²⁰⁰ Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press conference by US secretary of State Dr Henry Kissinger 12 October 1973

Meanwhile in the Soviet Union, October 12 was the gloomiest day of the war.²⁰¹ Victor Israelyan, who was in the Kremlin, stated that there was a feeling that events were slipping out of Soviet control. Describing the meetings as militant. Kremlin leaders such as KGB Chief Yuri Andropov argued for increased resupply of Arab clients and argued for unilateral action if the United States continued to stall. Presumably this meant taking diplomatic action without the United States, but the three divisions on alert in Eastern Europe seemed to be threatening intervention.

Kissinger and Dobrynin shared lunch that day. At that lunch Dobrynin made was Kissinger later referred to as “extremely threatening noises,”²⁰² warning that the Soviet Union would not stand by as the Israelis threatened Damascus. Dobrynin also objected to the redeployment of the US 6th fleet off Crete.²⁰³ Marking an increase in the tensions between the superpowers the successes of détente the first week of the war began to unravel.

Just before midnight on October 12, Secretary Kissinger was visited by the Israeli ambassador Simcha Dinitz. Dinitz reported that the Israelis were in trouble. Their offensive on the Syrian front was forced to halt because of a lack of ammunition. Dinitz stressed the need for supplies. Kissinger’s diplomacy was predicated on an Israeli offensive. This was necessary in order to get the irreverent Sadat to acquiesce to a cease-fire. According to Schlesinger, after this meeting, “Henry began to fall apart.”²⁰⁴ Schlesinger may have been biased because he bore the brunt of Kissinger’s wrath over

²⁰¹ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 76

²⁰² Kissinger-Shalev 03:15 p.m. October 12. 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives. College Park, Maryland., folder 11. see also Kissinger, Crisis, 201

²⁰³ Kissinger, Crisis, 194

²⁰⁴ Quoted in Isaacson. Kissinger, 523

Israel's halting of the offensive. For Kissinger a delay in the offensive increased the risks to American interests in the region.

After meeting with Dinitz, Kissinger's first move was to call Schlesinger. In an emotional telephone conversation Kissinger accused the Defense department of sabotage because the airlift to Israel had not yet started.²⁰⁵ Schlesinger suggested that if Kissinger was really serious about resupplying quickly they could use US military aircraft to haul the materials where they need to go. Kissinger still hoped to convince the airline industry to grant Israel charters. As Kissinger continued to spout accusations, Schlesinger seemed skeptical about the Israeli story, repeatedly making the point that the Israelis could and should have alerted the Americans they were about to completely run out of ammunition. Instead he reported that the Israelis gave the impression they had enough ammunition for fifteen days. Schlesinger remained coolheaded and helpful throughout the conversation, but this did nothing to assuage the upset Secretary of State. Since this time, Schlesinger has said "there was a cover story in that period-which the source of resistance [to the airlift] was to be the pentagon. This story was basically to protect the realities of the national policy."²⁰⁶

Kissinger blamed the Defense department then and now for the delay because he thought they were pro-Arab. After hanging up with Schlesinger, Kissinger called General Al Haig, President Nixon's chief of staff, complaining "the sons of bitches in Defense have been stalling for four days and not one airplane has moved." Kissinger enlisted Haig to speed up the resupply process to Israel asking him to call Secretary

²⁰⁵ Kissinger-Schlesinger 11:45 p.m. October 12, 1973, NPMP. HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives. College Park, Maryland., folder 11. see also Kissinger, Crisis. 212

²⁰⁶ Sheehan, The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger, 33

Schlesinger and his deputy Bill Clements to “throw the fear of god” into them.²⁰⁷ Halting of the Israeli offensive upset Kissinger’s plan for diplomacy which required Israel to apply pressure. Despite Schlesinger’s suggestion, he was still not willing to use US military planes to fly the goods directly to Israel for fear of upsetting the Arabs.

Kissinger was not done for the evening; he called Schlesinger again at 12:49 a.m. In an expletive laced conversation, Kissinger again charged the Pentagon with “massive sabotage.” Schlesinger responded “It’s just not true, Henry...we’ve been asking them what their daily supply is they have exhibited no uneasiness about it at all.”²⁰⁸ Kissinger does not include it in *Crisis*, but his attitude was “look they fucked it up.”²⁰⁹ American plans called for an Israeli offensive and a limited Israeli victory. so Israel needed supplies. Kissinger was insistent that the airlift start moving quickly in order to get the Israelis the consumables they needed to continue their offensive.

For the Americans the Yom Kippur War changed on October 13.²¹⁰ First it was decided by Schlesinger and Nixon, who overruled Kissinger. that it was necessary to use military planes to take the supplies directly to Israel. Secondly, The British who had been contacted the day before to play an intermediary role in the crisis responded to Kissinger’s asking them to act as a third party and introducing the cease-fire resolution at the Security Council. The British because of their own interests in Egypt decline after Sadat told them he would not accept a cease-fire at that time.²¹¹ Sadat was planning on

²⁰⁷Kissinger-Haig 11:54 p.m. October 11, 1973. NPMP. HAK TELCONS. chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park. Maryland., folder 11.

²⁰⁸ Kissinger-Haig 12:49 a.m. October 13, 1973, NPMP. HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.. folder 12.

²⁰⁹ Kissinger-Haig 12:49 a.m. October 13. 1973. NPMP. HAK TELCONS, chronological file. Box 22, National Archives. College Park, Maryland., folder 12.

²¹⁰ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 220

²¹¹ Kissinger. *YOU*, 516

offensive in the Sinai and was determined to carry it out. As the possibility for a cease-fire fell apart, US-Soviet relations also disintegrated.

The failure of the cease-fire on the thirteenth marked the end of the second stage of diplomacy. The period from October 9 to the failure of cease-fire early October 13 witnessed a deepening of involvement by the superpowers in the October war. Both the United States and the Soviet Union continued to push for a cease-fire or stall depending on their clients interests. The phone continued to be a chief tool of Kissinger's diplomacy as was détente. Despite the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union were both working to promote their interests, détente led to decreased tensions between the two relative to prior conflicts. However, the mutual trust and cooperation built by détente was shattered when Sadat refused a cease-fire on the thirteenth and led to increased aggressiveness by the two world powers. By October 13 the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in airlifts to their clients, and on the road to direct confrontation.

Chapter 4

From Confrontation to Moscow: October 13-20

After the cease-fire failed Kissinger's diplomacy moved toward open confrontation with the Soviets. Kissinger assumed that the Soviets had used détente to trick the United States. This marked a change in his attitude from trying to use détente to cooperate to saying on the 13th "détente is not an end to itself, I think developments now are going to drive us towards confrontation."²¹² In a conversation with Dobrynin he accused the Soviets of only being willing to abstain in the Security Council because they knew Sadat was not willing to accept a cease-fire. Dobrynin in return maintained the Soviet position, that the Soviets desired peace and were willing to abstain. He told Kissinger that his thinking the Soviets were up to a game was, "a very wrong assumption."²¹³ Nevertheless, Kissinger decided that the time for cooperation was over promising "We [the Nixon Administration] are now going to wash our hands of it and let nature take its course."²¹⁴

Kissinger then told Secretary Schlesinger letting him know they were "getting into a confrontation posture with the Soviets."²¹⁵ The airlift was to be a sign of this change. but Schlesinger had an ironic nugget of information for Kissinger. After Kissinger's tongue-lashing of Schlesinger and personal attacks on his deputies. Schlesinger informed Kissinger that the Pentagon had "one hell a lot of stuff ready to

²¹² Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 518

²¹³ Kissinger-Dobrynin 04:00 p.m. October 13, 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23, National Archives, College Park, Maryland., folder 12. see also Kissinger, Crisis, 234

²¹⁴ Kissinger-Dobrynin 04:00 p.m. October 13, 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23, National Archives, College Park, Maryland., folder 12. see also Kissinger, Crisis, 234

²¹⁵ Kissinger-Schlesinger 04:15 p.m. October 13, 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23, National Archives, College Park, Maryland., folder 12. see also Kissinger, Crisis, 236

move.” The problem was they could not get clearance from Kissinger’s State Department. It is information like this that has led scholars, among them Matti Golan in *The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger*, to accuse Kissinger of purposefully withholding supplies for diplomatic reasons at the expense of Israeli lives.²¹⁶ Matti Golan is an Israeli and making a moralist argument, but the realism of the Cold war necessitated Kissinger’s pragmatic diplomacy. The fact is that Kissinger’s loyalty was to the United States, and he was correctly balancing Israeli and American objectives. Kissinger and Nixon wanted Israel to win the war, but they were determined not to allow Israel to win so much of a victory that the stalemate from 1967 would continue. In their opinion, held throughout the war, a return to the stalemate would neither serve Israeli’s nor the United States’ interests.

After getting the news from Schlesinger that eighteen cargo planes were ready to be airborne within hours, Kissinger once again spoke with Dobrynin, confirming the fact that he was moving American diplomacy into a confrontational posture. He confirmed the American airlift reporting: “We are prepared to stop our aerial supplies when you are willing to stop.”²¹⁷

Kissinger and Dobrynin spoke again just before 8:00 p.m. on October 13. Dobrynin delivered an oral message from Brezhnev reiterating the Soviet Union’s and his personal desire to use détente to help solve the crisis. After feeling burned by the Soviets with the failed cease-fire proposal, Kissinger was uninterested in working jointly with the Soviets to find a speedy solution to the crisis. Having decided that the US was going to

²¹⁶ Matti Golan *The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger*, (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1976.)

airlift supplies to Israel, Kissinger decided to carry out the threats he had made earlier in the crisis. In his memoirs Kissinger wrote “In almost every crisis there occurs a moment, however fleeting, which conveys an unmistakable signal that the other side is not prepared to push matters to a confrontation.”²¹⁸ He was confident in this decision because he judged Brezhnev’s letter and Dobrynin’s behavior to be just this signal. As he had warned during the opening day of the crisis, the United States would not be as easy to deal with now as they had been earlier.

Kissinger saw Soviet actions in the Middle East at the time as “creeping Soviet escalation.”²¹⁹ He blamed the Soviets’ airlift for the Arabs exceeding expectations on the battle field. He also blamed the Soviets for stringing him along, remarking that the Soviets had been willing to accept a cease-fire, but he doubted their sincerity remarking to Dobrynin “in the meantime, you sent in 140 airplanes. [That] may be why the Arabs are so tough now.”²²⁰ Kissinger then, ironically, told Dobrynin “we will not under any circumstances let détente be used for unilateral advantage.” After a long diatribe in which Kissinger pointed out how closeness with the Soviets had damaged relations between the US and its allies, Kissinger straight out told Dobrynin that the US would not accept the Egyptian conditions for a cease-fire.

He also highlighted the strengthening in US-Egyptian ties informing Dobrynin that the Egyptians had told the US their demands a few days before. Kissinger’s goal in saying this was not purely to inform Dobrynin of the US position, but also to let him

²¹⁷ Kissinger-Dobrynin 04:25 p.m. October 13, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23, National Archives, College Park, Maryland., folder 12. see also Kissinger, Crisis, 238

²¹⁸ Kissinger, YOU, 521

²¹⁹ Kissinger, YOU, 513

²²⁰ Kissinger-Dobrynin 04:25 p.m. October 13, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23, National Archives, College Park, Maryland., folder 12. see also Kissinger, Crisis, 238

chew on the fact that Egypt and the US were building increasing lines of communication. After a few more tense minutes of conversation, Kissinger foreshadowed his intentions vis-à-vis Egypt, “why do we have to deal with you...why not deal with Sadat directly?” With that final conversation between the two on October 13, a superpower confrontation was on.

In the Middle East the battle was militaristic not diplomatic. On October 13, Sadat launched the offensive he had sacrificed a cease-fire for. Egyptian armor steamed from out of under the SAM umbrella in a push to take the Gidi and Mitla passes. Over the next two days, they would be repulsed by the Israelis at the cost of almost 250 tanks.²²¹

A new stage of American involvement began when the first C-5 transport planes arrived at Lod airport carrying supplies flown by the American military.²²² The United States was not committed. Kissinger had made a commitment to give the Israeli three or four days to improve their position. Kissinger sent a decision to Sadat through Ismail informing him just as Kissinger had informed Dobrynin, that the United States was willing to halt the airlift, immediately after a cease-fire was reached.²²³ Even in the face of the airlift, Kissinger worked on winning over Sadat, emphasizing that the United States would work to bring a “*just and lasting peace to the Middle East* (Italics added).” Kissinger sent similar messages to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and the Shah of Iran in an effort to mollify their objections to the airlift. Kissinger and Nixon talked privately in a similar vein. Even though Nixon had decided on resupply he was still insistent that after

²²¹ Thomas Walczyk, “October War” Doctrine and Tactics in the Yom Kippur Conflict 6 to 24 October 1973,” *Strategy and Tactics* (American Press, Inc: Gordonsville, Va., # 61, Mar-Apr 1977) p. 13

²²² Quandt, *Decades*, 185

²²³ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 248, message to Sadat

the war the US must be able to pressure the Israelis telling Kissinger “We’ve got to squeeze them goddamn hard. And that’s the way it is going to be done.”²²⁴ American diplomacy however must was dependent on the military situation on the ground and news of the Egyptian offensive in the Sinai.

Having taken care of the vice presidential issue. Nixon was able to spend more time on the formulation of American policy on the fourteenth.²²⁵ Regarding the airlift, Nixon told Kissinger that if it was to be done it should be carried out fully. “This is a deadly course, I know, but what I meant is. Henry, I have no patience with the view that we send in a couple of planes...My point is if-when we are going to make a move. it’s going to cost us-out there.”²²⁶ Nixon also told Kissinger that in future State Department briefings he wanted it said that the purpose of the airlift was not to fuel the fire but to “maintain the balance.” Nixon wanted Kissinger to report one more thing, that “Brezhnev and Nixon will settle this damn thing.” Nixon and Kissinger conferred later in the morning after Kissinger attended a WSAG meeting. Kissinger reported that American planes would be landing at an Israeli air force base every fifteen minutes. Nixon decided that some of the cargo planes, since they were able to fit them. should take some of the A-4 fighter/bomber Skyhawks he had promised the Israelis as he reiterated to his Secretary, “You understand what I mean. If we are going to take heat for this. well, let’s go.”²²⁷ Still, even while giving orders and offering advice, Nixon showed his

²²⁴ Kissinger-Nixon 09:04 a.m. October 14, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS. chronological file, Box 23, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.. see also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 252

²²⁵ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 249

²²⁶ Kissinger-Nixon 09:04 a.m. October 14, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS. chronological file, Box 23, National Archives, College Park, Maryland..

see also Kissinger, *Crisis*, 252

²²⁷ Kissinger-Nixon 11:10 a.m. October 14, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file. Box 23, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.. see also *Crisis* 254

distance from the crisis by asking Kissinger to send messages to Brezhnev directly in his name. Kissinger had long been protecting his president and expanding his personal power by using his role as Secretary of State to sign messages in the president's name. Nixon also asked that Kissinger inform the Soviets that the US would stop the airlift after the war something Kissinger had already done the night before. The purpose of this was to restrain the Soviets from escalating their resupply as the US stepped up its own.²²⁸ This restraint would be especially important when it became clear that Israel had scored a massive victory in the Sinai and the Russian position became more precarious.

The morning of the fifteenth opened with cautious optimism in Washington. It was clear that the Israelis had scored a massive victory in the Sinai. A Middle East Task Force report from the morning of October 15 claimed the IAF was the "absolute initiator" of air operation and reported that the Israelis had destroyed nearly 300 Egyptian tanks.²²⁹ The newspapers had not picked up on the airlift and the Arabs had not yet responded to it. American supply planes continued to land in Israel every forty-five minutes. Having decided that the United States would allow Israel three or four days to fight, Kissinger did not talk with Dobrynin for an entire day for the first time in the conflict. Neither did he talk much with the Egyptians. His only telephone conversation with the Egyptians was with Zayatt who called to push back a planned meeting. However, the back channel remained in use. Kissinger's Egyptian counterpart, Hafiz Ismail, responded to Kissinger's message from the day before, informing Sadat of the airlift. The message from Ismail once again indicated that no other country spoke for Egypt except for Egypt, and that Sadat wished to keep the backchannel between the National Security Advisors

²²⁸ Kissinger, Crisis, 256

open and operational. The message concluded with an invitation for Secretary Kissinger to visit Egypt.²³⁰ Kissinger's policy of winning over the Egyptians was having an effect.

While the American's were working to undermine Soviet influence in Egypt, the Soviets were trying to drive a wedge between the United States and its European allies. Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin met with the Prime Minister of Denmark, Anker Jorgenson. Kosygin informed Jorgenson that "the Soviet Union does not seek anything for itself in the region."²³¹ He also reiterated the Soviet desire for a long-term peace in the Middle East and highlighted the shared benefits of a quick cease-fire in the region. According to the New York Times, this message resonated with the Europeans.²³²

October 16 saw resumption in escalation by the superpowers and the resumption of diplomacy. In the Black Sea the Soviets were loading material and equipment onto vessels. Kissinger responded with a sea-lift of his own with the goal of keeping the total US resupply effort at 125% of the Soviets'.²³³ At the same time that creeping escalation continued between the superpowers, the Soviets sent Kosygin to Cairo to meet with Sadat.

The Soviets deemed the situation in the Middle East critical and desired to pressure Sadat into a ceasefire by reminding him "that Cairo is not far away from the Canal" and that with the gradually worsening Arab position a breakthrough on the canal was increasingly likely.²³⁴ Kosygin went to Cairo with a four point peace proposal based on a cease-fire in place, Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines, an international peace

²²⁹ Burr, The US and Cold War, The Middle East Task Force, Situation Report in the Middle East as of 1200 EDT, October 15 1973, Department of State doc 30

²³⁰ Kissinger, Crisis, 260

²³¹ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 88, quoted in Pravda 10/16

²³² Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 88

²³³ Kissinger, YOU 531 see also Kissinger, Crisis, 262

²³⁴ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 91

conference for negotiation and ratification of a final agreement, and finally a formal “guarantee” by the United States and Soviet union of the entire agreement.²³⁵ The decision to send Kosygin was also meant to strengthen the Soviet Union’s ties with its client. Throughout the crisis Kissinger and the United States had been attempting to build relations with Egypt and prying it from out of the Soviet orbit. Kosygin’s visit was a chance to demonstrate Soviet closeness and address the shortcomings of the American policy. Meanwhile, the situation on the ground continued to be favorable to the United States. Just as the Soviets had warned, the Israelis managed to break through at the Canal.

Twenty-five tanks under the command of Ariel Sharon crossed a bridge onto the west bank of the canal. Once the tanks made it to the other side of the canal they worked to systematically destroy the SAM sites in order to allow the IAF full freedom in the air. The American response to this offensive, described as a raid, was cautiously optimistic. A situation report from the 16th described no major offensives by either side during the day showing that the Americans did not yet view Sharon’s raid as a major turning point of the war.²³⁶

American diplomacy in the Middle East continued as well, but most decisions had been made and the Americans were by and large waiting for more favorable news. Kissinger responded to Ismail’s message from the day before by agreeing to visit Cairo “once a cease-fire has been achieved.”²³⁷ President Nixon agreed to meet with Arab

²³⁵ Kalb and Kalb, Kissinger, 480

²³⁶ Department of State, Operations Center, Middle East Task Force, Situation Report #36, "Situation Report in the Middle East as of 1800 Hours EDT Oct. 16, 1973"Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1174, 1973 War (Middle East) 16 Oct. 1973 File No. 11 [2of 2]

²³⁷ Kissinger, Crisis, 261 message to Sadat

foreign ministers from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Algeria the next day in an effort to keep tensions low and the Saudis responded to the pair of messages sent by Kissinger on the fourteenth. They expressed disappointment at the US decision to resupply Israel and warning that relations may take a turn for the worse as a result. They also urged the European Community countries to use their influence with the United States to pressure it to stop its resupply efforts.²³⁸ In the short term though oil continued to flow to the US from Saudi Arabian wells and late in the day Kissinger estimated there was a 2/3 chance for a rapid conclusion to the conflict.²³⁹

Both President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger met with the Arab foreign ministers the next day, October 17. Before they met, there was an alteration of the US strategy from not discussing a cease-fire considering accepting a cease-fire linked to Resolution 242, and the phrase withdrawal from the occupied territories. Kissinger got first crack at the Arab ministers at his office in the West Wing. The primary goal of the conversation was to ensure that the war ended with US-Arab relations still on a friendly note and that there would not be an oil embargo. The Arabs, led by Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Omar Saqqaf, insisted that the Arabs were united in the view that Israel must return to pre-Six Day War lines. Kissinger's response was that the Americans would work to implement resolution 242, but seeing as though resolution 242 had laid the groundwork for the six year stalemate leading to the October war, the Arabs were not mollified. Before the conversation was over though it was time to move to the

²³⁸ Burr, Document 33. Situation report in the Middle East as of 1800 EDT Oct. 16, 1973

²³⁹ Kissinger, YOU, 532

oval office to continue it with Nixon. where they repeated almost the same conversation, remaining civil.²⁴⁰

When the conversation moved back to Kissinger's office, the toughest issues were discussed. Foreign Minister Benhima of Morocco expressed concern that US arms supplies were allowing Israel to maintain its occupation of Arab lands. He thought this was unjustifiable because the US continued to support Israel when it knew from numerous statements by Sadat and Brezhnev that Israel's survival was not at stake.²⁴¹ The rest of the meeting continued in this vein. The third meeting was tenser and more combative than the earlier two, but Kissinger and Nixon were both optimistic after the meeting that they would avoid an oil cut off. Saqqaf's statement to the press "the man who could solve the Vietnam War, the man who could have settled the peace all over the world, can easily play a good role in settling and having peace in our area of the Middle East," gave Kissinger optimism that the US would pull through the crisis unscathed. Kissinger described the morning as "most successful" in a post-meeting telephone conversation with the president.²⁴²

Kissinger then attended a WSAG meeting at 3:05 P.M. with William Clements and Robert Hill from Defense; Joint Chief of Staff Admiral Thomas H. Moorer and Vice Admiral John P. Wienel; as well as William Colby and Samuel Hoskinson from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). WSAG discussed the status of the airlift effort and all were satisfied that they were outpacing the Soviets. Nevertheless it was decided that both the airlift and the nascent sealift should be increased to match Soviet increases.

²⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conversation Wednesday, October 17, 1973, 11:10 a.m. Oval Office

²⁴¹ Burr, Document 34a, Memorandum of Conversation, Wednesday October 17, 1973, 10:15 A.M. at President's oval office, second meeting at 12:30

²⁴² Crisis 280, President-Kissinger 1:40 P.M., 10/17/73

Kissinger was optimistic in the meeting stating “we don’t expect an oil cut-off now in light of the discussions with the Arab Foreign Ministers this morning.”²⁴³ His optimism proved wrong, however, as in the middle of the meeting it was announced that the Arabs had cut oil production five percent to be increased five percent every month until Israel withdrew to pre-1967 borders. The Arab countries also increased the price of oil by 70%.²⁴⁴ In a secret message from the embassy in Kuwait, it was reported that the initial cutbacks were to serve as a warning to the United States and that the moderates had had a considerable fight to limit the cutbacks to the initial five percent.²⁴⁵

After this announcement, the WSAG principals went to see the President. The President stated that the two main issues facing the US were oil and the strategic position.²⁴⁶ In order to best handle the situation he felt the air and sea lifts must continue, not only ensure an Israeli victory but also to appear as a credible ally and put the US into a position where they could pressure the Israelis once negotiations began. Nixon was aware that he would be blamed for any resupply of the Israelis. Once he took the fateful step of starting the airlift, he was going to see it through, no matter the costs. He told the

²⁴³ Burr, the October War and US Policy,. doc 34a Minutes. "Washington Special Action Group Meeting," 17 October 1973. 3:05 p.m. - 4:04 p.m. Source: NPMP, NSC Institutional Files, box H-117, WSAG Minutes (originals) 10-2-73 to 7-23-74 (2 of 3)

²⁴⁴ Kissinger, YOU, 536-7

²⁴⁵ William Burr, October War and US Policy Doc 38. from U.S. Embassy Kuwait cable 3801 Cable to State Department. "Atiqi Comment on OAPEC Meeting." 18 October 1973 Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1175. 1973 Middle East War 18 Oct. 1973 File No. 13

²⁴⁶ William Burr, October War and US Policy Doc 36B, Memcon, "WSAG Principles: Middle East War," 17 October 1973, 4:00 p.m. Source: NPMP, NSC Institutional Files, box H-92, WSAG Meeting Middle East 10/17/73, folder 6 subject: WSAG principals" Middle East War

WSAG principles that his theory was “in order to have the influence we need to bring Israeli to a settlement, we have to have their confidence. That is why the airlift.”²⁴⁷

Diplomacy with the Soviets moved slowly October 17th. Kosygin was in Cairo and it was felt that diplomacy would not move until his consultations with Sadat were finished. A tank battle was being waged in the Sinai, but both sides were calmly waiting for the situation on the ground to change.

A Department of State telegram from US intelligence in Cairo to Kissinger the morning of 18 October revealed that the tank battle being waged in the Sinai was of “major proportions.”²⁴⁸ The report indicated that the Egyptians had suffered a loss of position of at least four kilometers in the Sinai and were taking heavy casualties. The situation on the southern front appeared to have swung, at least temporarily, in favor of the Israelis. The Israelis also managed to reinforce the bridgehead across the canal that Sharon established the day prior.

Even though Kosygin was still in Cairo, but superpower diplomacy began to move again. Both sides were still stalling for time, but the Soviets were more anxious for a cease-fire and introduced a proposal consisting of three provisions. Dobrynin read the message to Kissinger nearly two hours before it was to arrive in Washington, an example of how telephone diplomacy often outpaced official cables. First it called for an immediate cease-fire, then a phased withdrawal of Israeli troops, and finally “appropriate

²⁴⁷ William Burr, October War and US Policy Doc 36B, Memcon. “WSAG Principles: Middle East War,” 17 October 1973, 4:00 p.m. Source: NPMP, NSC Institutional Files, box H--92, WSAG Meeting Middle East 10/17/73, folder 6 subject: WSAG principals” Middle East War, Doc 36B, Memorandum of Conversation, 4:00 P.M. October 17, 1973, White House, subject: WSAG principals” Middle East War

²⁴⁸ William Burr, Doc 37, U.S. Interests Section in Egypt Cable 3167 to State Department, “Egyptian Military Situation,” 18 October 1973 Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1175, 1973 Middle East War 18 Oct. 1973 File No. 13

consultations aimed at establishing a just and honorable peace in the Middle East."²⁴⁹

Thus began the first stage in a diplomatic proposal that would eventually lead to a cease-fire. It also marked the resumption of joint cooperation in search for a cease-fire by the superpowers. Neither superpower was particularly anxious to move the issue into the Security Council where their allies would interfere and make the situation even more difficult.

Unfortunately for the Soviet proposal, Prime Minister Meir of Israel refused any cease-fire linked to Resolution 242. "Israel's holy writ in six years of negotiation."²⁵⁰

This demonstrated a clear divergence in the goals of the United States and Israel. Meir was stalling, while the United States wanted a quick finish to the war. Israel had turned the tide and now was clearly winning militarily and she wanted to push her advantage to deliver such a blow to the Egyptians that peace could be imposed instead of negotiated. Late in day the IDF began to encircle the Egyptian 3rd army, threatening to cut off all routes of escape.²⁵¹

Kissinger was becoming increasingly worried about the strain the war was putting on US-European relations. US-relations with Europe and Japan were tense and the strains on them had increased in the days preceding the oil cutback. At a North Atlantic Treaty Organization meeting on October 16, US representative to NATO Donald Rumsfeld was criticized over the United States acting without her NATO allies. The European view was that détente was global and that there should be no "special" détente

²⁴⁹ Kissinger-Dobrynin 08:45 p.m. October 18, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23, National Archives. College Park, Maryland.

²⁵⁰ Kissinger, YOU, 539

²⁵¹ Kissinger, YOU, 542

between the US and USSR.²⁵² Relations were poised for further strain as the conflict continued. Kissinger although stalling for time to let Israel win, but desired a cease-fire before a clear break occurred between the US and Europe. October 18, the State department received a message from the American Embassy in London regarding European views. The Europeans were worried that the actions of the United States were going to threaten their relationship in the Middle East, and even worse, affect their oil supply. The Europeans with the exception of Portugal were united in their opposition to the United States using its European bases for the airlift.²⁵³

The Russians felt that they had “done everything [they] could to ensure an end to the fighting that would be beneficial to the Arabs,” but peace was not at hand and the Arab position was precarious at best. Brezhnev’s cease-fire proposal met with a positive reaction in Washington the day before, but the Israelis were pressing their advantage and refused a cease-linked to any withdrawal, even to an unspecified line.²⁵⁴

In an effort to preserve détente, avoid further confrontation, and to break the stalemate over the ceasefire Brezhnev invited Secretary Kissinger to Moscow on the morning of October 19. Kissinger would not leave until the next day. First he wanted to attend a dinner at the Huang Chen, the Chinese ambassador to the UN,²⁵⁵ something he fails to mention in Crisis. The purpose was to stall in order to give Israel, which was against a ceasefire, as much time as possible to wrap up operations against the Egyptians so that they would agree to the ceasefire. Kissinger also wanted to tweak the USSR as

²⁵² Burr, Department o State telegram.. 10/16/73 6:48 pm subject nato implications of the middle east conflict:

²⁵³ Burr, October War. doc 39 U.S. Embassy United Kingdom Cable 12113 to State Department, "European Attitudes in Middle East Conflict," 18 October 1973 Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1175. 1973 Middle East War 18 Oct. 1973 File No. 13

²⁵⁴ Kissinger, Crisis, 291

part of the triangular diplomacy that was occurring between the two superpowers and China. This is the one time where concerns over China altered US behavior during the crisis. China, however, was a constant concern with the Soviets and their main reason for wanting to build a peace outside of the Security Council. Kissinger was also strengthened by a situation report delivered that morning which stated “the French convey the impression...that if the war led to a US-USSR confrontation, the Soviets would blink first.”²⁵⁶ Kissinger, like Israel, felt that he was in a position of strength vis-à-vis his opponent and was going to push the advantage as far as possible. Kissinger would go to Moscow determined to use détente to his advantage, just as he perceived the Soviets had been using it to theirs.

The third stage of diplomacy during the October war lasted from the collapse of a cease-fire proposal October 13 until Kissinger flew to Moscow, the morning of October 20. From the October 13 to October 17 Kissinger moved American diplomacy into a confrontational posture with the Soviets. The Soviet airlift was matched by a bigger one by the United States. The Soviet sea lift was similarly matched. Nixon and Kissinger were pouring weapons into Israel not only to ensure its victory in the war, but also to put the necessary political capital in the bank to draw on during negotiations. After the oil embargo began October 17 Kissinger was once again willing to work with the Soviets, but he still wanted to stall to give the Israelis more time to improve their situation. He hoped the time it would take him to fly to Moscow and negotiate the settlement would be

²⁵⁵ Hanhimaki, The Flawed Architect, 308

²⁵⁶ William Burr, October War, Document 40, Department of State, Operations Center, Middle East Task Force, Situation Report # 43, "Situation Report in the Middle East as of 0600 Hours EDT, Oct. 19, 1973" Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1173, 1973 Middle East War, 19 Oct. 1973-File No. 14

adequate. In this way he hoped to manipulate détente to serve the interests of the United States.

Chapter 5

Moscow, a Cease-fire, and a Nuclear Alert

Détente played a significant role throughout the crisis. The search for the early cease-fire showed the importance of using détente to limit the regional conflict by both Cold War powers. The October war showed the limits of détente up to this point, especially after the failing of another cease-fire proposal on 13 October. On the other hand, Kissinger's trip to Moscow, his first trip since ascending to the Secretary of State position, showed its fruits. It also was also an example of Kissinger's double use of détente. Kissinger left for Moscow at 2:00 A.M. the morning of 20 October. Before he left he notified Dobrynin that he never negotiated immediately after a long flight.²⁵⁷ The purpose of this was to gain time for the Israelis to continue their military operations because with the flight time, it meant it would be at least thirty-six hours until negotiations would begin. Kissinger also decided to keep the airlift going to Israel, justifying that by doing so "[Israel] can't say we screwed them in their hour of triumph."²⁵⁸

Nixon included a handwritten note to Brezhnev, granting Kissinger full authority to speak for Nixon and negotiate a cease-fire. Victor Israelyan suggests that Nixon did not completely trust Kissinger.²⁵⁹ Peter Rodman an NSC staff assistant said "Nixon was getting a little nervous that Kissinger was protecting the Israelis too much."²⁶⁰ What is more likely, however, is that Nixon was distracted by Watergate and really did desire for

²⁵⁷ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 302

²⁵⁸ Burr, *October War*, Document 42 Memcon between Kissinger, Schlesinger, Colby, and Moorer, 19 October 1973, 7:17 - 7:28 p.m. Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1027, Memoranda of Conversations - Apr-Nov 1973, HAK and President (2 of 5)

²⁵⁹ Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin*, 125

²⁶⁰ quoted in Kenneth Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, 85

Kissinger to stop the war, in order that Nixon might use détente for domestic purposes. Kissinger, usually not one to turn down power, was furious, complaining that the grant of full authority undermined his maneuvering position because he could not stall to “confer” with the president. Kissinger’s job was to get a truce, but his goal was to get it on the best terms, which mean that he needed wriggle room to stall and let Israel improve its situation on the ground. The President, however, would not have been available anyway. The night of October 20, the Saturday Night Massacre occurred when Nixon fired special prosecutor Archibald Cox and Attorney General Elliot Richardson, and acting FBI Director William Ruckelhaus resigned in protest, leading to the beginning of impeachment proceedings early the next week.

While in Moscow Kissinger also hoped to be able to communicate with the Israelis. He hoped to receive up to the minute reports from the battlefield to better help him judge the right time to implement the cease-fire. Kissinger received word that the IDF had completed its encirclement of the Egyptian 3rd army, but after that the Israeli phones went silent. Kissinger’s back channel with the Egyptians remained open, however. On the 20th Ismail informed Kissinger through the backchannel that the Egyptians were willing to accept a cease-fire-in-place along the lines that Kosygin had proposed as long as the Soviets and Americans would guarantee the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories.²⁶¹ The remarkable thing about this was that Sadat was willing to end the fighting with Israeli soldiers on the west bank of the Canal as long as the fighting stopped. This was a stark change from his earlier positions. Sadat’s Arab allies continued their support for him as well. Jordan resupplied its armor division in

Syria throughout the day, and on the oil front Saudi Arabia announced a complete embargo of oil to the United States.²⁶²

Despite Kissinger's best stalling tactics, negotiations started the night he arrived in Moscow to negotiate with Brezhnev. The Kissinger-Dobrynin channel had resulted in Soviet recognition of Kissinger's business like manner and pragmatism.²⁶³ Brezhnev had tremendous respect for Kissinger and very much liked negotiating with him, so when they sat down to negotiate they had a very congenial meeting.²⁶⁴ During their first meeting they outlined their respective positions. The memorandum of conversation from the discussion shows that the negotiations from the first night while serious were also lighthearted.²⁶⁵ Brezhnev and Kissinger had tremendous respect for each other as well as an ability to joke with each other. At one point in the conversation Brezhnev joked about guns, holsters and a holster belt Kissinger had promised to bring him complaining that he had no belt. Later they discussed how much money it would take to get Foreign Minister Andre Gromyko to wear a hat saying "Nixon is the one."

The Soviets did not understand Watergate. They thought it was a plot by those against détente to remove Nixon and replace him with someone who took a harder line against the Soviets.²⁶⁶ The first agreement of the discussions was over Washington senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson. The mention of Senator Jackson caused Brezhnev to

²⁶¹ Burr, October War, document 44. Excerpts from Backchannel U.S.-Egyptian messages, 20-26 October 1973 Source: NPMP. HAKO, box 130. Saunders-Memorandum-Sensitive

²⁶² Burr, October War, doc 45b Embassy in Saudi Arabia Cable 4663 to State Department, "Saudi Ban on Oil Shipments to U.S.," 23 October 1973 Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1175. 1973 Middle East War, 23 October 1973-File No. 18

²⁶³ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 122-3

²⁶⁴ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 123

²⁶⁵ Burr, October War Document 46, Memorandum of conversation. Saturday October 20, 1973. General Secretary Brezhnev's Office. The Kremlin, Moscow 9:15-11:30 p.m.

²⁶⁶ Dobrynin, In Confidence, 266

cough and ask for water. Then he and Kissinger agreed that his name was best left unsaid, and that they should refer to him simply as “our friend” even though he was neither of their friends. The meeting closed lightheartedly with the decision to begin meeting the next day at noon. Kissinger agreed and made a joke about the late start, “That gives the Ambassador [Dobrynin] a chance to go to a Mass in the morning,” to which Brezhnev retorted was, “his innermost desire.”²⁶⁷ In actuality the noon start would give both sides time to see how the military situation developed in the Middle East.

Brezhnev, however, would not have as much time as he desired to pour over maps of the battlefield because the reality on the ground was outpacing negotiations. His sleep was interrupted at 4:00 a.m. by Soviet Ambassador to Egypt Vinogradov who reported that Sadat now wanted an immediate cease-fire.²⁶⁸ The Israeli encirclement of the 3rd army meant that the road to Cairo was open to the IDF. This was pretty much the same message that Ismail had delivered to Kissinger through the backchannel. but Sadat decided not to tell either side that he was communicating with the other²⁶⁹ in order to strengthen his weak position as much as possible. Kissinger’s goal of outpacing the Russian air lift was working in making his appeal to Vinogradov, Sadat opined “I can fight the Israelis but not the United States. I cannot cope with the huge flow of American tanks and aircraft, we destroy them, but the flow goes on.”²⁷⁰ Brezhnev met with the Politburo Sunday morning to seek permission to pursue an immediate cease-fire.

When Brezhnev and Kissinger met at noon it only took four hours to negotiate a cease-fire. Sadat’s urgent calls for the Soviets to save him “and the Egyptian capital

²⁶⁷ Burr. Document 46. Memorandum of conversation, Saturday October 20. 1973. General Secretary Brezhnev’s Office, The Kremlin, Moscow 9:15-11:30 p.m.

²⁶⁸ Israelyan. Inside the Kremlin, 129

²⁶⁹ Israelyan. Inside the Kremlin. 131

encircled by Israeli tanks” made Brezhnev eager for a cease-fire.²⁷¹ They agreed to what would become U.N. Resolution 338. As a consequence of Sadat’s position Kissinger did not have to negotiate over the pre- 1967 borders or a cease-fire status quo ante. Instead a simple cease-fire-in-place was both possible and desired by the Egyptians and therefore Soviets. The cease-fire was also expedited by the fact that Kissinger was willing to go along with two of the three provisions Brezhnev had proposed before Kissinger’s trip. The US agreed to an immediate cease-fire and because of Nixon was willing to recognize the special role of the USSR in the peace settlement. The acceptance of the second proviso was not something Kissinger wanted, but he was following orders from Nixon who sought to preserve his special relationship with Brezhnev. After a short negotiation the final wording of resolution 338 was agreed upon. Resolution 338 reads:

The Security Council

1. Calls upon all parties to the present fighting to cease all firing and to terminate all military activity immediately, no later than twelve hours after the moment of the adoption of this resolution, in the positions they now occupy;
2. Calls upon the parties concerned to start immediately after the cease-fire the implementation of the Security Council resolution 242 in all its parts;
3. Decides that immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire negotiations start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace settlement in the Middle East.²⁷²

In order to get a resolution that the Arabs and Israelis could agree to, the resolution was filled with ambiguities. For one the reference to resolution 242 was vague

²⁷⁰ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 129

²⁷¹ quoted by Dobrynin Dobrynin, In Confidence, 296

being that it was never implemented and there were several different interpretations as to what that exactly meant. Indeed argument over its interpretation caused the six year gridlock leading to the October war. One might also notice that “immediately” is used in all three paragraphs of the resolution referring to an end to the fighting, implementation of resolution 242, and the starting of cease-fire negotiations under “appropriate auspices.”²⁷³ Did immediately mean immediately or immediately after twelve-hours? The term “appropriate auspices” was the language most problematic in the resolution so Kissinger and Gromyko worked on an appendix titled “Understanding” to better define what the term meant to the two parties. This unpublished document said that negotiations would occur with the “active participation of the United States and the Soviet Union at the beginning and thereafter in the course of negotiations when key issues of a settlement are dealt with.”²⁷⁴ The real purpose the document was to keep other countries from interfering in the process, especially the Europeans.²⁷⁵ With the writing of this document, initialed the next day by Gromyko and Kissinger, formal negotiations came to an end. In instructions written by Kissinger and Gromyko, they informed their UN representatives how to proceed in the UN. The representatives to the UN, Joe Scali on the American side and Ambassador Malik on the Soviet side were to jointly introduce the resolution at a special meeting of the council at 9:00 p.m. Washington time (1:00 a.m. October 22, Moscow time).

After wrapping up negotiations, Kissinger went back to the guest house where he was staying in order to convey messages to Nixon, the British, and the Israelis. Kissinger

²⁷² UNSC. Resolution 338

²⁷³ Israelyan 137

²⁷⁴ Burr, Document 53, Memcon breakfast, Monday, October 22, 1973 8:45-9:45 a.m., Guest House of the US delegation, Lenin Hills, Moscow

still did not know if the Israelis would go along with the cease-fire, but he was prepared to exert pressure on them in order to force them to accept it. Kissinger was very satisfied with Resolution 338 because, in his view, it had achieved the major US strategic objectives: US obligations to Israel had been met; the Soviet role was reduced in the Middle East by the failure of Soviet arms to win the war for the Arabs and because of Egypt's budding ties with the United States, and was likely to be further reduced in the negotiation process; and US relations with the Arab world, although strained, were still friendly despite the oil embargo.²⁷⁶

Kissinger was unable to immediately cable to Israelis about the cease-fire because American communications had been subject to what he termed "man-made interference."²⁷⁷ This resulted in a four hour halt in communications. Kissinger sent a secret message from the American Embassy in Moscow to be delivered to Israeli ambassador Dinitz saying, "in the circumstances we would understand if Israelis felt they required some additional time for military dispositions before cease-fire ta[k]es effect. We still want to shoot for target of 12 hours time span between Security Council decision and beginning of cease fire but could accept Israeli's taking slightly longer."²⁷⁸

The morning of 22 October the American and Soviet negotiators sat down to breakfast together. News came through that the Security Council proceeded smoothly:

²⁷⁵ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 142, see Kissinger, YOU, 555

²⁷⁶ Kissinger, Crisis, 305

²⁷⁷ Kissinger, YOU, 557

²⁷⁸ Burr, the October war and US policy, doc 51 U.S. Embassy Soviet Union Cable 13148 to Department of State, 21 October 1973

Source: NPMP, HAKO, box 39, HAK Trip - Moscow. Tel Aviv, London - October 20-23, 1973 HAKTO, SECTO, TOSEC, Misc.

Kissinger called it an "excellent example of cooperation."²⁷⁹ Gromyko assumed that the French and Chinese must have been absent, but was informed that only the Chinese abstained from the vote. The French had given a speech saying that appropriate auspices meant within the Security Council. Nevertheless, the Resolution was agreed upon and the delegations were in good spirits when Kissinger left for Israel after breakfast, October 22.

Hop Skip Jump to Washington

Before returning to Washington, Kissinger stopped off in Tel Aviv and London for consultations with the Israelis and British. Kissinger faced several challenges in Israel. He had to explain to Prime Minister Meir why she had to accept the cease-fire imposed on Israel. Meir had previously made it clear that she would not accept a cease-fire if it was imposed on Israel, but Kissinger was going to get her to agree to it anyway. Kissinger and Meir had a series of three meetings on October 22, while Kissinger was in Israel, something he glosses over in *Crisis*. Kissinger initially had a private meeting with the Prime Minister in which he worked to reassure Meir he had done everything possible to get as satisfactory a ceasefire agreement as possible.²⁸⁰ They discussed paragraphs two and three of resolution 338 in detail. Kissinger explained the reference to 242, problematic to the Israelis, saying that he thought because 242 meant nothing, neither did the reference. "What it means is what is to be negotiated."²⁸¹ Meir was also concerned

²⁷⁹ Burr, the October war and US Policy, doc 53 Memcon between Gromyko and Kissinger, 22 October 1973. 8:45 - 9:45 p.m. Source: RG 59. SN 70-73, POL US-USSR

²⁸⁰ Burr, the October war and US Policy . document 54 Memcon between Meir and Kissinger, 22 October 1973. 1:35 - 2:15 p.m. Source: RG 59. SN 70-73. POL 7 US/Kissinger

²⁸¹ Memcon. Burr, Document 54. Memorandum of Conversation, Monday 10/22/1973 1:35-2:15. the Guest House Herzliyya (near Tel Aviv). Source: RG 59. SN 70-73, POL 7 US/Kissinger

that the resolution only mentioned “negotiations” and not “direct negotiations” like the Israelis had previously demanded. Meir was further concerned that the Resolution said nothing about the return of prisoners of war, asking “how can I face the mothers and wives of these men?” The conversation intensified because the Egyptians and Syrians had not yet agreed to the cease-fire.

Meir: They have said that the fighting continues.

Kissinger: You won't get violent protests from Washington if something happens during the night, while I'm flying. Nothing can happen in Washington until noon tomorrow.

Meir: If they don't stop, we won't.

Kissinger: Even if they do...

Later, the Egyptians did agree to a cease-fire set to go into effect just before 7:00 p.m. Kissinger's second meeting was with a large group of American and Israeli officials over lunch at the Israeli Guest House. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan vocalized his desire to continue the Israeli offensive to which Kissinger replied “that's in your domestic jurisdiction.”²⁸² Dayan complained further that Kissinger agreed to the cease-fire too early. Dayan desired to humiliate the Arabs like Israel had done in 1967. He was driven by a desire for revenge after the Arab armies caused him to panic the first few days of the war. He reluctantly admitted that both the Egyptians and Syrians fought better during the October War. The parties also discussed the upcoming negotiations, which Kissinger realized would be historic, but he was pessimistic about them too: “The

²⁸² Burr, October War, doc 55 Memcon of Luncheon for Kissinger's Party, 22 October, 2:30 - 4:30 p.m. Source: RG 59, SN 70-73, POL 7 US/Kissinger

beginning of the process will be an historic event, even if it totally stalemates—which I expect, frankly.”²⁸³

After the luncheon, Kissinger attended his third and final meeting in Israel, a military briefing. Israeli Chief of Staff Lt. General David Elazar explained that the Israelis were satisfied with the situation on the Syrian front. The Syrians were in no position to launch an offensive, but they might be able to do so in a few days. On the Southern front, Elazar said he believed they could destroy the Egyptian 3rd army “in two, maybe three days.”²⁸⁴

Historians have raised the question as to whether Kissinger in his conversations with the Israelis gave them the green light to continue their offensive. One school of thought is that “he intentionally scotched efforts to provide UN supervision for the cease-fire, knowing that the Israelis had been pressing for more time to destroy the third army.”²⁸⁵ One Israeli account quotes Kissinger reacting to how long it would take to complete the operation by responding “Two or three days? That’s all? Well, in Vietnam the cease-fire didn’t go into effect at the exact time it was agreed on.”²⁸⁶ The language from his conversations with the Israelis shows that he thought that ultimately the decision to adhere to the cease-fire or not was a domestic decision. Kissinger, did however, make it clear to the prime minister that some slippage was acceptable.²⁸⁷ However, there is no

²⁸³ Burr, October War, doc 55 Memcon of Luncheon for Kissinger's Party, 22 October, 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.Source: RG 59, SN 70-73, POL 7 US/Kissinger

²⁸⁴ Memcon, Burr, Document 55, Memcon of Luncheon for Kissinger's Party, 22 October, 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.Source: RG 59, SN 70-73, POL 7 US/Kissinger

²⁸⁵ Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation, 372

²⁸⁶ Matti Golan. The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger. 86

²⁸⁷ Memcon, Burr, Document 54, Memcon between Meir and Kissinger, 22 October 1973. 1:35 - 2:15 p.m.Source: RG 59, SN 70-73. POL 7 US/Kissinger

evidence that he expected the Israelis to continue fighting more than is normal during the final pangs at the end of a bitter conflict. Furthermore, giving the green light to the Israelis to destroy the third army would have been disruptive to his diplomacy. It would have led to the same Arab humiliation as the Six-Day.

Nuclear Alert

Kissinger stopped in London for consultations with British Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Douglas-Home who reported that the Syrians appeared to be preparing for an offensive on the next day.²⁸⁸ The northern front had been quiet since the first week of the war, but Assad after wanting a cease-fire since October 8 now wanted to fight on. Kissinger continued onto Washington and slept.

When he got to the office the next morning, October 23, there were two messages waiting for him, one from his Egyptian counterpart, Hafiz Ismail, and one from US ambassador to Israel Kenneth Keating. The cease-fire which had gone into effect hours earlier was already collapsing. The message from Ismail complained that Israel had broken the cease-fire and that fighting in the canal area had resumed. Keating's message told of domestic opposition within Israel to the cease-fire.²⁸⁹ The military, in particular, after its first taste of defeat early in the war had no desire to stop fighting until it had regained its aura of invincibility. The Egyptian armed services, for their part, did not want a cease-fire either and there were even reports of mutiny in response to Sadat's decision.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ Kissinger, YOU, 568

²⁸⁹ Kissinger, YOU, 568

²⁹⁰ Burr, October War, Department of State Operations Center, Middle East Task Force Situation Report # 57, "Situation Report in the Middle East as of 1200 EDT, 10/23/73" Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1175. 1973 Middle East War, 23 Oct. 1973-File No. 18

While it remains unclear as to who fired the first shot, once bullets were again flying in the Sinai the IDF, already itching for a fight decided to continue the offensive it was in the middle of when the ceasefire went into effect. A situation report from 23 October shows that the Israelis used the collapse of the ceasefire to strengthen the IDF's position west of the canal.²⁹¹

Through most of the day Kissinger worked with Yuli Voronstov at the Soviet Embassy because Dobrynin had stayed for further consultations in Moscow and had not yet returned. In the morning they worked together trying to solve the crisis, just as the two sides had done in the middle of the first week of the war. The Soviets were being pressured by Sadat to stop the fighting and were upset with Israel. They began to make noises about unilaterally pushing forth a resolution calling on both sides to withdraw to the cease-fire line. Yuli Voronstov read Kissinger a message from Brezhnev to Kissinger regarding the resumption of hostilities: "All this looks like a flagrant deceit on the part of the Israelis. We will express the confidence that the United States will use all the possibilities they have and its authority to bring the Israelis to order. It goes without saying that Israeli forces in this case should be withdraw to the positions where they stayed during the acceptance of the cease-fire decision."²⁹² Both the Israelis and Americans were concerned about this because that ceasefire line had never been

²⁹¹ Burr, October War, 59, Department of State Operations Center, Middle East Task Force Situation Report # 57, "Situation Report in the Middle East as of 1200 EDT, 10/23/73" Source: NPMP, NSCF, box 1175, 1973 Middle East War, 23 Oct. 1973-File No. 18

²⁹² Burr, October War, 60 Message from Brezhnev to Kissinger as read by Minister Vorontsov to the Secretary on the telephone on October 23, 1973 at 10:40 a.m. Source: NPMP, HAKO, box 69, Dobrynin/Kissinger Vol. 20 (October 12-November 27, 1973)

established, it was a point in the sand that could only now be arbitrarily determined and in the view of both Kissinger and the Israelis this would be at the expense of Israel.

Egypt made use of special channels of communication with the United States. Ismail used the backchannel to complain about the collapse of the cease-fire and to try to enlist the United States to “guarantee the cease-fire.”²⁹³ Sadat also used the backchannel to write Nixon formally asking him to intervene “even if it necessitates the use of forces” to guarantee the ceasefire. Sadat effectively threatened to end the budding relationship between the United States and Egypt.²⁹⁴ Nixon responded in a message that the United States had not in fact guaranteed the cease-fire and had simply promised to “engage fully and constructively” in building a peace settlement.²⁹⁵

The Israeli offensive drew the ire of Brezhnev who was beginning to think that Kissinger had made a deal with Israel while in Tel Aviv.²⁹⁶ Had Brezhnev heard Kissinger’s comments in Israel, he probably would have been convinced of this, but he had not. Brezhnev continued to express his belief that the US could control the Israelis. Brezhnev made the first use of MOLINK for hotline messages between the Secretary General and President Nixon during the day urging the president to use his power to get the Israelis to stop. Brezhnev wrote in a letter “we in Moscow are *shocked* that the understanding which was reached only two days ago has in fact been ruptured by this action by the Israeli leaders. Why this treachery was allowed by Israel is more obvious to

²⁹³ Memcon, Burr, Document 44, Excerpts from backchannel US-Egyptian messages, Tuesday 10/23/1973 Ismail to Kissinger

²⁹⁴ Kissinger, *YOU*, 574

²⁹⁵ Burr, *October War*, Document 44, Excerpts from backchannel US-Egyptian messages, Tuesday 10/23/1973 Nixon to Sadat

²⁹⁶ Burr, *the October War and US Policy*, 37

you.”²⁹⁷ This was particularly problematic because at about 12:30 p.m. Kissinger had penned a letter in Nixon’s name to Brezhnev in which the US “assume[d] full responsibility to bring about a complete end of hostilities on the part of Israel.”²⁹⁸

This would prove very problematic for Kissinger and American diplomacy. That night the two superpowers worked to pass a new resolution, Resolution 339, calling on both sides to return to the original cease-fire line. It was set to go into effect at 7:00 a.m. local time, 1:00 a.m. EST.²⁹⁹ However, the Israelis were not yet interested in cooperating. On Tuesday afternoon, October 23, Meir sent a note which Dinitz read to Kissinger. She said, “It is impossible for Israel to accept that time and again it must face Russian and Egyptian ultimatums which will subsequently be assented to by the United States.”³⁰⁰ The attitude of the Government of Israel made the situation very difficult for the United States. Kissinger should not have guaranteed that he could bring Israel to observe the cease-fire because throughout the war both superpowers showed an inability to control their clients. Despite Israeli intransigence Kissinger decided to continue the airlift to Israel, justifying it as necessary to be able to pressure Israel at the negotiation table later.³⁰¹ This move did not alter the situation on the ground, but did not serve to win the United States any points for appearing impartial. The Israelis pushed their offensive until they had cut off all supply routes to the Egyptian 3rd army. Once they were in a position where they could starve the 3rd army, the offensive halted and an escalation of the crisis was inevitable.

²⁹⁷ NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, HAK administrative staff files, Phone links 1969-1974 Box 10, MOLINK Brezhnev to Nixon, 10/23/73 4:00 p.m.

²⁹⁸ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 312

²⁹⁹ Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect*, 315

³⁰⁰ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 314

³⁰¹ Kissinger-Schlesinger 03:02 p.m. October 23, 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file. Box 22, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

Kissinger's strategy was to focus on a cessation of hostilities and then to worry about the 3rd army.³⁰² At a WSAG meeting Wednesday morning, October 24, Kissinger thought that the Americans were in a good position if peace could be reached, "The Arabs may despise us, or hate us, or loathe the US," he said, "but they have learned that if they want a settlement, they have to come to us. No one else can deliver."³⁰³ Unfortunately, the United States had failed to deliver on Tuesday and was failing so far on Wednesday.

Throughout the day, Sadat invited American troops to the Egyptian side of the cease-fire line in order to stop the fighting. This, combined with the situation on the ground, led to what would become a direct confrontation between Soviet and American forces.³⁰⁴ Kissinger had worked throughout the crisis to keep the Soviets out of Egypt, but Sadat had also asked the Soviet Union to send "observers" into the region. The Soviets were very willing to cooperate and again indicated that they if the United States failed to act, the Soviet Union would act unilaterally.³⁰⁵ In an effort to avert this, a message was sent in the name of President Nixon to Sadat again letting him know that the US was doing its utmost to get the Israelis to stop. The crisis continued. Dobrynin and Kissinger spoke again at 7:25 p.m. and Dobrynin repeated that the Soviets would go ahead with a resolution calling for the introduction of peacekeepers. Kissinger promised a veto.³⁰⁶

³⁰² Kissinger, *Crisis*, 325

³⁰³ Kissinger, *YOU*, 578

³⁰⁴ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 529

³⁰⁵ Kissinger-Dobrynin 07:05 p.m. October 24, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

³⁰⁶ Kissinger-Dobrynin 07:25 p.m. October 24, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

In the middle of his conversation with Dobrynin, Kissinger spoke with a distraught President. Impeachment hearings had begun earlier in the week and Nixon was out of the decision making loop as he wallowed in despair trying to salvage his presidency through détente.³⁰⁷ Shortly after 9:30 Dobrynin dictated a message from Brezhnev, what became the infamous Brezhnev note. Once again telephone diplomacy was well ahead of official cables. The note received by the state Department at ten that evening once again suggested that the superpowers send forces into the region to stop the war. The problematic part was the next paragraph in which Brezhnev wrote “I will say it straight that if you find it impossible to act jointly with us in this matter, we should be faced with the necessity urgently to consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally. We cannot allow arbitrariness on the part of Israel.”³⁰⁸ Brezhnev reiterated his desire to keep détente and asked for a quick reply. The message was strongly worded but there is debate over whether it was overtly threatening or not. However, during the crisis, Kissinger interpreted it as especially threatening. Soviet troops in the region were the last thing Kissinger wanted, and he decided with General Haig to “go to the mat” on the issue, despite Haig’s feeling the Soviets were playing a game of chicken.³⁰⁹

There is no clear answer to the debate over whether the Soviets really intended to intervene or not. Victory Israelyan working from inside the Kremlin during the war, states that the Kremlin leaders did not think Nixon would do much about the letter. The

³⁰⁷ Kissinger-Nixon 07:10 p.m. October 24, 1973, NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23, National Archives. College Park, Maryland.

³⁰⁸ Burr, Document 71. letter from Brezhnev to Nixon 10:00 p.m. State department, first dictated at 9:30 Message from Brezhnev to Nixon. 24 October 1973, received at State Department, 10:00 p.m. Source: NPMP, HAKO, box 69, Dobrynin/Kissinger Vol. 20 (October 12-November 27, 1973)

³⁰⁹ Kissinger-Haig 09:50 p.m. October 24, 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

Soviets had intended it as a signal that the time for empty words was over.³¹⁰

Ambassador Dobrynin put it clearer. “[the] Politburo did not have any intention of intervening in the Middle East.”³¹¹ It was supposed to be tough language, but not a threat that would lead to a nuclear confrontation. However, in Washington, Kissinger viewed the note as an ultimatum,³¹² as did the principal American officials³¹³ and Lord Cromer of Britain.³¹⁴ It was decided that a signal needed to be sent to the Soviets, but the situation was at the point where any effective message would have to include an implied threat of war.³¹⁵ Kissinger and Haig decided not to get the President who was out of commission, tired and quite possibly drunk, he had been drinking.³¹⁶

Kissinger spoke with Dobrynin again at 10:15 p.m. and took a confrontational posture telling Dobrynin “this is a matter of great concern. Don’t you pressure us. I want to repeat again, don’t pressure us!”³¹⁷ Kissinger and Haig felt that the Soviets were being aggressive because of Watergate and the impeachment hearings against Nixon.

K: You cannot be sure how much of this is due to our domestic crisis.

H: I think we owe a lot to that.

K: I don’t think they would have taken on a functioning President.

H: They wouldn’t.³¹⁸

³¹⁰ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin, 173

³¹¹ Dobrynin, In Confidence, 297

³¹² Kissinger, YOU, 583

³¹³ Alexander M. Haig Jr. with Charles McCarry, Inner Circles. (Warner Books: New York, 1992) p 415

³¹⁴ Kissinger, YOU, 583

³¹⁵ Isaacson, Kissinger, 531

³¹⁶ Hanhimaki, The Flawed Architect, 316

³¹⁷ Kissinger-Dobrynin 10:15 p.m. October 24, 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23. National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

³¹⁸ Kissinger-Haig 10:20 p.m. October 24, 1973. NPMP, HAK TELCONS, chronological file, Box 23, National Archives. College Park, Maryland. See also Crisis 345-6

Kissinger called together a rump session of the National Security Council placing himself at the chair instead of Nixon. Nixon was not in attendance, but he had spoken with Haig before the meeting telling him, “you know what I want, Al; you handle the meeting.”³¹⁹ Gerald Ford although nominated, had not yet been confirmed as Vice President, and therefore was not invited.³²⁰ At that meeting WSAG became aware that Soviet forces in Eastern Europe had been placed on alert, and appeared ready to fly into Cairo. Because of the hour difference, if Soviet paratroops were going to be sent in, it would most likely be at dawn in the Middle East, so time was of the essence. A total of seven airborne divisions were now on alert.³²¹ It was decided that they needed to respond in two ways. They sent a formal reply was delivered to Dobrynin at 5:40 a.m. October 25. It rejected all Soviet demands.³²²

The WSAG also decided that besides on official response, a message needed to be sent to the Soviets that they would be able to understand and not the press. The WSAG decided to raise the defense condition (DEFCON) alert to level three, the highest level it goes during peacetime. This included a nuclear alert. The Strategic Air Command, in control of American nuclear weapons, was placed on alert. NORAD and the 82nd airborne division were included as well. The WSAG principals also redeployed American forces. Fifty B-52's were returned to the United States from Guam and the *USS John F. Kennedy* carrier group steamed towards the Eastern Mediterranean.³²³ While the president slumbered, the Secretary of State in an unprecedented display of power placed the American military on a war footing.

³¹⁹ Haig, *Inner Circles*, 415

³²⁰ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, 531

³²¹ Haig, *Inner Circles*, 415

³²² Kissinger, *Crisis*, 353

The nuclear alert was not only a signal to the Soviets, but it was also done for the Israelis. By threatening to go nuclear, the United States gave Israel a face-saving way to completely call off its offensive without having to appear to be backing down to Soviet threats.³²⁴ Moreover the United States wanted Israel to know its serious desire in halting the conflict. Golda Meir realized this. She told her cabinet that week, “There is only one country to which we can turn and sometimes we have to give in to it-even when we know we shouldn’t. But it is the only real friend we have, and a very powerful one. We don’t have to say yes to everything, but let’s call things by their proper name. There is nothing to be ashamed of when a small country like Israel, in this situation has to give sometimes to the United States.”³²⁵ Furthermore, the Israelis had already put their nuclear forces on alert October 9. Had the Soviets intervened, there is the possibility that Israel would have used the nuclear option.

On the morning of 25 October the Americans were calm. Before Kissinger had to deal with the Soviet response, he had two messages from Sadat. The first, addressed to Kissinger emphasized the hope for a joint US-USSR intervention force, but the second message called for an “international force,” sure to exclude the United States and Soviet Union.³²⁶ This meant that the growing US-Egyptian relationship had paid off. Sadat was hedging his bets on the United States.³²⁷ It was his request for a joint force that sparked the crisis, and withdrawing it helped to calm the crisis.

³²³ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 379

³²⁴ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 379

³²⁵ Golda Meir, *My Life*, (C.P. Putnam’s Sons: New York, 1975)

³²⁶ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 354

³²⁷ Kissinger, *Crisis*, 353

Kissinger's note, with Nixon's signature, to the Soviets shocked them into de-escalation.³²⁸ After Brezhnev received the note, the Kremlin met to decide how to react. Would they answer in kind? The hawks in the Kremlin were willing, but Brezhnev and the doves carried the day. Brezhnev decided to let Nixon cool down. This would be the most influential step in de-escalating the crisis. According to Israelyan, the Soviets were not ready for war, politically or psychologically. For one, Brezhnev was scheduled to open the World Congress of Peace Forces in Moscow that day. Brezhnev felt that this was important for his bid for absolute power because it was supposed to highlight the successes of détente, which he was known as being the founder of and show him as the defender of the working man.³²⁹ Brezhnev wanted to work towards a quick conclusion to the Middle East conflict, thus he decided to let the Americans cool down, in part, so that he could open the Congress.

A little after two-thirty Dobrynin called Kissinger with a message from Brezhnev. Brezhnev's reply overlooked the nuclear alert from the previous night and indicated a continued desire to work together. After Dobrynin read the message Kissinger called Secretary Schlesinger.

K: I think it is working

S: I think you have won

K: Yep. They have agreed to the SC Resolution

Schlesinger was referring to Security Council Resolution 340, which called for an observer force made up of non Security Council members to be sent to the Middle

³²⁸ Israelyan, Inside the Kremlin .180

³²⁹ Israelyan Inside the Kremlin. 164

East.³³⁰ This meant that Kissinger had succeeded in staring down the Soviets and keeping their troops out of Egypt.

It was decided that the DEFCON alert would be scaled back starting at midnight and Kissinger then embarked on a series of congratulatory calls to reporters and Nixon who had only found out about the alert after he woke up. The crisis was over and only small details remained to be worked out. Kissinger's nuclear brinksmanship caused the other nations to stop and take stock and created the conditions necessary for a cease-fire to hold. The October War was over.

³³⁰ Kissinger, Crisis, 358

CHAPTER 6

Denouement

As the October war came to a close October 15, 1973 four of the five participants felt victorious. Egypt, Israel, the United States and the Soviet Union all felt that they had won. Syria was the only clear loser.

Even though the Egyptian 3rd army was surrounded by the IDF Sadat still saw his military operation as a victory. The Egyptian leader had accomplished important achievements. First, he replaced Arab “shame” with Arab pride. Unlike 1967 when the Arab armies broke and ran, they fought hard during the October war. As a result of this, Sadat was able to realize his second goal, changing the psychological balance in the Middle East. The initial successes of the Egyptian Army destroyed the IDF’s aura of invincibility. Egyptian forces had crossed the Canal and captured parts of the Sinai, and despite the Israeli advance still controlled strips of territory when the cease-fire went into effect.³³¹ The Egyptian victories could not, moreover be credited to the USSR. The Egyptian successes occurred without the help of the Soviet advisor Sadat had expelled in 1972. Domestically, Sadat was a hero for having challenged the Israelis. Egypt also began to embark on a more pro-American policy after the war. American arms and influence with Israel proved to be more influential than Soviet help and the budding US-Egyptian relationship grew after the war.

In Israel the war was a victory militarily, but psychologically a setback. The Israelis were attacked and suffered heavy casualties early. The Canal was crossed and the Bar-Lev line overrun, and positions threatened on the Golan Heights, but the Israeli

military held strong and managed to push its enemies back. By October 9, the IDF had recovered its position on the Golan and closed in on Damascus. This allowed for additional forces to be deployed against the Egyptians. When the Egyptians emerged from under the SAM umbrella on October 14-15 the Israelis won a decisive victory. On 16 October Israel retook parts of the canal, eventually capturing about 1600 square kilometers on the west side of the Canal.³³² The price was high though. The Israelis suffered nearly 2,200 deaths, the equivalent of 200,000 in the United States.³³³ Fortunately for the Israelis, they were being rearmed; the US airlift, which started pouring supplies into Israel October 14, continued until November 15, replacing the forces lost during the war. Psychologically, Israel lost its aura of invulnerability. In return though, at Kilometer 101 on November 11, 1973 it gained long-awaited recognition from the Arab world when Egyptian and Israelis met to sign a formal ceasefire for the first time. The Kilometer 101 talks led to a long disengagement process, culminating in the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty at Camp David.

The Syrians, on the other hand, emerged from the October War as the big losers. Even though the Syrian troops acquitted themselves much better than they had in 1967, Damascus suffered shelling and Syria lost 3,000 soldiers, and lost part of the Golan Heights. Furthermore, Assad had been abandoned by his Soviet supplier when he asked for a ceasefire on 8 October and then was talked out of launching his offensive 23 October by the Soviets. Soviet-Syrian relations suffered as a result.³³⁴

³³¹ Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 433

³³² Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 437, Kaufman, *The Arab Middle East*, 82 says 300 sq. kilometers.

³³³ Burr, *The October War and US Policy*

³³⁴ Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin*, 214

The Soviet leadership emerged from the Yom Kippur War believing they were victorious. From the Brezhnev's perspective the war demonstrated Arab solidarity and the important role of the Soviet Union in the Middle East.³³⁵ Furthermore, the Soviet Unions' international actions were believed to have kept the Arabs from surrendering to the Israelis in the final week of the war.³³⁶ For Brezhnev the war resulted in increased power, and despite the war, the World Peace Congress went smoothly. Brezhnev felt that détente was the tool that brought peace to the Middle East: "thanks to the joint efforts of the USSR and the United States, which had become possible under the conditions of détente, a dangerous armed conflict in the Near East was successfully extinguished."³³⁷ by Brezhnev. However, from a perspective farther from the action the Soviet victory was rather hollow.³³⁸ Relations diminished between the USSR and Egypt, and the USSR and Syria. The Soviet role in the Middle East was diminished to the point where it was the Americans who were the only superpower responsible for bringing about the Egyptian-Israeli peace in 1979. Furthermore, Soviet weapons and backing proved insufficient to win a war against an American backed client. The Soviet leaders may have felt they had won a victory, but they did not.

The United States emerged as a winner from the October War. Guided by Kissinger's masterful hand the United States accomplished its major objectives in the region. The American supported Israel was the military victor. Israel was stopped from totally humiliating the Egyptian army by the nuclear alert. Despite Nixon's desire to work jointly with the Soviet Union, Kissinger's diplomacy laid the groundwork for the

³³⁵ Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin*, 211

³³⁶ Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin*, 213

³³⁷ quoted in Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 397

³³⁸ Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin*, 213

Soviets exclusion from the region, another American objective. Not only did the United States' client win the war, but the United States also managed to gain a new friend in Egypt. Kissinger demonstrated to the Egyptians that if they wanted peace, they would have to work with the Americans. The major American setback was the oil embargo, which lasted until March 1974, against the US by the Arab oil producers. The oil embargo emerged as much out of the Arab desire to own and control production of oil reserves as out of the October War. Unless the United States abandoned Israel, it was likely to have faced an oil embargo.

How can one judge Henry Kissinger's performance during the crisis? Ultimately the question must be was it successful or ineffective? William Quandt looking through a geopolitical lens categorizes the war as a success, because Kissinger achieved his major aims. He limited Soviet influence in the region, protected Israel's security; and improved relations with Egypt. He was able to do this because of how intertwined the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Cold War had become. As much as this served to exacerbate the crisis it also enabled Kissinger new diplomatic opportunities to enhance the US position. He did this through telephone and personal diplomacy. Kissinger employed a double use of détente. He worked within and outside the frameworks of détente to gain leverage over the Soviets. Kissinger was not perfect, however. In the opening days of the war he was unable to achieve an early cease-fire and was under the mistaken impression that the Israelis would win a quick victory. While a mistake in judgment this had no impact on the failure of an early cease-fire, which was the fault of Egyptian and Israeli obstinacy.

Those who argue that Kissinger's diplomacy during the October war increasingly argue from a moralist approach. Hanhimaki is one author who asks if Kissinger's

behavior and policy truly reflected the countries “values” and “interests.” The main vein of this critique is that Kissinger did not act morally as he conducted his diplomacy without concern of human suffering. This is the “interest” that Kissinger failed to follow, but he did not and neither did Nixon perceive this as an interest. Had he acted more “morally” he would not have been able to achieve the United States’ interests. For instance, if the United States had resupplied Israel sooner, less Israeli lives may have been lost, but the US situation vis-à-vis the Arabs would have likely suffered. Had Kissinger not resupplied Israel choosing not to send more weapons into a region on fire, Nixon’s position would have been further weakened and the United States might have lost Israel, or even worse Israel may have resorted to nuclear weapons. This type of critique is almost entirely revisionist, fails to take into account the realities of the Cold War and the geopolitical realism followed by decision makers of the day.

Was Kissinger right to issue a nuclear alert? Kissinger biographers believe that his decision to place the American military on nuclear alert is one that Nixon likely would have approved had he been present.³³⁹ Despite this, Hanhimaki was against the alert because like Raymond Garthoff, a State Department Soviet expert and Kissinger critic, he saw it as an alarmist interpretation of the Brezhnev note.³⁴⁰ NSC staffer Peter Rodman said of the nuclear alert, “it was our strategy to deliberately overreact...facing down the Russians...you had to scare them off.”³⁴¹ The question is open for debate, but the nuclear alert was effective. It caused the Soviets to blink, Kissinger won the game of chicken. Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and Victor Israelyan, a member of the Soviet task force for the October war, argue that the Soviets were not going to intervene. The

³³⁹ Hanhimaki, The Flawed Architect, 316, Isaacson, Kissinger, 532-534

³⁴⁰ Hanhimaki, The Flawed Architect, 315-6, Garthoff, Détente and Confrontation, 376-385

question about Soviet intervention is open for debate the policy-makers from the US and the USSR have polar views, but the reality of the nuclear alert was that it was effective, and therefore the right diplomatic move. It caused the Soviets to blink, they were not willing to respond in kind and Kissinger won the game of chicken.

Did the October War damage détente? Hanhimaki and others like to argue that détente was damaged by the October War. This however is not the case. At the beginning of the October War the United States and the Soviet Union both thought of détente as a tool to further their own positions. Détente was a means to an end, not an end in itself. Ambassador Dobrynin says that the October War led to a comprehensive review of détente by the Soviets, but their conclusion was a “reaffirmation of détente as a useful and important policy.”³⁴² Dobrynin blames other factors for the collapse of détente, including the presidential change in 1974, and the redeployment of nuclear weapons away from cities towards Soviet military bases, which would threaten Soviet first strike capabilities.³⁴³ In the White House, Richard Nixon proclaimed the benefits of detente, “I would suggest that with all of the criticism of détente, that without détente, we might have had a major conflict in the Middle East. With détente, we avoided it.”³⁴⁴ Even though the superpower continued in parts of the third world, détente had achieved its purpose. The two Cold War powers communicated throughout the war, even as each sought to improve its interests and avoided confrontation. Détente would continue until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

³⁴¹ Kenneth W. Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, 95

³⁴² Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 301

³⁴³ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 305

³⁴⁴ The Nixon Press Conferences (Earl. M. Colena enterprises: New York, 1978) Press Conference October 26, p. 370.

The situation at the end of the war allowed for the first discussions between Israeli and Egyptian officials and led to the end of the greatest state-to-state conflict Israel was involved in. This must be regarded as a success by Kissinger. It placed the United States as the central foreign power in the Middle East. A critique of Kissinger's diplomacy can be made on the long term effects of his policy. The argument exists that by placing the United States as the central foreign power in the region, the United States has suffered from the same anti-colonial feelings that plagued the Ottomans, British and French. Increased American presence in the region has certainly had an impact in this regard, but to what extent is open for debate. One can also criticize Kissinger because other issues remain to be settled in the region, including Israeli relations with Syria, the Palestinian problem and access to cheap oil. However, these problems are not the fault of Kissinger. His achievements during the October war significantly outweigh the long-term effects of his policy. Kissinger took the opportunities that were presented to him and practiced a diplomacy using the telephone and détente as his tools that was successful at pursuing the interests of the United States as they were in 1973.

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