


Chapter 5

Failure to Connect the Dots, 50 Years Later: “Yom Kippur War” (1973) Versus “October 7”

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ABSTRACT

Hamas-led attack on Israel (October 7, 2023) was considered to be a spectacular military surprise similar to the “Yom Kippur War” (1973). There are parallel lines to the attack and the war, most of them in the field of intelligence, such as ignoring intelligence reports and failure to connect the dots, i.e., failing to interpret the large amounts of data accumulated in the intelligence division, and identified in the two events, that a war was about to break out. Israeli intelligence also failed in both wars by sticking to the wrong concepts. According to the first case study (“The 1973 War”), the Egyptian and the Syrian armies would not start a war because the Israeli military had remarkably won the “1967 War”. According to the second case study (Hamas-led attack on Israel), “Hamas is deterred,” and the conflict between Israel and the Hamas organization controlling in Gaza strip, could be contained by Israel. Though both conceptions were incorrect, they prevented political and military decision-makers and heads of the IDF from “reading” the intelligence reports, which explicitly described the most likely option of war and attack in both situations. In the research, a top-tier intelligence agency, the IDF intelligence, failed miserably to connect the dots twice, 50 years apart. In our research, the “Yom Kippur War” and the Hamas-led attack on Israel (October 7, 2023) are compared using a close tables and artificial intelligence.

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INTRODUCTION

In the realm of national security, the intelligence community serves as the first line of defense against threats both foreign and domestic. Yet, history has repeatedly shown that even the most sophisticated and well-resourced intelligence agencies can fall prey to catastrophic failures. This chapter delves into two such failures in Israeli intelligence: the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and the Hamas-led attack on October 7, 2023. These events, separated by half a century, share striking similarities in their underlying intelligence breakdowns, particularly in the critical process of “connecting the dots” - the ability to synthesize disparate pieces of information into a coherent and actionable intelligence picture.

The Yom Kippur War, which caught Israel off guard on its holiest day, has long been studied as a classic case of intelligence failure. It exposed significant weaknesses in Israel's intelligence apparatus and led to widespread reforms. However, fifty years later, the October 7 attack orchestrated by Hamas echoed many of the same shortcomings, raising critical questions about the nature of intelligence work and the persistent challenges in interpreting and acting upon available information.

This chapter aims to conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis of these two seminal events, focusing on the parallels in intelligence gathering, analysis, and decision-making processes. We will explore how preconceived notions, or “conceptions,” can blind analysts and decision-makers to contrary evidence, and how the failure to challenge these conceptions can lead to catastrophic outcomes. The role of organizational culture, cognitive biases, and the psychological aspects of intelligence work will be examined in depth.

By juxtaposing these case studies, we seek to understand: first, the role of cognitive biases and organizational cultures in shaping intelligence assessments: How do ingrained beliefs and institutional norms influence the interpretation of intelligence data? Second, the challenges of interpreting vast amounts of data in the modern intelligence landscape: In an era of information overload, how can intelligence agencies effectively sift through and prioritize critical information? Third, the importance of fostering a culture of critical thinking and “devil's advocate” approaches in intelligence work: How can agencies institutionalize practices that challenge prevailing assumptions and encourage alternative analyses? Fourth, the impact of hubris on decision-making processes at both the intelligence and political levels: How does overconfidence in one's capabilities or previous successes contribute to intelligence failures? Fifth, the evolution of intelligence practices over the past fifty years: What lessons were learned from the Yom Kippur War, and why were they insufficient to prevent the October 7 attack?

This analysis will draw upon a rich body of literature in intelligence studies, cognitive psychology, and organizational theory. We will examine primary sources,

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