

PREGNANT BLINDNESS IN INTELLIGENCE. ONE CASE FROM HISTORY

A “CEGUEIRA PREGNANTE” NA INTELIGÊNCIA: UM CASO HISTÓRICO

LA “CEGUERA PREGNANTE” EN LA INTELIGENCIA. UN CASO HISTÓRICO

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ABSTRACT

The discipline of intelligence analysis has evolved in recent decades in the light of technological progress and the development of other areas of knowledge. Psychology, with contributions from cognitive psychology, has raised the issue of the pregnancy. Colonel Christian Pinto Sampaio (Brazilian Army) applied these concepts into the performance of the intelligence analyst, with very interesting results. Taking his work as a starting point, we use his theoretical framework to study the case of the Yom Kippur War. The work of Colonel Pinto Sampaio is a valuable contribution to the clarification of the basic intelligence's problems, and its consideration by those responsible for the management of intelligence systems can provide effective solutions to an important part of this problem. Finally, we must continue to explore the psychology of the intelligence analyst and the operation of these organizations to ensure that decision-makers have better quality information to do their jobs. Nevertheless, it would also be appropriate that this type of academic research be distributed and analyzed by the analysts themselves and become part of their training plan.

Keywords: Pregnant Blindness. Intelligence. Psychology. Pinto Sampaio.

RESUMO

A disciplina de análise de inteligência evoluiu nas últimas décadas à luz do progresso tecnológico e de outras áreas do conhecimento. A psicologia, com as suas contribuições desde a psicologia cognitiva, apresentou a problemática da gravidez. O Coronel Cristiano Pinto Sampaio (Exército do Brasil) tomou esses conceitos para aplicá-los ao desempenho do analista de inteligência, com resultados muito interessantes. Tomando seu trabalho como ponto de partida, utilizei o marco teórico por ele desenvolvido para aplicá-lo ao estudo do caso da guerra do Yom Kippur. O trabalho do Coronel Pinto Sampaio é uma contribuição valiosa para o esclarecimento da problemática básica da inteligência, e a sua consideração por parte dos responsáveis pela direção de sistemas de inteligência pode fornecer soluções eficazes para uma parcela importante dessa problemática. Por último, é necessário continuar explorando a psicologia do analista de inteligência e o funcionamento dessas organizações para fazer com que os tomadores de decisão contem com informações de melhor qualidade para realizar seu trabalho. Além disso, seria apropriado que esse tipo de pesquisa acadêmica seja distribuído e analisado pelos mesmos analistas e que passem a fazer parte do plano de formação deles.

Palavras-chave: Cegueira Pregnante. Inteligência. Psicologia. Pinto Sampaio.

RESUMEN

La disciplina de análisis de inteligencia ha evolucionado en las últimas décadas a la luz del progreso tecnológico y de otras áreas del conocimiento. La psicología, con sus aportes desde la psicología cognitiva, ha planteado la problemática de la gestación. El Coronel Cristiano Pinto Sampaio (Ejército de Brasil) tomó estos conceptos para aplicarlos al desempeño del analista de inteligencia, con resultados muy interesantes. Tomando su trabajo como punto de partida utilizamos el marco teórico por el desarrollado para aplicarlo al estudio del caso de la guerra del Yom Kippur. El trabajo del Coronel Pinto Sampaio es un valioso aporte al esclarecimiento de la problemática básica de la inteligencia, y su consideración por parte de los responsables de la dirección de sistemas de inteligencia puede aportar soluciones eficaces a una parte importante de esa problemática. Finalmente, es necesario continuar explorando la psicología del analista de inteligencia y el funcionamiento de estas organizaciones a fin de lograr que los decisores cuenten con información de mejor calidad para realizar su trabajo. Asimismo, sería apropiado que este tipo de investigaciones académicas sean distribuidas y analizadas por los mismos analistas y que pasen a formar parte del plan de capacitación de los mismos.

Palabras clave: Ceguera Pregnante. Inteligencia. Psicología. Pinto Sampaio

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I FIRST CONSIDERATIONS

I.1 Cognitive Psychology Findings

Richards Heuer says that the many problems that impair a precise intelligence analysis, those inherent to the human mental processes, are the most important and most difficult to approach (HEUER, 1999). Intelligence analysis is, essentially, a mental process, but the lack of awareness on the functioning of our own minds hinders the understanding of such process.

Heuer adds that a basic discovery of cognitive psychology lies in the fact that human beings do not consciously experience a large amount of what goes on in their minds and also that the weaknesses and turns inherent to the processes of human thought could be demonstrated through carefully designed experiments. Heuer also reminds that Herbert Simon first introduced the concept of “restricted” or limited rationality (SIMON, 1988). This author used to sustain that, due to the capacity limitations of the human mind, our minds are not capable of facing the complexity of the world. To cope with that, we build a simplified mental model of reality and work with this model. We behave rationally within the boundaries of our mental model, but this model does not always adapt itself well to the requirements of the real world. The concept of restricted rationality has been recognized generally, but not universally, both in its character of accurate representation of human judgment and choice, and in the sensible adaptation of the limitations inherent to the way the human mind functions.

Heuer also states that a large amount of the psychological research on perception, memory, attention, period of attention and reasoning capacity documents the limitations of our “mental machinery”, identified by Simon (HEUER, 1999). Many academics have applied such psychological knowledge in the study of international political behavior. Some writings on the failure of intelligence and strategic surprise are based on a similar psychological perspective. In this sense, analysts carry a series of assumptions and expectations about the motivations of people and other countries’ government procedures. The events that are compatible with such expectations are easily perceived and processed, whereas those that are contrary to the prevalent expectations are usually not perceived or distorted. This distortion is a subconscious or preconscious process.

This tendency to perceive what one expects to perceive is more significant than any tendency to perceive what one wishes to perceive. Actually, there is probably no real tendency towards the expression of desire. The evidence most commonly mentioned to support the affirmative that people tend to perceive what they want to perceive can in general be explained with the same degree of correction used for the theory of expectation.

Expectations can come from various sources, among which are past experience, professional qualification and cultural and institutional rules. All these influences predispose the analysts to give special attention to a certain type of information and organize and interpret such information in a given manner. Perception is also influenced by the context in which it occurs. Different circumstances evoke different groups of expectations.

Expectation patterns subconsciously impose to the analysts what to look for, what is important and how to interpret what they see. These patterns form a way of thinking that predisposes the analysts to think according to a given manner. A way of thinking is similar to a screen or a lens through which one perceives the world.

Heuer highlights that the gradual reception of information through time also makes it easier for the analysts to integrate it to the opinions they have already acquired. No information individually received will be enough to induce the analyst to change a previous opinion. The cumulative message inherent to a lot of information might be significant, but is attenuated when one examines information as a whole (HEUER, 1999).

Regarding memory, our author also reminds us that it hardly ever changes in a retroactive way. Analysts often receive new information which, according to logic, should make them reevaluate the credibility or relevance of the previous information. Previous information would then be more highlighted and it would be easier to access it in the memory, or the opposite would occur. However, that is not what happens. Memories rarely ever engage into reassessing or organizing in a retroactive manner as a response to new information. The information that was discarded either because it lacked value or because it did not meet the analyst’s expectations, does not become more memorable, even if the analyst changes his way of thinking, to such extent that the same information, if it were to be received today, might truly be considered relevant (HEUER, 1999).

I.2 Perception in a conflict environment

Robert Jervis has conducted an interesting study (JERVIS, 1976) regarding the role of perception in the conflict area and in international relations. He states that Man has cognitive limitations that condition his actions and that, therefore, this is true to both analysts and political decision makers, and consequently to the relationship among international players.

Jervis says that the reality-filtering process is generated by rational and irrational mechanisms. He explains that rational consistency refers to permanent behavior patterns that are used to limit the complexity of the surrounds, whereas irrational consistency proposes that Man is prone to avoid conflict between his own beliefs and the world around him (every new piece of information will be assumed based on the original understanding).

According to the author, such mechanisms bias the decision-making process because if distorted assumptions are used as starting point, the answers will be wrong. It is not satisfactory to accept the fact that a phenomenon cannot be explained unless new elements are added to change and interfere in the original understanding.

Man tends to believe that the other's behavior is more centralized, planned and coordinated than it actually is; it is more common for a political decision maker to interpret events as having been planned rather than being accidental.

Likewise, the interpretation of future information will be conditioned also by the previous interpretation of international history and the statesman's action will be shaped by the political system in which he lives, which provides him with strategies and tactics to achieve the desired objectives. The decision maker usually overestimates the level of information that the other possesses, as well as the power to impose his wishes in all areas of his government. The behavior of the State is usually seen in a centralized manner and not as independent actions by individual players trying to promote their interests and biased and partial conceptions of the national interests.

The content of perception, in turn, also depends on the effect of the other's behavior on the player. When the other behaves according to the player's desires, the latter overestimates the level of responsibility of his own policies over the results. When the situation flows without major changes, there is a smaller tendency to occur the referred overestimation.

However, when the other's behavior is undesirable, the player tends to see it as a reaction to internal issues and not as a consequence of the applied policy. In such cases, the player believes the other is trying to do harm, rather than understand that these could be the undesirable consequences or side effects of the applied policy.

Jervis also explains that there are factors that base the overestimation of the successful influence: the satisfaction of the ego, the efficacy and the ability to shape one's environment; the knowledge of one's own efforts to influence the other, without considering the other factors that could have contributed to that. Without further evidence, the most adequate explanation is the overestimation of influence.

2 - PINTO SAMPAIO'S "THESIS"

Around the end of 2013 a Final Integrating Paper (TFI) was presented in the Aeronautical University Institute, in the Strategic Intelligence Analysis Specialization Course, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, which was prepared by a senior officer of the Brazilian Army (PINTO SAMPAIO, 2013), with an original approach to

a well-known theme, the concrete and every-day activity of intelligence analysis and the professional qualification of the analysts.

The thesis was based essentially on the knowledge that there are several factors affecting the work of intelligence analysts, and that error, mistake and misunderstanding are an integral part of their work. Having as a starting point that many arguments on the causes of such fact pointed towards the scarcity of time, information and sources, and also the reality that the "mental models" directly interfere in the analysis process, the author also considered that the very personality and attitudes of the decision maker in charge of receiving the work from the analyst could induce the analyst's error.

Besides, the author also said that a problem that had been broadly studied and discussed in the field of psychology, such as the cognitive barriers and biases, had not, however, received sufficient attention the field and within the perspective of intelligence, and he went on to name this type of problem as "Pregnant Blindness".

The author did not intend this name to be considered a scientific term, but just an adaptation of the terms that helped provide a meaning to an event, and explained that this was a phenomenon according to which data, information and knowledge were unduly analyzed, i.e., analysts were deprived of the elements that enable them to "look at the object", and that they consequently remained virtually "blind" and this would often drive to the usage of memory in order to perceive something they did not actually "see". He added that this "blindness" was pregnant as it tried to simplify the parts that compose the image, the discourse, the information to convert them into something "visible", perceptible, that could be understood and analyzed according to an established mental model.

What actually lies behind these reflections is based on the idea that the human beings, there included intelligence analysts, create permanent thought structures supported by their own experiences and learning, mental schemes that, when faced with the concrete facts of the situation that requires explaining, establish a mental model to provide the replies. This means to say that the memories of a whole life are included in a "library" of available data on the personal experience where they join the acquired academic knowledge. This cognitive process can produce a mental model with paradigms that are often unbreakable. Besides, the working place and living environment influence the intelligence analyst's way of observing, perceiving and understanding.

He concluded by saying that possibly all the opportunities in which the intelligence analyst had to face a situation for which he thought he was not equipped with the necessary "tools" to perform his work, due to his experience, the changes in his surroundings and the information treatment, might provide the conditions for the appearance of the Pregnant Blindness.

To fundament his thesis, Colonel Pinto Sampaio resorted to a deep analysis of the studies done in the field of cognitive psychology.

He concluded in his work that the mental models perform a key role in the internal representation of objects, state of affairs, event sequence, concepts, systems that enable us to infer and predict, understand phenomena and systems.

Among the findings of his work, the one he highlights guarantees that a mental concept or system is not represented by a single model, but perhaps by many models, and also that there may be many mental models to represent in an optimum way. This means that “in an intelligence agency it is possible to detect many different and inadequate mental models on any theme, for instance, the structure of terrorist cells, and it is also possible to find adequate and similar mental models on the same concept” (PINTO SAMPAIO, 2013, p. 10).

He adds some features about mental models:

- They are incomplete and the ability of people to “run” their models is very limited; the models are unstable, generally because people forget details, especially when they are run during a long period of time;

- The models do not have a well defined border because people usually confound similar concepts and processes;

- The models might be “non scientific”, i.e., they may reveal behaviors based on superstitions and beliefs that people have about the concept, and, finally, developed mental models tend to be too simplified and economical.

Therefore, he says that

One should not expect analysts to present elegant and precise mental models, but confused, incomplete and imperfect ones. Nevertheless, mental models are always evolving. People build them from a system or from a concept interacting with the system that is the object of study (PINTO SAMPAIO, 2013, p. 11).

He also recovers a precious finding by Richards Heuer Jr.:

People usually think that perception is a passive process. We see, listen to, smell, taste or feel the stimuli that affect our senses. We think that if we are really objective, we register what actually happens. However, it can be demonstrated that perception is an active, not passive, process; it “creates”, rather than registers, reality (PINTO SAMPAIO, 2013, p. 16).

Author Pinto Sampaio chooses an interesting example to show the possible practical results that studied phenomenon can cause. He says: a ‘Brazilian guy’ might possess the following mental scheme: “Argentines are the best in football”. Mental schemes (long lasting) interact with mental representations that are created to provide an answer to concrete situations (mental models). According

to this example, our ‘Brazilian guy’ has to choose some of his foreign friends for a football competition. After a quick reasoning, he belief leads him to choose all the Argentines available. He adds:

We can imagine that his choice was not good and he is very annoyed at the end of the competition because he did not win any match. And then he finds out that although his friends were all born in Buenos Aires, they grew up in Quebec, are overweight and did not train (PINTO SAMPAIO, 2013, p. 18).

It seems convenient to include here the definition given by Pinto Sampaio to the Pregnant Blindness (PB):

PB is the ability to use, totally or partially, the cognitive process (perception, learning and memory) to solve a problem and which is produced when the analyst’s mental model tries to simplify data, information or knowledge to give a meaning to an analysis during the intelligence cycle (PINTO SAMPAIO, 2013, p. 61).

At this point and intending to shed some additional light on the idea of the mental models, we have included a comment by a distinguished strategic thinker and military historian of our times, Martin Van Creveld. He says:

Apart from the cognitive problems – if a zebra is a black animal with white stripes or vice-versa – the solution that depends on our own will should be expressed so that to classify and arrange (i.e. ‘understand’) the information that reaches us we find support on a mental matrix consisting of concepts and the existing relationship among such concepts. ‘Understanding’ means arranging the information according to this matrix in such way that the information that does not seem to fit into it will be considered ‘illogical’. The matrix in each person’s mind belongs partially to the person and is partially shared with other people. Its origins are partially biological, partially psychological, partially the result of education and training, and partially the result of practical experience. The link between the matrix and the real world is always full of problems. Some of it is probably true, some is false, when more than, let us say, 50% is false, we classify this person as disturbed. When a change occurs in the outside world, the matrix should change also; however, this takes time and some parts of the matrix have the ability to update themselves before other parts. There is no right way to ensure that a person’s matrix corresponds to reality, but being aware of that is a good starting point. Mental flexibility consists in the ability and willingness to change one’s matrix whenever necessary (VAN CREVELD, 1985, p. 278.). (Note from the translator: free translation of quote)

Pinto Sampaio also recovered a statement by Richards Heuer that could summarize the essence of the intelligence activity environment threatened by Pregnant Blindness:

The presence of contradictory information of

uncertain reliability is an endemic disease of Intelligence analysis, similar to the need to formulate quick judgment on current events before gathering all the evidence (HEUER, 1999, p. 35). (Note from the translator: free translation of quote)

3 A HISTORICAL CASE THAT STAGES THEORETICAL FINDINGS

Analysis of the impact of the specific pathologies that obstruct the effective processing of information in the alert-response process. Such obstacles can include cognitive dissonance, confirmation biases, and heuristic judgment that affect individual capacity to perceive reality. For over forty years the prevailing thesis among scholars studying this theme was that intelligence failures are not the product of insufficient information or of negligence or stupidity of intelligence producers and consumers. Instead, it is granted to the result of inherent pathologies to the alert-response process affecting "honest, dedicated and intelligent" men. The experience gathered since the beginning of the 1940's repeatedly confirms this thesis. The most recent evidence is the lack of intelligence of September 11, 2001.

The failure by intelligence agencies to provide early and precise alert in face of sudden attacks has been the object of multiple studies that have identified, described and analyzed a large number of inherent obstacles in the alert-response process. Those include, among others, concealment, that prevents the victim from getting information on the intentions of the initiator and his attack capacity; deception, that enhances false information about the intentions of the initiator and his capacity; the boy-who-cried-wolf syndrome, that results from repeated false alerts that corrode the receptivity of the victim in the long run; compartmentalization, which, albeit unintentionally, artificially obstructs the flow of relevant information; the tendency in intelligence agencies towards complacency with the "best-case" or "worst-case" scenarios; and the structural disadvantage that has already been incorporated in the delayed response by the victim to the received alerts.

The problematic relationship between intelligence employees and political decision makers is another source failure. The tendency of decision makers to act as their own intelligence agents might lead them to rejecting solid estimates delivered by the intelligence. On the other hand, decision makers might also have a tendency to automatically accept intelligence production, a phenomenon that may lead to the creation of a solid and dogmatic estimate on the probability of war. The over commitment of decision makers with their own political agenda may affect their receptivity regarding intelligence products that are not consistent with this agenda.

The third source of alert failure would be the general pathologies of information processing. In this regard, scholars studying surprise attacks resort to such

fields as cognitive and social psychology, organizational studies and cybernetics.

In this context it is possible to identify a set of real historical cases that could illustrate concrete findings in the theoretical field. We have selected one of such cases which we consider relevant due to its historical and political transcendence and because from that period to this day it has given rise to an extensive and very solid set of academic research. This case occurred in the 20th century and was the beginning of the so-called Yom Kippur War.

3.1 The historical case: Yom Kippur

At 2:00 p.m. on October 6, 1973, Egypt, which had been defeated a few years earlier in the so-called Six-Day War, launched a strong offensive via the Suez Canal and took by surprise Israel and its armed forces. At the same time, Syria launched a strong offensive on the Golan Heights. In both cases the attacking forces overcame Israeli border defenses and created, especially on the north front, a critical threat to Israeli population in this area.

Abraham Rabinovich said: "When the fight was over, less than three weeks later, its army (Israeli) was going to the capital cities of Egypt and Syria in one of the most outstanding turns of military history. Nevertheless, Israel came out of the war more hurt than victorious" (RABINOVICH, 2003, p.49).³

Since then, many documents have been revealed, many reports have been presented in memoirs by witnesses, as well as many academic works have been written addressing those events. In the words of Uri Bar-Joseph, author of one of the most important of such works, "These documents have enabled me to present the distorted picture of intelligence as it was forecast the day before the war to Israeli civilian and military decision makers" (BAR- JOSEPH, 2005, p.555).

Because that was what the Israeli fiasco was all about on October 1973, a gross intelligence failure caused by the "pregnant blindness" that took hold of the mind of the most important person in charge of military intelligence in Israel and of some of his main subordinates.

Specialists consider that the sudden Yom Kippur attack, in 1973, was the most traumatic of all the tormented history of Israel. The success of the Egyptian and Syrian armies on the first day of the war, occupying the "Bar Lev" defense line along the Suez Canal, as well as considerable portions of the Golan Heights, plus the loss of 300 of the 500 tanks of the Israeli defense when the war started, compose the most serious threat to the existence of that country since the 1948 war. According to the words of Moshe Dayan, Israeli Minister of Defense at

³ Note from the authors: much of the bibliography used in this paper has been obtained through the KINDLE electronic device, by Amazon. In such works there are no references to "page", just to "position" (p.).

the time, on the first hours of the morning of October 17, "the 'Third Temple' was in danger".⁴

The Arab success was the direct result of the failure in the Military Intelligence Directorate (AMAN, Hebrew acronym for this intelligence apparatus that provides Israeli civilian and military echelons a high quality strategic alert on an imminent attack). This alert which, according to the security doctrine of the country was expected to be given at least 48 hours previous to the beginning of the actions, was a necessary condition for mobilization and deployment of the Israeli reserve forces, which accounted for 80% of the land army troops.

Later on the IDF⁵ were able to finally impose themselves in the war, but the major losses suffered and their failure to achieve a decisive victory capable of erasing the Arab achievements in the first stages of the war, were a hard blow on the Israeli security doctrine. As a consequence, since 1973 Israel has been seeking a new doctrine that might give a better response to the threat of a surprise attack.

Among the intelligence failure events, the 1973 fiasco is one of the most significant, compared to Pearl Harbor and Operation Barbarossa. But, unlike Pearl Harbor, during the weeks that preceded the war Israel had an almost perfect picture of the Arab attack plans, their military deployment and their intention to start a war. And, contrary to Operation Barbarossa, when the Soviets had excellent information about the German military preparations, but were mistaken by a sophisticated deception plan, the Arab deception plan in 1973 was much more primitive.

There is an additional element that might have influenced the Israeli "laxity" and enabled the military surprise. The exhilaration that followed the lightning victory of 1967 over the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian armies gave Israel a feeling of manifest destiny similar to the one that drove the United States to the west in the 19th century. Since then they had achieved a major reinforcement of their military power. Israel owned then the double in terms of tanks and combat aircrafts than what they had back in 1967. Their main armored formations were no longer Brigades with a hundred tanks, but Divisions with three hundred tanks. Their General Staff was actually getting ready to shorten in three months the thirty-six month compulsory military service of their conscript soldiers. On the other hand, the apparent Arab meekness encouraged the Israeli feeling of invulnerability.

The country had changed. An author comments on this respect:

A MOSSAD employee, who had been assigned a job abroad immediately after the Six-Day War, returned to the country after five years and found a changed country. Israel was no longer a confident country, but

also self-satisfied and submerged in a good life that seemed would last forever. Civil servants and military chiefs now moved around in big automobiles and took part in paid work lunches, a new habit in Israel. The border was not at fifteen-minute distance from Tel Aviv or next to Jerusalem, but out of sight and also out of their minds, in the Jordan, in the Suez Canal and in Golan. The army had grown a lot and there were many more general officers, basically Brigadier Generals, a new recently created rank. Many of these had had their offices redecorated to match their new status. A scornful attitude regarding the Arab military capacity had subtly taken hold of the national psyche (RABINOVICH, 2003, p.165). (Note from the translator: free translation of quote)

Two facts have allowed the Yom Kippur surprise to become an excellent study case to test the validity of these theoretical explanations: Firstly, the people involved in the production of this fiasco were all experienced and intelligent, and the assessment error regarding the Egyptian and Syrian war intentions was authentic. Secondly, Israel had excellent information on the Arab military preparations and the intentions of both Egyptians and Syrians to start a war. Based on this information they could have concluded that the attack was highly probable. Given such facts, it is no surprise that the academic studies on this failure should focus on explaining why the main people involved believed until the last minute that Egypt did not consider itself as capable of starting a war and that Syria was not ready to launch an attack without help from Egypt.

It is not the purpose of the present work to report all the circumstances around the Arab military offensive against Israel in 1973 and ignore the great interest such facts bear for strategy and intelligence studies. For length reasons we will focus on the events related to the intelligence failures that gave rise to the surprise factor.

Since the Six-Day War, the annual intelligence evaluation of the IDF had been considering war as improbable. This changed on the first meeting of General David Elazar with the General Staff after taking on the position of Chief of Staff, on January 1, 1971. "There is a strong probability of war" he said. According to his opinion, Anwar El Sadat had virtually no other option if he intended to keep alive the political process that would lead to the recovery of Sinai and the restore his country's prestige.

This was a clear reflection of the Egyptian political reality at that moment. After failing in his political initiative to obtain a withdrawal, albeit partial, of Israel from the Sinai, Sadat started to get ready for war. Nothing positive happened in 1971, which he had named "the year of decision", nor in 1972. "We had lost credibility in the eyes of the world and had started to lose faith in ourselves", he would declare after the war, in 1974 (RABINOVICH, 2003, p. 241).

The three years after Sadat became president – a period of no-war, no-peace – had been the most

⁴ It referred to the fact that the very survival of the State of Israel was in danger.

⁵ IDF: Israel Defense Forces (comprehends the three Armed Forces).

demoralizing of the entire modern history of Egypt. A deep sense of humiliation and impotence had reflexes in the literature and popular songs, and in the sarcastic jokes about the army and national leadership, particularly Sadat. The war was a desperate option. If Egypt were to be defeated once more, the impact on its self-image would be terrible. But Sadat could not see any alternative. When he found out that the army at the time of Nasser had only developed defensive plans, he ordered the top commands to prepare a plan to cross the Canal and face the Israeli army.

At that time the Soviet Union was an important ally of both Egypt and Syria, which provided naval and air bases from where they could watch the American fleet in the Mediterranean. In return, the USSR kept around 15,000 military advisors in each of these countries and provided them military equipment for foreign currency.

But the USSR also discouraged the Arabs in relation to any initiative to resume war actions as this would go against the "detente" atmosphere that prevailed in the USSR-USA relationship at that moment. Thus, Moscow refused to provide the Arabs with the offensive military equipment they demanded, like long-range fighter-bombers and medium-range land-land missiles. The noticeable contempt of the Soviets for the combat capacity of the Egyptians was also a cause of stress in the relationship.

The announcement that followed the first summit meeting between Leonid Brezhnev and Richard Nixon, in May 1972, in Moscow, caused a violent shock in Sadat. The reference to a loosening in the Middle East meant the perpetuation of the Israeli occupation in Arab territories. The Soviets had also agreed with a possible redrawing of the borders.

It took the Soviet ambassador in Cairo, Vladimir Vinogradov, seven weeks to present the Egyptian president a report on the main points agreed in the summit meeting in Moscow and their main implications for Egypt. This message made no reference whatsoever to the Egyptian weapon requests and it ended by stating "that Egypt was not ready for war". Sadat's reply had a soft tone but a strong content. He gave the ambassador ten days to evacuate all the Soviet military personnel from Egypt. It was clear for him that the Soviets would not do anything to help the Egyptian recovery of the Sinai.

The news was sadly received in Moscow and with approval in Israel, as it was construed as a guarantee that Egypt would not start a war in the foreseeable future. Washington interpreted the facts in a similar way.

Years later, Henry Kissinger would write:

We grossly underestimated Sadat. Based on the experience of previous Arab-Israeli wars, we considered that Sadat's threats to go to war, unless there were diplomatic developments, were no more than operatic gesticulations. Even the expulsion of

the Soviet advisors in July 1972 was interpreted with a certain condescendence as a symptom of innate petulance, since he had not even tried to obtain any reciprocity gesture from us. It never occurred to us that he could be "clearing the area" for the military action and wanted to remove what he considered as a Soviet obstacle to it (KISSINGER, 1999, p. 354).
(Note from the translator: free translation of quote)

According to the Israeli military planning in force, in the improbable case of the intelligence not giving the previous alert signal for the deployment of the reserve divisions before the war started, it was expected that the Sinai Division would be able to stop the Egyptian army, with the support of the air force, until the arrival of the reserve forces.

The Israeli military intelligence estimated that if the war were resumed it would be in the form of artillery fire across the Canal and small-scale raids. Another possible scenario would be for the Egyptians to establish a small beach-head along the east coast of the Canal and hold it until the foreseeable cease fire.

To cope with such possibilities, the IDF developed a defensive plan with the code name "Dovecote". It counted on the three hundred tanks of the Sinai Division – the only armored division of the regular army – and on the Air Force. The Israelis were so sure of their capacity to deal with the Egyptian offensive that the defensive forecasts were not an important part of the plan and it focused on the quick counter-attack that would take place across the Canal.

In face of the possibility of the Egyptians starting a more intense offensive, a broader plan was developed with the code name "Sela". It involved the deployment, behind their own lines, of two reserve armored divisions that would be mobilized before the start of the war, with the intelligence alert signal. Similar to "Dovecote", "Sela" only contemplated going from the present defensive stage to a massive counter-attack across the Canal, leaving the fight against the Egyptian offensive, which they did consider very important, in the hands of "Dovecote".

During a war game played by the Israeli South Command, in August 1972, four Egyptian divisions were assumed to have been seen getting ready to cross the Canal, with a forty-eight hour intelligence pre-warning. In the army, called "Battering Ram", the Sinai Division "swept" the Egyptian beach-head in half a day. On the third day of action, the first reserve division would have arrived at the front and crossed the Canal close to its north end. The forty-eight hour alert was considered extremely short, considering the quality of the Israeli military intelligence. A five or six day pre-warning was deemed closer to reality.

In October 1972, returning from a period as military attaché in Washington, General Eli Zeira was assigned chief of the military intelligence service, known by its Hebrew acronym AMAN. He had served as field

assistant to Moshe Dayan and as seen as the general that Dayan respected the most. One day, this brilliant officer was thought to become Chief of Staff. However, in some circles his assignment was reason for concern. Some military chiefs would have preferred someone more open to the uncertainties.

AMAN was the head of the Israeli intelligence community and was responsible for the design of the "National Intelligence Estimation", used by the General Staff and also by the government to formulate policies. The Mossad was responsible for the intelligence collection abroad, but despite its reputation it counted on AMAN for the assessment of the intentions and capacities of their Arab opponents.

To ensure the early alert under the new circumstances, AMAN, headed by Zeira, did not trust solely on the analysis of what the enemy was capable of doing, since it could attack with short forewarning, but mainly on the analysis of what the enemy could try to do.

Zeira knew that in an authoritarian regime decisions came usually from a single person, and he was sure he understood Sadat's way of thinking not only because of his own analytical capability. At that time, Israel had access to what they called a "super source" that could be described as "a person of high economical status in Egypt". This person had offered his/her services at the Israeli embassy in London, in 1969, and had passed all the extensive tests to check his/her reliability. Since then, he/she had provided political-military information of the highest quality and valuable views from the very heart of the Arab world. It was this agent, called "The Source" by the investigating commission – the Agranat Commission, who evaluated the action after the war and gave Israel the keys to Sadat's strategic thinking.

The Egyptian leader was decided to recover the Sinai and was going to resort to war if he had no other option. But this would not happen before two conditions. First, he had to receive from the Soviet Union fighter-bombers capable of neutralizing the Israeli Air Force by attacking their bases right inside the Israeli territory. Second, he needed Scud missiles that could reach Tel Aviv. This way he would dissuade the Israelis from attacking the heart of Egypt. Israeli intelligence knew by other sources that the Egyptians were negotiating that with the USSR and that they had not been provided with those means. Therefore, Egypt was not ready for the war.

"The Source's" identity was that of Dr. Ashraf Marwan, President Nasser's son-in-law. Born in 1944, Marwan had married Nasser's third daughter, Muna, in the 1960's, and became the President's itinerant ambassador. He was used as a special envoy in multiple missions, first for Nasser and afterwards for Sadat. He had worked as Sadat's chief of cabinet and as coordinator between the President and the Egyptian intelligence services.

The information supplied by Marwan, which

included written documents and oral reports, was known to few people within the Israeli intelligence community. It was extremely valuable information. In two opportunities before the war, in December 1972 and April 1973, Marwan had warned that Egypt had decided to start the war and in both occasions those warnings were given a few weeks before the date expected for the beginning of the actions, which enabled Israel to adopt corresponding measures. And in both cases the warnings resulted false, but corresponded to actual Egyptian intentions that had been frustrated on both occasions for different reasons. The final war alert was given by Marwan forty hours before the beginning of the attack, which did not allow Israel enough time to take the necessary measures.

Another extremely valuable source of information was Jordanian King Hussein. Despite the fact that he had fought against Israel in 1967, the support received from the Jewish state during the events that culminated in the Black September and his traditional mental and ideological closeness to the West had led him to change position. In May 1973 he warned the Israeli government that a new war was imminent. Later on, on July 17, via the Mossad, he had warned that in the conversations that had just taken place between Egypt and Syria he had heard references to an impending war and the mentioned date for the beginning was July 26.

Hussein asked and obtained an urgent meeting with Golda Meir, on September 25, at a place near Tel Aviv. According to one of the few Israeli witnesses present at the meeting, the King seemed "nervous and anxious". During the meeting the King reported the content of the conversations he had had in Cairo with Sadat and Asad, on September 10 to 12, highlighting that both Arab leaders had made it clear that they were no longer willing to tolerate the current situation of "neither war, nor peace". He added that he himself had agreed to this posture and that, even though Jordan had explained that the country would not take part in any future war, something had to be done to prevent war before the Arabs ran out of patience. He also communicated the Israelis that he had information regarding the Syrian military units that were supposedly conducting drills and were in a pre-war situation and that he believed Syria had made a military agreement with Egypt.

It is said that this warning greatly impressed Golda Meir. Around midnight she contacted Dayan and reported the conversation with Hussein, showing her concern. The Minister of Defense replied that he was personally alert about the situation, as were the IDF, and that it was his intention to reinforce the Northern Front the following day. Some alert measures were adopted for the first line units in the North and these were partially reinforced. But even with such reinforcements the situation was that 100 Israeli tanks in this front would have to face the potential threat of 800 Syrian armored vehicles.

Zeira had inherited from his predecessors "The Concept", as this particular evaluation was called, and had embraced it without reserves. It was a Sadat concept, not his, and had come from an Egyptian point of view, and that was what made sense. Zeira guaranteed the General Staff that whatever the furious noises that Egypt could make, they would not go to war until such conditions had been satisfied. And Syria was not strong enough to go to war without Egypt.

"The Concept", - a thinking scheme that enables the establishment of order and meaning to relevant information elements for the perception of a concrete problem - is a key tool for intelligence work. The partial report of the Agranat Commission, disclosed to the public in 1974, concluded that the root of the Israeli intelligence failure lay in "the persistent adhesion of intelligence officers to what they called 'The Concept'". Thus, the members of the Commission identified the source of the intelligence failure correctly, but did not succeed in explaining it properly" (BAR- JOSEPH, 2005, p.555).

Regarding "The Concept", Steven Stewart wrote:

(Zeira) was one of the architects of what was known as "The Concept". To make it simple, the concept was based first of all in the idea that the Arabs were not ready for a generalized war against Israel. Although they had the capacity to start a limited war, they knew perfectly well that Israel would not feel restricted by the rules of this game and so the limited war would soon scale towards a generalized war. Secondly, Zeira's Concept lay in that, if there was going to be a war, it would be short. The third assumption was that in a total war the Arabs would be quickly defeated (STEWART, 1980, p.358). (Note from the translator: free translation of quote)

In the spring (Northern) of 1973, an unprecedented deployment of Egyptian troops was detected, including artillery and engineering bridge-building material, near the Canal margins. Intelligence sources, including "The Source", reported that Sadat's intention was to start the war. Cairo's forces were in total alert, and expeditionary forces of Iraq, Algeria and other Arab countries took position in the Egyptian line. Two combat aircraft squadrons left Iraq and Libya headed for Egypt. One was formed of Mirages aircrafts capable of reaching the heart of Israel. The intelligence sources mentioned a date around the middle of May for the beginning of the actions. The IDF were put in readiness condition.

Despite all the signs, Zeira was of the opinion that there was low probability of war since Syria was in condition to take part. David Elazar did not accept Zeira's evaluation of "low probability of war" and ordered the Staff to act as if the war were imminent. Preparations (Plan Blue-White) included transferring the tank concentrations closer to the front, speeding up the creation of new units and transferring bridge-building equipment to the Canal

surrounding areas. Mossad's Chief, Zvi Zamir, did not share Zeira's evaluation either. He thought that Sadat was more ready for war than what "The Concept" indicated. In the end, the expected Egyptian offensive did not occur.

Zeira came out of this crisis with strengthened reputation and self-confidence. With alert bells ringing all around him and the fate of his country at stake, he had coldly kept throughout the crisis that the probability of war was not just low, but "extremely low". Including those most experienced among the analysts of his own agency had challenged this evaluation, but he had remained undisturbed. He sustained that it was AMAN's duty "to the country's blood pressure low and not sound the alarm unnecessarily" (RABINOVICH, 2003, p. 432). Otherwise, reserve forces would have been mobilized every two months with a devastating effect for the economy and moral of the country.

Zeira's triumph was a kind of indirect defeat for Elazar. There was criticism inside the government concerning the heavy costs the "Blue-White" logistic initiatives had entailed and there was a major risk of the Chief of Staff being seen as an alarmist if he were to "cry wolf" again. In the future, he would think twice before questioning Zaire's evaluations.

General Zaire's reading of Egypt's strategy had become outdated right at the moment he had assumed his post. Close to that date, Sadat declared to the Armed Forces Supreme Council that he would attempt to start military actions even before receiving the wide-range aircrafts and Scud missiles. His objectives in the Sinai could be achieved through more modest means than those.

He had made that decision at the moment he expelled the Soviet advisors and ordered the Minister of War to have the army ready for the war by mid November. He was convinced that he only needed to gain a beach-head in the East margin of the Canal to trigger the intervention of the super powers and install a political dynamics that would eventually force Israel to withdraw to its previous international borders. To meet this goal, it was not necessary to neutralize the Israeli air force by attacking its bases, a project that would be difficult to achieve anyway, but simply keep it away with the Soviet anti-aircraft missiles.

For this conception, the new Soviet anti-aircraft missiles SA-6 would have a key role. These self-propelled systems, unlike the previous SA-2 and SA-3-, had arrived in Egypt after the cease fire in 1970, and their mobility made them difficult targets for the Israeli air force. Also unlike the older systems, they could cope with any target flying at 300 feet above the ground, annulling the once successful Israeli technique of flying at low altitude to avoid the defenses.

The plan that finally came out, called "High Minarets", foresaw an advance of only five or six miles east of the Canal, a distance that could be covered by the

batteries of land-air missiles. The new Egyptian Chief of Staff, Shazly, an experienced officer, sustained that they could challenge the Israeli air superiority, the main factor of all the previous defeats, just by relying on the SAM. What had arisen from all this was a totally new Egyptian strategic concept, whereas the Israeli intelligence relied that they still had the old one.

Five Egyptian divisions had been gathered along the West margin of the Canal. It was a basic premise of the plan that all the forces should cross at the same time from different points along one hundred miles. The Egyptian army had been strongly reinforced after 1967. The high politicized Staff had been purged and the new members had been selected based on their competence instead of their political connections, as had been the case in the past. In the combat units, illiterate members, who had constituted a meaningful percentage of the tank crews, had been replaced. University graduates, who had been excused from military service in the past, were incorporated, which had significantly improved the quality of the officers. Intensive training with the new Soviet military equipment improved in a remarkable way their skills and abilities.

On the night of September 29 to 30, AMAN received a report from the CIA, based on "highly reliable" sources, warning that a major offensive from Syria could be expected as from the end of that month to occupy the Golan Heights. According to this information, the Syrian army had already started their battle procedures. The information included the Syrian attack plan, which was similar to the one reported by Branch 5 of AMAN a few months before.

Such information would usually shake the entire intelligence and security community, but that did not happen. As the AMAN analysts guessed, behind the term "highly reliable source" was King Hussein himself, who had given the Americans the same alert he had already given the Israelis on September 25. AMAN head analysts did not put weight on the fact that the most important intelligence agency of the free world had send them this warning. The Branch 5 analysts had tended to assess the Syrian threat more seriously during this period to generate a special intelligence review of the Syrian war plan. But the senior echelon of the Investigation Department added a tranquilizing evaluation to the document, saying that AMAN had not considered these arrangements as a reflex of the Syrian intention to attack, and thus neutralized the value of the warning.

All the warning went unheard and the reserve forces were summoned. On October 6, 1973, as all the "signs" had indicated, five divisions of the Egyptian army crossed the canal taking all their heavy material, backed by several commando units, and overcame the Israeli defenses. At the same time, several heavy Syrian units attacked the Golan Heights forcing the scarce defense to

withdraw and taking over the Israeli command, control and communications station in Mount Hermon. "Pregnant blindness" had defeated the Israeli intelligence.

On the basis of such facts, on November 21, 1973, a national investigation commission was created, which became known as the Agranat Commission⁶. Its chairman was the President of the Israeli Supreme Court of Justice, Dr. Shimon Agranat, and its members were high-ranked civil and military staff. It received the mission of examining the intelligence available before the war regarding the Syrian and Egyptian intentions concerning the war; the intelligence analysis by the authorized civilian and military units; the general preparedness/enlistment of the IDF for combat, especially on October 5, 1973, the day before the beginning of the war.

The Intermediate Report was published on April 1st, 1974 and focused on the reasons for the lack of enlistment of the IDF in face of the attack: the notion ("The Concept") by the IDF that Egypt would not attack before it could achieve air superiority capable of paralyzing the Israeli Air Force and that would allow fighters to enter the Israeli territory, as well as the lack of motivation by Syria if an attack in the Egyptian front did not take place. This "concept" induced the Israeli intelligence to underestimate the suspicious signs collected on both countries. The maneuvers by the Egyptian forces were evaluated as war preparation and were not considered by the Military Intelligence Department as sufficiently adequate signs to alert the IDF. As a result, the IDF did not take the necessary precautions in time, which would basically be the mobilization of its reserve units.

The Commission recommendations included the creation of a Defense Committee within the Cabinet; the splitting of the intelligence analysis into several authorized units; the assignment of an advisor on intelligence matters for the Prime Minister; a clear work, authority and responsibility division among the Government, the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister and the Chief of Staff. Other recommendations included the resignation of Eliahu Zeira, Chief of the Intelligence Department, and other officers of the military intelligence. It was also recommended that the Chief of Staff David Elazar should be substituted because he had not counted on an independent intelligence evaluation and a detailed defense plan. Elazar was further criticized for his excessive trust on the capacity of the IDF to contain and defeat the enemy forces just with the regular forces. The Chief of the South Command, Major General Shmuel Gonen, was the target of criticism as well and it was recommended that he should be removed from active service until the Commission concluded its mission.

Surprisingly, the Commission did not find any flaws in the attitude of the Minister of Defense

⁶ AGRANAT Commission. [S.l.: s.n.], 2008. Available at: <http://www.knesset.gov.il/lexicon/eng/agranat_eng.htm>. Accessed on: Feb 3, 2015.

Moshe Dayan, or in that of Prime Minister Golda Meir. Nevertheless, the publication of the Report increased public unrest and the crisis between the political leadership and the majority of the population was enhanced. Golda Meir announced her resignation during a special plenary session of the Knesset, on April 11, which was followed by a discussion about the Agranat Commission Report. Moshe Dayan was not ratified in his post by the new government headed by Yitzhak Rabin that took office on June 3.

A second intermediate report was presented by the Commission on July 10. It was 400 pages long and only its introduction was disclosed. Its content included detailed testimonies given to the Commission and supplements to the first report.

The final report was presented on January 30, 1975. It contained over 1500 pages and, as the previous one, only its introduction was made public. The reports described in detail the events of October 8 in the Sinai Peninsula and the first day of combat in the Golan Heights. On both cases, the IDF was seriously criticized for their lack of enlistment and for faulty coordination among units. The report also focused other aspects, such as orders, discipline and emergency supply, but did not analyze the public image regarding the insufficient air actions.

The concrete results of the report were: strengthening of the Mossad and of the Investigation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the assignment of intelligence and defense advisors for the Prime Minister; the removal of the Chief of Staff, of the Chief of the Military Intelligence Department Eliyahu Zeira, and his assistant Brigadier David Shalev, of the Chief of the Egypt Department Lt. Colonel Yona Bendman, and of the officer chief of intelligence of the South Command Lt. Colonel David Gdalia⁷.

The findings of the Commission led to other measures, the modification of the Basic Law for the Army.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The present work intends to bring a methodological contribution to the field of intelligence taking as starting point the work by Colonel Pinto Sampaio and trying to apply what he studied to a historical case. Through the analyzed example one can confirm that the presented errors in intelligence analysis were caused by "Pregnant Blindness" of the key Israeli players; and also that it was the main cause of costly strategic surprises.

We live at a time when technology and information control our days and give us an unprecedented feeling of understanding about different problems. In such context, many authors, particularly Richards Heuer Jr., say

that, contrary to the common belief, lack of information cannot be blamed for intelligence failures because there is a super-abundance of information available and that the biases and prejudice in the minds of analysts (and of decision makers) are what make such surprises possible.

The results obtained through the interaction of psychology and intelligence is bearing fruit and helping improve the work of analysts.

According to this line of thought, the work of Colonel Pinto Sampaio is a valuable contribution to explain the basic problematic of the intelligence, and its study by those responsible for guiding intelligence systems might result in efficient solutions to an important part of this problem.

Finally, it is necessary to continue exploring the psychology of the intelligence analysts and the operation of these organizations so that decision makers might be able to count on better quality information to perform their work. Likewise, it would be appropriate for this type of academic research to be distributed and analyzed by the analysts themselves and it became part of their qualification program.

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Indication of Liability

The concept of authorship adopted by Meira Mattos Collection is based on substantial contributions to each of the persons listed as authors, following the categories below:

- (1) Conception and Research Planning or Data interpretation;*
- (2) Composing;*
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