From Groupthink to Polythink in the Yom Kippur Decisions of 1973

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Abstract

Many studies on decision-making in the Yom Kippur War of 1973 claim that a Groupthink syndrome led to the faulty assessment and processing of information prior to the Yom Kippur War.

In this paper, based on official transcripts of the meetings held on the morning of October 6, 1973 in the office of then Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and in the office of then Prime Minister Golda Meir, and based on the Agranat Report (for inquiry into the 1973 war), we show that the well-known Groupthink syndrome that characterized decision-making until the evening of October 5, 1973changed in the early morning of October 6, 1973 to a Polythink syndrome –a polarized and divided decision-making dynamic among members of the decision unit. Important theoretical insights and policy implications are derived from this case study.

Introduction

Shortly before 4am on October 6, 1973, Brigadier General Israel Lior, the Military Secretary to the Prime Minister of Israel called then-Prime Minister Golda Meir and reported that a message he received from the Mossad said, "Today a war will break out." Prime Minister Golda replied, "I knew it would happen. What do we do?" (Haber, 1987, p 13).

The decision unit on the morning of October 6, 1973 consisted of: Israel's Prime Minister Golda Meir, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. David (Dado) Elazar, Military Intelligence Chief Major General Eli Zeira, Assistant Minister of Defense and former Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen.(res.) Zvi Tzur, Cabinet Ministers Israel Galili and Yigal Allon (State Archives, 1973, p 1).

Two major meeting attended that morning by members of the decision-making group. The first took place at 05:45am in the office of Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, attended by the chief of staff, chief of intelligence and other senior military officials (IDF Archives, 1973, p 1). The second meeting, held in the office of Prime Minister Golda Meir at 08:05am, was

attended by the prime minister, defense minister, the chief of staff,

assistant defense minister, and ministers Galili and Alon (State Archives,

1973, p 1).

Following a "solid intelligence" from Mossad agent Ashraf Marwan, who

was a senior Egyptian official and a close associate of then-Egyptian

President Anwar Sadat, war would begin later that day.

In light of this information, five alternatives were examined (IDF Archives,

1973, p 3; Archive state, 1973, p 5). (1) A preemptive strike against Egypt

and Syria; (2) a preemptive strike only against the Syrian air force and

missiles; (3) mobilization of reserves for the purposes of both defense and

attack; (4) mobilization of reserves for defense only; and (5) finding a

diplomatic solution along with the mobilization of reserves.

In this paper, we examine the views of members of the above mentioned

decision-making group and the intra-group dynamic regarding:

(1) a preemptive strike

(2) the mobilization of reserves, and

(3) the likelihood of the outbreak of war on that day

We shall first briefly discuss the polythink syndrome along with the groupthink concept.

Groupthink and Polythink

Groupthink, as introduced by Irving Janis (1982), is a well-known concept recognized by scholars of group decision-making and behavioral decision making. At the core of Groupthink is the claim that members of a decision-making group often make homogenized, uniform decisions due to social pressure, a leader's influential position, self-censorship, etc.

Studies thus far on decisions of the 1973 Yom Kippur War indicate that groupthink was the main reason for the so-called "concept" of the strategic surprise leading to the Yom Kippur War. According to Bar-Joseph and Levy (2009) the underlying assumptions of the "concept" were: 1) the Egyptians would not attack Israel before they could deal with the Israel Air Force and hurt Israel deep inside Israel, and 2) Syria would not enter the war against Israel without Egypt.

The Polythink model, or polarized and decentralized group thinking presented by Mintz and his colleagues (Mintz and de Rouen, 2010, Mintz and Wayne, 2016a, 2016b) argues however, that on the homogeneous-

fragmented decision-making *axis* affiliated on one extreme with groupthink, the polar opposite also exists. It is a decentralized, fragmented pattern of group decision-making called "polythink". The phenomenon is characterized by divided opinions, disagreements, intra-group conflict, and confusion, even dissent, leading to decision paralysis or sub-optimal decisions.

In this paper we show that decision-making on the morning of October 6, 1973 was consistent with symptoms of the Polythink syndrome. Furthermore, we show the transition from a groupthink syndrome to polythink on that morning.

We begin by examining the positions of the various decision-makers regarding the possibility of launching a preemptive strike on the morning of October 6, 1973. Then we analyze the issues of calling up the reserves, and the assessment of the likelihood of war on that day.

1) Positions of members of the decision unit regarding a preemptive strike[1]

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[1] The decisions for a preemptive strike, calling up the reserves and the assessment of the likelihood of war breaking out on that day were, of course, dependent upon each other.

It is well-documented that there were two opposing sub-groups in the Israeli decision unit on the morning of October 6, 1973. Dayan, the defense minister and Zeira, head of military intelligence, opposed a preemptive strike. Chief of Staff Elazar, and former Chief of Staff and then consultant to the secretary of defense, Tzur, supported a preemptive strike before the outbreak of war in 1973. Prime Minister Golda Meir, took the side of the defense minister and the head of military intelligence.

Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. David (Dado) Elazar: forty minutes after receiving the solid intelligence message, at 05:10, the chief of staff met urgently with his deputy, Major General Israel Tal, and surveyed the IDF's options. Chief of Staff Elazar authorized the commander of the air force, Major General Benny Peled, to mobilize all that was necessary for an attack. This was done without the approval of the Defense Minister or the Prime Minister (Bar-Joseph, 2001).

Already during the first meeting held that morning at 05:45 in the Defense Ministry, Elazar raised the issue of a preemptive strike and offered two alternatives. First, to launch preventive strikes on airports in Egypt and Syria, and second, to launch a preemptive strike against Syria's air force and

missile system only (IDF Archives, 1973, p 3). At a meeting held later that morning in Prime Minister Golda Meir's office, Elazar raised the second option only, to destroy the Syrian air force in its entirety and then Syria's missiles. Elazar explained that "a preventive strike is, of course a huge advantage. It will save many lives"(State Archives, 1973, p 5).

Defense Minister Moshe Dayan: the defense minister met with his advisers for a preliminary discussion to discuss the issue only two hours after receiving the news (Bar-Joseph, 2001). Dayan vehemently opposed a preemptive strike that had been part of the discussions held at the first general staff meeting in his office at 5:45 that morning when he said, "A preventive strike is out of the question" (IDF Archives, p 3). The main reason for his objection, which he repeated several times that morning, was that Israel could not attack first, not a minute before, as long as the Americans believed that Egypt and Syria did not intend to start a war (IDF Archives, 1973, p 3; State Archives, 1973, p 3). According to Dayan at the meeting in his office, "Even if the Americans were 100% sure [that there would be war] they will not allow us to attack first. If there is terrible news, we will go to Golda and she'll say yes. I will not recommend it"(IDF Archives, p 3).

In his autobiography, Dayan later explained that he rejected preemptive action by the Israel Air Force out of concern that it would hurt the chances of getting the full support of the United States during a war, should it break out (Dayan, 1976, p 576).

Chief of Military Intelligence, Major General Eli Zeira: during the meeting in the defense minister's office, Zeira reassuring those present by saying that according to the Americans, "All is quiet. There will be no war"(IDF Archives, 1973, page 5). At a later meeting in the Prime Minister's office, Zeira again minimized the severity of the threat by raising the possibility that President Sadat would change his mind and not attack. Zeira indicated there were signs from the Syrian front indicating the possibility of an attack (though built according to the Soviet military doctrine of simultaneous readiness to defend and attack), but reiterated that this did not necessarily mean that Sadat would start a war and that he would probably change his mind. "Despite the fact that they are ready, in my opinion, they [the Egyptians] know they will lose. This time it will be different. He [Sadat] has not yet given the command to start. He will probably back off at the last minute… and even if he gives it [the command for war] he could cancel it" (State Archives, p 7). While Zeira did not speak directly against a

preemptive strike, it can be clearly concluded from his words that he did not support this alternative and tried to calm the meeting's participants.

Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir: on October 6 at 08:05 am, members of the decision-making group gathered at Meir's office because Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and Chief of Staff Elazar had failed to reach an agreement. This disagreement was a clear expression of polythink within the group. When the possibility of a preemptive strike against Syria was discussed, Meir expressed that despite being "at heart drawn to it", and although it was "very attractive", Israel could not be the one to start the war out of fear of hostile international public opinion against Israel (State Archives, pp 8-9). Thus, at the beginning of the meeting the option of preemptive strike was rejected out of hand and was not discussed again. At the end of the meeting, Golda again explained, "As to a preemptive strike - we won't be able to explain it [to the Americans and the world]" (State Archives, p 12).

Another reason for the refusal of Prime Minister Golda Meir to authorize a preemptive strike was linked to Israeli-US relations. In May, 1973, Henry Kissinger presented the President of Egypt with a timetable for negotiations

according to which, by 1974 an interim agreement would be reached with Israel, and a permanent agreement a year later, when Israel would withdraw from the Sinai (Kipnis, 2012). Prime Minister Golda Meir apparently believed that if Israel were to launch a war, the United States would not be able take Israel's side in the fighting, which Israel would probably need. Two years after the war, in her memoirs, Meir wrote that a preemptive strike might have reduced casualties at the outset, but afterwards, Israel would not have received broad US air support which, according to her, saved many lives (Medzini, 2008).

2) Positions of members of the decision unit regarding mobilization of reserves

Another issue raised on the morning of October 6, 1973 was mobilization of the reserves. Here, too, the polythink syndrome was at play, as there were serious disagreements among members of the decision unit.

The following are decision unit members' positions on the decision to mobilize the reserves:

Defense Minister Moshe Dayan: Dayan's position was very clear. During the first meeting on the morning of the 6th of October, held in his office,

Dayan favored limited mobilization for "defense only". "I would say that what is essential is to recruit tanks to the Golan Heights. Let's say that you [addressing Elazar] need another division… mobilizing up to 20,000 to30,000 is possible" (IDF archives, p 4).

At a later meeting held on the same day in the office of Prime Minister Golda Meir, Dayan said, "Dado wants a larger mobilization. I am reluctant. I propose mobilizing all the Air Force reserves, an armored division in the Golan Heights and a division in the Sinai. Up to 50,000 to 60,000 people, maybe a little more than that. If things get worse and shooting starts, we'll mobilize the full array. If I thought there was no alternative, I would recruit everyone" (State Archives, 1973, p 4).

The reason for Dayan's position was the fear "that everyone in the media will say that we [Israel] are going to attack"…Full mobilization before a single shot has been fired. We will immediately be called the aggressors...it is important that they don't say we started (war)" (State Archives, 1973, pp 8-9). Defense Minister Dayan added, "My reason [not to mobilize the reserves] is not financial… I'm afraid that everyone in the media will say that we are going to attack" (State Archives, p 8). Dayan even stated in his

autobiography that his opposition to mobilizing the reserves in excess for the purpose of defense was due purely to political-foreign policy considerations, mainly the need for support from the United States (Dayan, 1976 p 576).

Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. David (Dado) Elazar: in stark contrast to Dayan, Elazar had already demanded mobilizing about 200,000 reserves during the earlier meeting-- held at the defense minister's office on the morning of October 6 (IDF Archives, 1973, p 4). Elazar tried to explain the rationale behind his request saying that in order to switch from a defensive posture to an attack, three divisions were needed on the Northern front. After some discussion, Elazar and Dayan, with divided opinions, decided to mobilize all the air force reserves, but to turn to Prime Minister Golda Meir to make the decision about how many divisions and brigades and reservists to mobilize and whether to open with a preemptive strike (IDF Archives, 1973, p 5). Dayan explained in his autobiography, written later, that the reason he turned to the Prime Minister on the issue of mobilizing the reserves, "in the preliminary discussion I told the chief of staff that I agree to immediately mobilize the required number of reservists for the protection of the two fronts in any scope he saw fit. However, I decided to

pass on to the Prime Minister the question of a preemptive strike by the Air Force and the matter of recruiting the reservists required in the plan to transition to an offensive attack" (Dayan, 1976, p 576).

Unlike Dayan, in the meeting in the Prime Minister's office, Elazar explained the urgency of recruiting all the reserves, saying, "If they attack in 10 hours, we are prepared maximally with the regular army. But we haven't mobilized any reservists at all. The power of the IDF is 25% regular army and 75% reserves. To mobilize the reserves, we will need at least around 24 hours. The reservists we don't mobilize today will not be able to participate in the war tomorrow. This is a loss of one day. So I propose a large mobilization. I need to call up 200,000 soldiers. We will be ready by tomorrow morning with this force. By afternoon, more thoroughly. If we call up fewer than that, tomorrow I can add reinforcements. Defensively, we can block. But we will be limited to defensive moves [only]. Whereas if there are more troops, we can attack and move to a counterattack"(State Archives, 1973, pp 4-5).

In the face of the defense minister's position, Elazar was willing to compromise on a minimum reserve mobilization of all the air force,

supplementing the regular army with four reserve divisions, including all those who were supposed to support them. In other words, calling up a total of 100,000 to 120,000 reservists (State Archives, 1973, pp 10-11). In response to this, adviser to the defense minister, Zvi Tzur, noted that there was no significant difference between the recruitment of 70,000 reserve soldiers and 100,000 in terms of outside appearance, and Prime Minister Meir agreed with him (State Archives, 1973, p 10).

Chief of Military Intelligence, Major General Eli Zeira: as on the issue of a preventive strike, here too General Zeira joined Defense Minister Dayan in concerns about the international community's response, fearing Israel would be seen as the aggressor who caused the deterioration to war (IDF Archives, 1973, p 6). Zeira did not speak out against mobilizing the reserves in meetings where the decision was made, though it can be inferred that this was his intention.

Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir: There were two reasons behind Prime Minister Golda Meir's decision on the morning of October 6, 1973 concerning mobilization of the reserves: first, because of the impact on the economy of large scale mobilization if a war were not to break out in the

end, and second, due to the similar quandary of whether or not to preemptively strike, which could lead international public opinion to interpret mobilization of IDF reserves as an offensive first step by Israel (State Archives, 1973, pp 8-9). Ultimately, Meir decided on a compromise between the defense minister's position and that of the chief of staff (State Archives, 1973, pp 10-11).

3) Disagreements about the likelihood of war breaking out on the same day

Substantial differences of opinion were also evident (and documented in the official transcripts) among members of the Israeli decision unit on October 6 on the question of whether or not war would break out that day. Chief of Staff Elazar was convinced of it, having received the credible and solid intelligence report. Consequently Elazar pursued all preparations for it (Bar-Joseph, 2001). The Chief of Staff sought both to mobilize the full reserve force and launch a preemptive strike.

Contrary to the Chief of Staff's position, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan was not convinced even on the morning of October 6, 1973 that the war is imminent. Dayan said (after the war) about the war alert from Mossad

agent Ashraf Marwan, "As before, when the Arabs didn't attack, the explanation came that Sadat changed his mind 'at the last minute'. This time as well, if Sadat were to find out that we knew about it in advance and the advantage of surprise was removed from him, it was possible he would cancel or at least postpone the date of the attack"(Golan, 2013, p 251). The defense minister refused to accept literally Ashraf Marwan's warning. A clear example that Dayan doubted the credibility and importance of this warning is his statement in the Prime Minister's office on the morning of October 6, "We are not going to mobilize the whole [reserve] system just on the basis of Zvika's [Head of Mossad] message" (Bar-Joseph, 2013, p 53).

According to Bar-Joseph (2013), Dayan may have also relied on another source that could provide better and more reliable indications there was going to be war. Those were the "special measures" that Dayan was misled to believe were in operation. In contrast, Kipnis (2012) presents another explanation, speculating that Dayan believed that Egypt would not go to war because Sadat knew he would get what he wanted in negotiations a few months later.

The head of military intelligence, General Zeira, also advanced the theory of "Sadat's last minute regret" saying that while Sadat was now ready for war, Sadat was most likely afraid of losing because the balance of power between Israel and Egypt had not changed(State Archives, 1973, pp 6-7). Zeira apparently relied on the reservation of Ashraf Marwan, the Mossad's source who gave Zvi Zamir, head of the Mossad, the warning about the outbreak of war. "I [Marwan] should tell you [Zamir], if there are different political or military conditions, if there is a crucial and important change in them, Sadat could stop everything. He could not specify which conditions"(Zamir and Maas, 2011, p 148).

The head of military intelligence stuck to his estimation that the likelihood of war was low. Even when he was in the minority he continued to go along with the military intelligence explanation that the evacuation of Soviet advisors was out of fear and aggression demonstrated by the IDF in the weeks before the war. In addition, after receiving Ashraf Marwan's message, Zeira cast doubt on his credibility. In his book (Zeira 1993) presented the theory that Marwan was a double agent.

Prime Minister Meir was also not entirely convinced of the possibility that war would break out that day, but said; "I have one criterion. If indeed there is a war, we need to be in the best position. Outwardly, if there is a war, it would be better to arouse anger and have an improved situation. No one will be able to tell how many reservists we've actually mobilized...." (State Archives, 1973, p 12). And so it was. The transcript of the meeting summary states that, "At 09:20 the defense minister concluded that the chief of staff should mobilize the system as proposed by the chief of staff." That is to say, a partial mobilization of about 100,000 to 120,000 people (State Archives, 1973, p 11).

The positions of members of the decision-making group, as reported in the official reports, show that the serious disagreements between the chief of staff and the defense minister were partially due to the different interpretations they gave to Ashraf Marwan's warning. The chief of staff gave the warning high value and began concrete preparations for war. For example, minutes after receiving the warning, he called in the morning early hours the Commander of the Air Force Gen. Peled, to prepare the Israeli Air Force for an opening strike. In contrast, the defense minister acted slowly and refused to accept the assessment that war was

impending. The head of military intelligence even calmed the group of decision makers, saying that Sadat is unlikely to start a war and that the Americans, as well, did not see war as imminent. These words had great influence on the other decision-makers in the decision unit.

Prime Minister Meir, contrary to the other participants in the meeting, was not a military person. This has greatly affected her ability to make a military decision. The Prime Minister's military secretary, Brigadier General Israel Lior, testified that: "Long after this [war] [Meir] told me more than once, 'They were the experts and I was a civilian. I don't even know what a division is. What do I understand about these issues?"(Haber, 1987, p 28).

Whereas Chief of Staff Elazar did not speak in terms of "if war breaks out", other key members of the decision-making unit, Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan and Eli Zeira, spoke in terms of "if war breaks out ...".

The Polythink syndrome on the morning of October 6, 1973

Polythink Symptoms

Mintz and Wayne (2016), list a number of symptoms for analysts and scholars to ascertain whether a group dynamic fits the polythink syndrome, the groupthink syndrome or the Con-Div dynamic. The Polythink symptoms include disagreement among members of the decision unit, confusion and lack of communication, internal conflict, different framing by members of the decision group, leaks and more. We will now examine whether these symptoms characterized the decisions made on the morning of October 6, 1973.

1) Internal conflict among the decision-makers

Disputes and internal conflict among members of the group were expressed explicitly on the issue of mobilizing the reserves. For example, Defense Minister Dayan spoke openly about it, saying, "There are disagreements between Dado and me. He wants more and I want less" (Agranat Commission, 1975, p 40). Moreover, the Agranat Commission report noted that there was also a long debate about the possibility of preventing war through leaks to the world (the Agranat Commission, 1975, p 41).

As determined by the Agranat Commission and as explicitly appears in the meeting transcripts of the morning of October 6, 1973, we can determine unequivocally that there were serious disagreements between the defense minister and chief of staff on the issues of mobilization of the reserves and a preemptive attack. Zeira also took part in this debate, siding with the defense minister. Golda Meir sided with the chief of staff but compromised among the various positions presented to her by her defense minister and chief of staff. The plurality of views, opinions and alternatives presented by the participants in the decision unit regarding a preemptive strike, partial or full mobilization of reserves, delayed the decision.

2) Confusion and lack of communication

Lack of communication among members of the decision-making forum and lack of sharing of information between the political and military echelons was evident even before October 6th. Only Prime Minister Golda Meir, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and Minister Galili were aware of the secret negotiations channel between Israel and Sadat, with American mediation led by Kissinger, in the months before the war (Kipnis, 2012). Lack of

information sharing among the political leadership noted above and other relevant members of the decision-making group, including senior military officials, namely the chief of staff and intelligence agencies, specifically the head of military intelligence, certainly damaged the group's ability to make an informed decision.

Another miscommunication--around the use of "special measures" that could have alerted Israel in real time about Egypt's intention to go to war, was also evident. As described by Bar-Joseph (2013), the key decision-makers, Dayan and Elazar, relied on Zeira- the head of military intelligence, to activate these measures. This did not actually happen. It occurred only in a short "dry run". However, Dayan and Elazar were unaware that the measures were not applied. Zeira implied that special measures were implemented and the understanding was that they did not yield new or relevant information. This misled the decision-makers who depended on these resources.

There was also confusion around the issue of Ashraf Marwan's warning about the time of the outbreak of war. While Zamir testified that he warned the war would break out in the evening, before sunset (Zamir and

Maas, 2011), in discussions that took place in real time, it was apparent

that references were made to "the S hour" – after six o'clock in the evening

(Golan, 2013). According to Bergman and Meltzer (2003), it is unclear

where the interpretation of Zamir's message came from.

3) Different framing of information by members of the decision-making

group

In the meeting in Prime Minister Golda Meir's office, the discussion about a

preemptive strike was brief. The meeting mainly revolved around the issue

of mobilization of the reserves. With regard to the preemptive strike,

Defense Minister Moshe Dayan was very determined, saying, "Essentially

[we] cannot afford it this time ... not even five minutes before" (State

Archives, 1973, p 4). In contrast, and as strong evidence for polythink, Chief

of Staff Elazar presented the operative-strategic advantage of a preventive

strike, e.g., the elimination of the Syrian air force and its missiles.

As for the position of the head of military intelligence, Golda Meir turned to

Zeira and asked him, "What is our ability to know by ourselves what is

happening?" Zeira replied, "We know what is happening there. They are in

a position to go on the offensive at any moment ... they are technically and

operationally ready for war. But, despite the fact that they are willing, in my opinion, they know they will lose. Sadat is not it in a position to have to go to war today. And he knows that the balance sheet will not improve"(State Archives, 1973, pp 6-7). General Zeira expressed confidence that Sadat could reverse the command to go to war at any moment, should he give it, and would prefer to promote a diplomatic solution such as sending a message through the Americans or even through the Shah of Iran (IDF Archives, 1973, pp 6-7; State Archives, 1973, pp 6-7).

Zeira's position, with Dayan's support, about the need to take the Americans' position into account had a profound impact on framing the issue for the decision-group members. For example, in the meeting in the defense minister's office he said, "The "[Americans] say that everything is quite. There will be no war" (IDF Archives, p 5; State Archives, p 3).

The bias in framing was also evident in the discussion around the impact of the size and scope of the mobilization of reserves. In the discussion in the Prime Minister's office, Elazar said, "In terms of international-political impact, it does not matter if we call up 70,000 or 200,000 people." Later in the discussion, former Chief of Staff Zvi Tzur concurred, saying that "...In

terms of impact, nobody will know if it's 70,000 or 100,000." Finally, the Prime Minister was convinced, agreeing that "No one can measure exactly how many we mobilize" (State Archives, pp 5, 10, 12).

4) Deadlock and decision paralysis

Disagreements between Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and Chief of Staff Elazar led to a deadlock indecision-making. The stalemate delayed mobilization for reservists for several hours because of the need to contact the Prime Minister on this issue and on the preemptive strike. Eventually, partial mobilization of the reserves decided upon at the meeting with the Prime Minister began just seven hours before the expected start of the war (e.g., toward evening, around 18:00, based on Marwan's early warning) and only three hours before the *actual* outbreak of war (Golan, 2013). Dayan and Elazar were unable to reach a compromise, causing a delay in the decision.

The Agranat Commission pointed out that despite the meeting in the defense minister's office, when the chief of staff and defense minister decided to mobilize the reserves for defense purposes only, the order to begin mobilization on this scale was not issued at the end of the meeting

(Agranat Commission, 1975, p 34). The Committee determined that "the mobilization order was delayed by two hours as the Chief of Staff waited for the Prime Minister's decision on the question of the scale of mobilization" (Agranat Commission, p 35).

The chief of staff explained that this was because the debate in the ministry office "ended quite tense and angrily" (Agranat Commission, 1975, p 37). Moreover, the chief of staff testified that he did not come out of the meeting with the understanding that an agreement had been reached between him and the defense minister (Agranat Commission, 1975 pp 37-38);

Question (Agranat Committee member): But was there an agreement on the two divisions?

Answer (Elazar): No. What I want to say is that this [meeting] ended pretty tensely, with the words, "if you do not accept the conclusion, we are going to Golda". Since it ended like that, we went to [Prime Minister] Golda.

Q: Is it possible that even though the defense minister was unwilling to mobilize the reserves at his own risk, he would recommend it?

A: That's correct… He said that he would not be responsible for mobilizing the two divisions… Then he said, "If so, then we'll go to Golda". That is to say, even for this there was still no authorization, because it ended with "let's go to Golda".

This above exchange reveals two symptoms of polythink: disagreement and confusion among the decision-makers. These two symptoms caused, as indicated in the Agranat Commission report, a delay of several hours in mobilizing the forces agreed upon and hence, decision paralysis.

5) A lowest common denominator decision

The decision adopted by Prime Minister Golda Meir on the morning of October 6, 1973 was not to launch a preemptive strike and to approve the recruitment of only about 100,000 to 120,000 reservists, the minimum number required by her chief of staff, and no more than the number agreed upon by the Defense Minister. In other words, the reservists needed for defensive purpose. The decision reached was a compromise by Golda and also the lowest common denominator acceptable to the group members.

As noted, Elazar initially insisted on the recruitment of 200,000 reservists as opposed to Dayan, who agreed to recruit between 20,000 and 50,000. Towards the end of the discussion in the Prime Minister's Office, Elazar began to show signs of compromise. "...I am ready for a partial mobilization. But I want the four armored divisions ... all of the Air Force and four armored divisions"(State Archives, 1973, p 10). Ultimately, this was the mobilization figure approved by the Prime Minister.

6) There was no room for re-examination of the proposals raised and rejected by members of the decision group

The strongest example for polythink on October 6, 1973 was the issue of a preemptive strike, once this alternative was rejected by Dayan at the outset of the discussion, and later by Golda. The discussion afterwards focused almost exclusively on the issue of mobilizing reserves. That is, after Golda's decision not to authorize a preemptive strike, the possibility of launching a strike and improving conditions at the start of the war fell off the table completely and was not discussed again.

7) Limited review of alternatives

From early in the discussion on the morning of October 6, the focus was mainly on one issue - mobilization of reserves. Due to the political considerations of upcoming elections and secret negotiations with US mediation being held between Israel and Egypt in the period before the war, several alternatives were rejected. Specifically, a preemptive strike, and mobilization of the entire reserve force, both for defense and attack. The latter alternative was rejected because it could imply that Israel was the one who plunged the situation into war.

The Polythink Syndrome on October 6, 1973: Explanations

Mintz and Wayne (2016) provide five explanations for the Polythink Syndrome: institutional, political, ideological, leadership and management style, and expert/novice.

1) *The Institutional explanation*

According to the institutional explanation, members of the decision unit represent different and even competing bureaucratic entities. This has the potential to lead to lack or delay in sharing information, and keeping one's cards close to the chest. This often leads to confusion and miscommunication, the most prominent symptoms of polythink.

On the 6th of October 1973, there was no major competition among entities. The commander of military intelligence had a monopoly on the intelligence and assessment of the likelihood of war. A competition between Military Intelligence and the Mossad on the assessment of whether war will begin on that day began only after Zamir delivered Marwan's warning. General Zeira refused to take the warning seriously. This was the beginning of the polythink syndrome among the decision-makers. Unlike Zeira, Zamir, who served as head of the southern command before his appointment to head the Mossad, was well aware of the consequences and implications of not mobilizing the reserves on an attack by Arab armies (Bar-Joseph, 2011).

Zeira hid information from the decision-making group members (e.g., on the implementation of special measures--ibid), and even delayed the transfer of information. A clear example of this was his decision to delay the distribution of new information in the telegram sent from the Iraqi embassy in Moscow to the Iraqi government in Baghdad, which made it unequivocally clear that the reason for the evacuation of Soviet advisers was that Egypt and Syria were likely to go to war against Israel (Bar-Joseph, 2013).

The political leadership concealed information from the military and other members of the decision-making group about the secret negotiation channel with the Americans. Thus, important information was concealed that could have completed the picture (Kipnis, 2012).

2) The political explanation

Each of those present on the morning of October 6, and in particular Dayan and Elazar who presented completely opposing views, represented his respective interests, in addition to the national interest. According to Kipnis (2012), Dayan represented his political and diplomatic interests, e.g., conflict with Egypt or tension leading to a military conflict could hurt his party's popularity among the public. In addition, signs of massive preparations for war may be interpreted as a pretext for war on Egypt and Syria, which could hurt diplomatic relations with the United States. Dayan shared these considerations with Golda, but not with the chief of staff of the IDF, Elazar, thus damaging the group's cohesion.

3) Experts and novices in the decision unit and their reputation

No doubt, the issue of seniority and reputation among members of the decision group significantly influenced the decisions made. For example

Zeira's reputation, especially after the events of April and May, 1973, when

many in the security apparatus warned of war, including the chief of staff,

defense minister and head of the Mossad, while Zeira estimated that there

would not be a war, and he was right. Dayan, perceived as a hero of the Six

Day War, had acquired a great reputation in both the public and the

political and security leadership. He also supported Zeira's assessment of

the low probability of war (Bar-Joseph, 2001). These two key decision-

makers, highly reputed and experienced, heavily influenced the decision-

making process and group dynamics vis-a-vis the current and former chiefs

of staff.

4) Leader-followers relations

In direct continuation of the previous explanation, the background and role

of each participant in the decision-making forum was of critical importance.

Prime Minister Golda Meir testified before the Agranat Commission, "I

could not oppose the head of military intelligence or the chief of staff

(Cohen, 12.09.13). Brigadier General Lior also testified that Golda expressed

her confusion to him when approached by military leaders and asked to

make a military decision. The Prime Minister, the highest decision-making

authority on security and strategic issues related to national security, and the" ultimate leader", found herself without the knowledge or ability to make an informed military decision. This enabled her subordinates, the defense minister and the chief of staff, to engage in an altercation that ultimately led to delayed decision-making—a clear evidence of Polythink.

5) *Different points of view*

There were also differences between the security prism and the political-diplomatic prism in the assessments of the situation. Defense Minister Dayan said, "…It was natural for the chief of staff to want these actions [to recruit all the reserves]. It is traditional for the military to demand maximal action. If limitations are necessary, they should be determined by the political leadership" (Dayan, 1976, p 576). Contrary to Elazar, Dayan and Golda also considered the political ramifications of mobilizing the reserves just before the 1973 election.

Conclusions and Implications

The analysis of the positions held by members of the Israeli key decision unit on the morning of October 6, 1973 concerning the mobilization of

reserves, a preemptive strike, and the likelihood of the outbreak of war on that day, revealed a number of interesting, even counter-intuitive insights.

First, the serious disagreements within the decision making group in the morning of October 6, clearly demonstrate that the group dynamic with regard to these decisions was very far from the groupthink syndrome that had characterized this decision unit up until October 6, 1973.

Second, as a result of the polythink syndrome, the influence of the asymmetrical power relationships between the subgroups in the decision unit on the decision itself was critical. The subgroup led by Defense Minister Moshe Dayan was more influential and had higher status than the subgroup led by Chief of Staff Elazar. Certainty if the Elazar-Tzur group had greater influence on the decisions than the Dayan-Zeira group, Israel would have launched a preemptive strike on the morning of October 6, 1973, and mobilized the full complement of reserves for both defensive and offensive purposes. Despite the army's intelligence very poor assessments—the "low probability of war concept", had these actions been taken as the chief of staff of the IDC, Elazar, advised in the morning of October 6, 1973, they would certainly have changed the face and outcome of the war. The fact

that Chief of Staff Elazar's position during those meetings supported full mobilization of the reserves and a preemptive strike, which were both rejected by the Defense Minister and the Prime Minister, contributed to the tragic events and outcome of the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Third, the information passed on by Mossad Chief Zvi Zamir from Marwan convinced Chief of Staff Elazar that there would be war, but did not convince the defense minister and the commander of military intelligence. They both clung to their belief that there is very low probability that war would break out. During the meetings in the Defense Ministry and at the Prime Minister's office, Elazar had no doubt there would be war and demonstrated it emphatically. Specifically, during the meeting with the Prime Minister he said, "I firmly believe that war will begin today at 18:00" (State Archives, 1973, p 10). Elazar interpreted Zamir's message as reliable while Dayan and Zeira remained unconvinced. Elazar was the only member of the key decision making group who accepted as fact that war would break out the same day. In contrast, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan was not convinced, and during both meetings had many reservations and conditions. Concerning the mobilization of the reserves, he said, "If things get worse, if the shooting starts at night, then we'll mobilize the rest"

(Agranat Commission, 1975, p 40). As for a preemptive strike, he said, "If Egypt alone attacks, we can beat the Syrians ... in principle, if they don't open fire, we won't either" (State Archives, 1973, p 4).

General Zeira calmed Dayan, reinforcing his position and remarks. He relied on Marwan who had said that Sadat may change his mind and wouldn't start a war. This is evident in his repeated statements that, "he's likely to be reluctant at the last minute... he hasn't given the order to start. And even if he gives it, he could cancel. Our actions will probably deter him or give him a pretext" (State Archives, 1973, p 7).

Fourth, it is important to note that members of the decision group who supported only the partial recruitment of reserves were also against a preemptive strike, and those who saw the threat of war and supported a preemptive strike also supported wider mobilization of the reserves.

While the decision unit during the period preceding October 6, 1973 was marked by allegiance to the "concept" that there is a low probability for war, and a groupthink syndrome, no doubt that on the morning of October 6, disagreements and internal conflict within the decision group

demonstrated the polythink syndrome on October 6th, as shown in this

article.

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