

The Significance of the Reputed Yom Kippur War Nuclear Affair

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The fortieth anniversary of the Yom Kippur War brought new focus on a reputed “nuclear” affair connected to a discussion by senior Israeli officials, headed by Prime Minister Golda Meir, on one of the first days of the war. In this discussion, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan suggested a demonstration of the “nuclear option.”¹ For nearly forty years there have been rumors of Israeli “nuclear signals” at the start of the war, including deployment of Jericho ground-to-ground missiles and their armament with nuclear warheads.² Various descriptions have appeared in the literature and the media on numerous occasions, and as a result, the incident is recorded in the literature as if it were an established fact, usually on the basis of rumors and with no citation of sources.³

The episode has been discussed many times, and in 2013 it was the focus of a resource-intensive study published in the United States, which drew conclusions about the significance of nuclear signals and nuclear deterrence in times of crisis.⁴ The tremendous attention the nuclear incident has attracted, along with its current significance, requires a focused discussion and refutation of unsubstantiated claims.

The Story

My intention is not to review the various literary sources on Dayan’s suggestion after the *Time* Magazine report in 1976.⁵ Prior to the fortieth anniversary of the war, nuclear analyst Avner Cohen made public a videotaped interview with Arnan (“Sini”) Azaryahu as part of a documentary project on Israeli nuclear history at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, which led to a heated

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debate in Israel and abroad.⁶ The interview was conducted in 2008, a short time before Azaryahu, aide and right-hand man to Golda Meir's confidant Yisrael Galili, died at the age of 91. In the interview, he speaks of a discussion that took place on the afternoon of Sunday, October 7, 1973 in the presence of Meir, Dayan, Galili, and Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon. In the course of the discussion, Dayan suggested that because of the difficult situation on the fronts and "since we will not have a lot of time and a lot of options, it would be a good idea to prepare a demonstration of the nuclear option too." Those in attendance objected to the recommendation, and Dayan's proposal was dropped. Azaryahu told Cohen that the issue was raised immediately after Chief of Staff David (Dado) Elazar had left the room. Azaryahu was not present at the discussion, and he was updated by Galili after the meeting.⁷

In Cohen's book *The Last Taboo*, he writes of the main details of the incident and of another, earlier conversation with Azaryahu, but this time, the meeting is placed later, on October 9, 1973.⁸ The difference between the dates is important: if the incident occurred on October 7, then Dayan's suggestion preceded the failure of the counterattack on the Suez Canal, which began a day later. If Dayan's proposal was made on the October 9, then it came after it was clear that the attack had failed.⁹

Relevant here are additional comments made by Azaryahu in the interview conducted in May 1995 that was not made public and is quoted here for the first time. They place Dayan's proposal within a broad strategic disagreement:

Then there was the question whether they [nuclear weapons] are a deterrent. Shimon [Peres] and [Moshe] Dayan took the approach that they are a deterrent. It turned out that they are not. Already in 1967 the Arabs thought that we had nuclear weapons, and they launched the Six Day War. In 1973, they were sure that we had nuclear weapons, and they went to war. It did not deter them and did not prevent war. Fortunately, in [the wars of] '67 and '73, there was proof that we had the ability to face the Arabs with conventional weapons under the worst conditions . . . In 1973, there was a moment when Moshe Dayan feared that we would lose the war. And he tried to hint in a small forum, which included, in addition to Golda, Galili and Yigal [Allon], that perhaps we should *in the form of threats or a test explosion or the like* tell the Arabs to be careful. Although Dado was optimistic, Moshe [Dayan] was completely pessimistic. Both Galili and

Yigal told Golda that this was madness, we must not do this, and we would win with what we had. And she accepted this opinion and saw to it that no such test was carried out . . . This matter was leaked in one way or another to the press too . . . The decisive role played by Galili and Yigal in influencing Golda to withstand the pressure from Moshe Dayan was not leaked there [emphasis added].¹⁰

Because Azaryahu did not go into detail in the interview beyond speaking about “demonstration” of the “nuclear option,” Cohen wonders, in a text accompanying the interview, what the “demonstration” would actually have involved. He correctly notes that this was not about using nuclear weapons against military or civilian targets, and he speculates about the type of “demonstration.” The new evidence indicates that Dayan proposed considering not only a “test explosion,” but also an explicit threat to use nuclear weapons.

The credibility of the story on the one hand and the validation of the October 7, 1973 date on the other are reinforced by the testimony of Haim Bar Lev, southern front commander in the war, which was published in September 2013. Bar Lev wrote of the conversation he had with Meir:

On Sunday . . . the Prime Minister told me that the Defense Minister had visited the fronts, and returned and informed her that he in fact erred about the IDF’s strength, he was mistaken in his assessment of the enemy, and the situation is desperate. In his opinion, we had to withdraw from the Golan Heights to the plain overlooking the Jordan and hold on to it until the last bullet. In the Sinai, we had to withdraw to the passes, and if this did not help, we had to use non-conventional means, as in “let me die with the Philistines”. . . The Prime Minister gave me a shocked impression less because of the situation and more because of the Defense Minister’s changed opinions.¹¹

As far as can be gleaned from open testimony, this is the entire incident: Dayan made a suggestion, and it was rejected out of hand. However, in the literature there are a number of accounts of that meeting that do not conform to the description above.

Other Accounts of the Incident

Because we are not dealing with the historiographic aspects of the episode, it is sufficient to note that Seymour Hersh, in his book *The Samson Option*,

devoted an entire chapter to the nuclear issue in the war and claimed that in the meeting under discussion (which he says took place on October 8), three main decisions were made: (a) to launch a counterattack on the Egyptian front; (b) to deploy and arm the nuclear weapons in case of total collapse; and (c) to inform the United States of the latter decision and to ask it to supply weapons, ammunition, and equipment.¹²

At a conference in 1996, Yuval Ne'eman addressed these claims, which had multiplied in the literature, and in an article based on his conference lecture emphasized that no decision had been made to deploy the nuclear arsenal and that there was no connection between US aid and the nuclear issue. Ne'eman wrote that

It would be normal . . . for whoever might be responsible for the nuclear infrastructure and the processing of further nuclear steps—whether it be development, production or the enhancement of the level of preparedness—to come to the Prime Minister at the beginning of a war and enquire whether such circumstances might indeed be expected, etc. Such a consultation should have taken place between 6 and 8 October. . . the Prime Minister's answer *could not have implied* deployment. It might and should have indicated a need for some degree of preparedness for the strategic missiles, whatever their actual warheads, and some protective steps in the nuclear domain, such as shutting down the reactors throughout the war, to minimize risks from bombardments [emphasis added].¹³

Ne'eman's testimony complements that of Azaryahu and Bar Lev, and there is no obvious reason to doubt their reliability. Before addressing Dayan's position, two main theses on this issue that appear in the literature should be examined.

Blackmail and Threats: William Quandt's Testimony

In the literature on Israel's raising its nuclear alert status at the start of the war, two main theses have been proposed:

- a. Israel manipulated its nuclear forces (mainly in deployment and in arming Jericho ground-to-ground missiles with nuclear warheads) so that a Soviet satellite would pick up the Israeli ballistic missile deployment and the revelation would lead to a reexamination of the Arab war plans (Egypt did not have similar technology).¹⁴

- b. Deploying the missiles and arming them with nuclear warheads was intended to play a political role, to serve as a means of pressure in Israel-US relations, and persuade the Americans of the necessity of aid in the form of weapons and equipment for Israel (which led to the airlift).

In recently published study by five researchers (including Cohen), the authors attempt to clarify the nuclear dimension of the war and whether the existing theses are supported by any facts, or by rumors and gossip. While they note that there is no definitive proof that Israel made any changes to its nuclear arsenal during the war and they tend not to accept the accounts that have appeared in the literature until now, they discuss at length the only source – which they believe to be reliable – who claims that in fact the Americans picked up changes in Israel’s nuclear deployment. The source is William Quandt, who during the war served as a member of the National Security Council and as an aide to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Quandt is the only person in the US government who has written and spoken publicly over the years about the Israeli nuclear dimension of the war. After publication of Hersh’s book in 1991, he wrote:

I was close enough to those events as a member of the National Security Council staff that I doubt that an explicit threat was made by [Israeli Ambassador Simcha] Dinitz [as alleged by Hersh]. We did know *around this time*, however, that Israel had placed its Jericho missiles on alert. I did not know what kind of warheads they had, but it did not make much sense to me that they would be equipped with conventional ordnance. I assume others agreed.

Quandt writes that he has no evidence of Israeli “blackmail,” but “we knew that a desperate Israel might activate its nuclear option. This situation, by itself, created a kind of *blackmail potential*” [emphasis added].¹⁵

The authors note that aside from Quandt’s testimony, they found no evidence of changes in Israel’s nuclear arsenal. They interviewed him a number of times, and they accept as reliable his statements that at some point between October 7 and 9, 1973 – in different conversations with them, Quandt gave a number of different versions, which he has also done in writing over the years – intelligence was received indicating that Israel had raised the readiness level of its Jericho missiles.¹⁶ Quandt emphasized that Israel’s increased nuclear preparedness was not

discussed by more senior US officials. The authors claim that Quandt is a reliable source, that he has no agenda or personal interest in this matter, that he has not changed his version of events over more than twenty years, and that therefore, his testimony is reliable. They note that while they do not think blackmail was involved, it is likely that Israel made changes to its nuclear delivery systems as part of its deployment for war (checking, preparing, or raising the level of preparedness).¹⁷

Is it true that Quandt has not changed his version of events? Opinions are divided on this. At the aforementioned conference of 1996, Quandt's comments were a bit different from what he wrote in 1991, or from what he claims today. This is evident from what Ne'eman wrote, noting that Quandt accused the government of Israel

of using Israel's nuclear capability as a means of blackmail to obtain American arms. According to Quandt, in the first two days of the war, US electronic intelligence picked up a *sharp rise* in preparedness and in deployment of the "nuclear units" in Israel, and this was perceived as a tacit "message" which meant, "if you do not help us with tanks and planes, Israel will be forced to move to a nuclear deterrence alignment that is open and implemented" [emphasis added].¹⁸

For the documentary series "The Land Had No Rest," which was shown on Israeli television in October 2013, a number of US government officials were asked about the raising of the alert status of the Jericho missiles and the nuclear implications mentioned by Quandt. Kissinger noted that if this happened, it was never brought to his attention, and that neither he nor Nixon – or in his opinion, any other government official – received any hint that this had been considered or that the weapons were shown. General Brent Scowcroft, his deputy in the National Security Council, made a similar statement.¹⁹

As the authors attempted to find further support for Quandt's claim, and did not find it from Kissinger or Scowcroft, they spoke to James Schlesinger, US Secretary of Defense at the time of the war, who stated that he did not recall such a situation. In their opinion, the fact that Schlesinger did not remember such an incident does not prove much, since he may not have read the report that Quandt saw because of the amount of material he was receiving or because he did not think it was important. Furthermore, the authors also claim that Schlesinger may not remember reading the report.²⁰ They thus explore why there is no

information whatsoever that supports Quandt's testimony: perhaps the report was not catalogued correctly, perhaps it was lost, and perhaps it was intentionally kept classified because of the secrecy surrounding the Israeli nuclear project.²¹

Evidence supporting Quandt's version of events can be found in the film *1973: A War Diary*, in which Sameh Seif el-Yazal, an Egyptian military intelligence officer during the war, notes that his intelligence service knew that the level of nuclear alert had been raised, starting from the moment when all Egyptian forces were already on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. This testimony, however, is questionable, if only because Egypt did not have – and still does not have – the necessary technology to obtain this information.²² However, on the face of it, it would appear that this supports the testimony of Quandt, who is also interviewed in the film, and who repeats his assertion that US intelligence knew that the Jericho missiles had been prepared for use and placed on their launchers in a high state of readiness.²³

Nonetheless, since there is not a single US government official who remembers an incident in which Jericho missiles were deployed and armed as part of Israel's raising of its nuclear alert level during the first days of the war, and there is not a single document that indicates this (the authors write that they have reviewed many documents, both classified and unclassified), Quandt's testimony is subject to doubt, and/or he has confused it with another incident.

It has long been known that on October 17, 1973, an American satellite discovered that two brigades of Soviet Scud missile were deployed in the area of the Nile Delta. It was feared that the missiles were armed with uncamouflaged nuclear warheads, and when Israel received this information, Dado ordered that a Jericho missile battery be deployed. Ne'eman later recounted that "the chief of staff gave an order *not* to camouflage the battery, on the assumption that the Soviet satellites would pick up the message of counter-deployment and that the information would be conveyed to Sadat. The Egyptians had to guess which warheads these missiles were armed with" [emphasis added].²⁴ In a 1998 interview, Ne'eman noted that this was the *first* time that Jericho missiles had been deployed, and he emphasized that the order to deploy them was given by Dado – not Meir or Dayan – which indicates that the Israeli missiles were not armed with nuclear warheads.²⁵

Is it possible that at a distance of years, Quandt is simply confused?²⁶ Is it possible that the change picked up by the Americans in the alert level of the Jericho missile battery did not take place during the first days of the war, but rather about eleven days after it began? That is likely. Could it be that Israel's raising of the nuclear alert level was not discussed by the Americans and that all the decision makers simply forgot about it? That is less likely. This also explains why there is no evidence or proof supporting Quandt's version of events. Quandt did not know that the missiles were armed with nuclear warheads, but claimed that this was the only logical explanation for their being stationed. In other words, this is interpretation and not a fact.

On the other hand, if Quandt's version of events is correct, then one of the following options must be explained. In other words, either Azaryahu's testimony is not correct, and in fact a decision was made at that meeting to raise the nuclear alert level; or, even though Dayan's suggestion to have some demonstration of Israel's nuclear capabilities was rejected out of hand, the Defense Minister took some steps behind Meir's back in order to advance the nuclear arsenal. The researchers adopt the second theory, and conclude:

Our assessment, then, is that, in the very earliest days of the Yom Kippur War . . . Israeli officials – possibly at a level below the Prime Minister – ordered key elements of the Israeli nuclear weapons enterprise, probably including the Jericho ballistic missiles, to take steps to increase their readiness and alert status as a defensive or precautionary step in light of the dramatic, and possibly grave situation that Israel appeared to face. This step was not intended by the responsible authorities of the Israeli government as an attempt to “blackmail” or otherwise induce action by the United States. We further assess that at least some of these steps, particularly the order to alter the status of Israel's nuclear delivery systems or the alteration itself (possibly including the assembly of certain weapons systems, including nuclear weapons), was detected by U.S. intelligence, and that a report detailing this development was disseminated within the U.S. government, probably to a very small number of concerned officials at senior levels. We assess that this report had no significant impact on the decision-making within the U.S. government. We also judge that it is unlikely that the Israelis intended to send a nuclear signal to other

parties, namely the Arabs and/or Soviets, by changing the status of their nuclear delivery systems.²⁷

Assessment

Based on the historical accounts described here, the study mentioned presents three insights about the nuclear era:

- a. “The perceptual significance of nuclear operations”: In contrast to the commonly accepted view, manipulating “nuclear weapons and their associated forces” does not necessarily lead to a change in perception by an enemy or a friend concerning the intentions of a nuclear state, and is not necessarily perceived as increasing instability or further escalation of a crisis.²⁸
- b. “Bureaucratic and organizational factors in nuclear signaling”: Since the study concludes that Dayan bypassed the Prime Minister, the authors believe that “action that might appear to be the product of deliberate, coordinated state action can in some cases be more accurately interpreted as the result of segments of a government rather than of the whole state itself.”²⁹
- c. “How necessary or significant are [nuclear] signals?” The researchers believe that Israel’s manipulation of its nuclear arsenal did not affect the assessments of the other actors because they already knew that Israel had nuclear capability and would use it if the Arabs “pushed too far.”³⁰ Therefore, little (if any) attention was paid to the manipulation. Accordingly, they contend, nuclear signaling does not have a substantial effect as long as the other actors are aware of the capabilities and the red lines of the state that is signaling.³¹

A pure strategic discussion without an historical-political dimension has little meaning, because any strategic discussion is necessarily based on historical experience. So too, the greater the differences between policymakers, the greater will be the contradictory strategic conclusions documented in the rich literature on nuclear weapons. If my assessment that Quandt confused the dates is correct, then there is no need to seek proof that Israel raised its nuclear alert level, as the authors of the article did, or to speculate about how this move affected the battle, because it did not happen. Thus, it also becomes clear that the authors’ insights, even if they have a degree of truth, are not supported by historical facts. However, from this episode it is certainly possible to learn about Israel’s

position on the nuclear issue and about the debate on the issue among high ranking government officials.³²

From the start of the nuclear project, and even before the nuclear reactor in Dimona became a fact, there was a two-level argument among Israel's leaders: Is it correct for Israel to equip itself with nuclear weapons, and what will its nuclear policy be when the project is completed?³³ Two main positions stood out in this debate, both at the time the nuclear project reached critical stages, and later on as well. One supported explicit nuclear deterrence, while the other believed that Israel must not reveal its nuclear capability, since this could, among other consequences, lead to a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. This disagreement divided decision makers into those who supported explicit nuclear deterrence and those who rejected it. Supporting explicit deterrence, Shimon Peres, in the period immediately before the Six Day War, even suggested that a nuclear test be conducted so as to prevent war by revealing Israel's nuclear capabilities.³⁴

The debate about Israel's nuclear policy and the disagreement between supporters and opponents of ambiguity continued for many years.³⁵ Dayan was the most public proponent of explicit deterrence. In the 1960s and 1970s, he repeatedly gave public support for nuclear weapons. When asked about this shortly before the 1965 elections, he stated that "if it were possible to go to a store and buy atomic weapons, I would support that."³⁶ In the 1970s, he declared many times that nuclear weapons would reach the Middle East, and that therefore Israel must acquire a nuclear arsenal.³⁷ In 1976, in the context of a discussion on the Yom Kippur War, he stated that Israel must produce nuclear weapons because it cannot compete with the Arab buildup. He emphasized that if the State of Israel was in danger of being destroyed, it should respond not by adding tanks, but with a powerful concentration of nuclear weapons.³⁸ This was a clear hint as to his position during the war.

While is customary to view Dayan's suggestion as resulting from the panic that gripped him when the war broke out, his proposal actually matches his security outlook.³⁹ Had Israel revealed its nuclear capabilities either through a threat or a test, this would undermine the policy of nuclear ambiguity. Dayan believed that Israeli nuclear weapons had to play a deterrent role in the conflict, and having Israel's security rest on explicit nuclear deterrence would make more favorable borders possible in negotiations with the Arabs and would also make return to the 1967 borders easier (because of his assessment that explicit deterrence makes

defensible borders unnecessary). Indeed, in one of my conversations with him, Azaryahu too emphasized that Dayan's proposal was part of his general outlook concerning the role of nuclear weapons in Israeli foreign policy.

An important conclusion from the episode, therefore, is that Israel was steadfast in its position that it not reveal its nuclear capabilities, and they do not play an operational role in Israel's security doctrine. In fact, there were (and are) disputes among Israel's leaders as to the role that Israel's nuclear capabilities should play in conflict, but in spite of these disagreements, the output of Israel's foreign and defense policy on this issue was generally uniform: Israel will not be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons into the region.

Because Israel has adopted a policy of ambiguity and its nuclear capabilities do not play an open role in its operational military arsenal, the discussion remains speculative as to what role an Israeli nuclear alert would play in a crisis situation. The authors of the article cited above argue that in the case of Israel, nuclear signaling does not qualitatively affect the other actors, but this claim is not backed up by facts.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Peres's proposal in the days prior to the Six Day War to send a nuclear signal by conducting a nuclear test in the attempt to prevent war is highly significant. This is not meant to claim as some argue that Israel's nuclear capability has played a central role in the Arab-Israeli conflict (and in my opinion this is because Israel did not signal), but only to emphasize the fact that there is no evidence in the case under discussion of manipulations in the nuclear arsenal, and therefore, it is not possible to hold an historical discussion on the impact of nuclear signaling on other actors.

However, in a broader sense, following numerous reports in 1976 that revealed the proposal Dayan had made three years earlier, and because Dayan did not deny the reports but only claimed that they were "absurd," neighboring countries, and Egypt in particular, had stronger motivation to go nuclear.⁴¹ It has been reported that these accounts increased the anxiety in Cairo and strengthened proponents of nuclear development in Egypt, who argued that this was a response to Dayan's comments seeking to base Israeli strategy on nuclear deterrent power.⁴²

Concerning the study's second insight, which, couched in scientific language, states that sometimes manipulation of a nuclear arsenal is not a deliberate action of the state rather the action of a bureaucratic or organizational entity, the authors provide no historical example that

supports this far reaching insight. In fact, sources do not indicate that Dayan gave any order to manipulate the nuclear arsenal and circumvent Meir, even though he supported explicit nuclear deterrence. In spite of the lack of clarity and the deliberate obfuscation in everything connected to the decision making processes on the Israeli nuclear issue, it is evident that the project is under close supervision with clear procedures and that such opportunistic moves are not possible.⁴³ An action in the realm of securing nuclear facilities or launchers should not be misconstrued as a signal, since these are simply actions taken during an emergency. In the incident under discussion, it is claimed that Israel deployed Jericho missiles and armed them with nuclear warheads, an action that decision makers in Israel knew the United States would pick up (as would the Soviet Union, if the battery were exposed for long enough).

Decision makers in the United States, the Soviet Union, and Arab countries in October 1973 knew that Israel had nuclear capability. Nevertheless, this knowledge did not prevent Egypt and Syria from going to war against Israel then, or for that matter, in 1967. In other words, Israel's nuclear capability did not deter its enemies from launching a large conventional war. A major reason for this is the policy of nuclear ambiguity, whose logic removed the Israeli nuclear component from the regional conflict. In other words, because of its policy of nuclear ambiguity, Israel does not tend to carry out nuclear signaling, and therefore the impact of its nuclear capability on the conflict is minor. On the other hand, if Israel had armed its Jericho missiles with nuclear warheads during the first days of the war, this would have led to a fundamental change in perception in the United States and other countries (after all, why did the Defense Minister make the suggestion?). Since this likely did not happen, there was no need to reevaluate Israel's intentions.

One of the reasons why there was no need for a change in perception concerning the incident in question is that decision makers, both in Israel and the United States, knew that the Egyptian war plan – codenamed “High Minarets” – was intended to conquer territory up to a depth of ten kilometers east of the Suez Canal and that Egypt had no intention of advancing any further at that point.⁴⁴ Thus, from the American point of view, if the Jericho missiles were in fact armed on the second day of the war, this was not intended to protect Israel from conquest by the Egyptians and the Syrians (which most authors who address the nuclear episode claim), but to serve other, political purposes.

In historical terms, then, Israel did not conduct nuclear signaling in the first days of the Yom Kippur War, and Dayan's proposal was blocked and taken off the table as soon as it was raised. In addition, Israel did not blackmail the United States, and there is no connection between the airlift and changes in Israel's nuclear arsenal. There is no evidence that Dayan contravened Meir's order, and Quandt is likely confusing two different incidents. On the theoretical level, the authors' insight that changes in the nuclear arsenal do not necessarily lead to escalation and a change in perception by a friendly or enemy state is not supported by any evidence in the case under discussion. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Meir's decision was contravened, and therefore, the authors' determination that manipulation of the nuclear arsenal took place behind the back of the authorized authority (and perhaps implicit criticism of the manner in which the nuclear arsenal is supervised) is mistaken. In addition, the authors' claim that there is no significance to nuclear signaling during a crisis is not supported by any evidence. Rather, had Israel chosen to signal during the war, this would have had implications for the battle and beyond. In fact, the reason that decision makers in this incident objected to Dayan's proposal to make a threat or to conduct a nuclear test was the correct assessment that nuclear signaling would make Israel's situation worse – in other words, nuclear signaling has significance.

Notes

- 1 It is sufficient to point to the article by Ronen Bergman, "Atomic [Tremendous] Pressure," *Yediot Ahronot*, October 4, 2013; Avner Cohen, "When Israel Stepped Back from the Brink," *New York Times*, October 3, 2013; Amir Oren, "In the Yom Kippur War, Dayan Suggested Preparing a Nuclear Option and Golda Refused," *Haaretz*, October 3, 2013.
- 2 A short history of the Jericho missile can be found in Ronen Bergman's article "The Walls of Jericho," *Yediot Ahronot*, February 17, 2012.
- 3 Of the many instances in the literature that recycle these claims, it is sufficient to cite Seymour M. Hersh, *The Samson Option* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 1992), pp. 166-76 (Hebrew edition); Andrew and Leslie Cockburn, *Dangerous Liaison: The Inside Story of the U.S.-Israeli Covert Relationship* (Tel Aviv: Maariv, 1992), pp. 165-66; Howard Blum, *The Eve of Destruction: The Untold Story of the Yom Kippur War* (Harper Collins, 2003), pp. 227-29. This episode even served fictional literature. See, for example, Tom Clancy, *The Sum of All Fears* (New York: Penguin, 1992).
- 4 Elbridge Colby, Avner Cohen, William McCants, Bradley Morris, and William Rosenau, "The Israeli 'Nuclear Alert' of 1973: Deterrence and

- Signaling in Crisis," *CNA Strategic Studies*, April 2013, <http://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/DRM-2013-U-004480-Final.pdf>.
- 5 "The Politics of Death," *Time*, April 14, 1976.
 - 6 The videotaped interview (with subtitles) appears on the Wilson Center's website: <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/arnan-sini-azaryahu>.
 - 7 Azaryahu recounted the episode briefly in his book, where he noted that the chief of staff, Dado, had opposed the suggestion. See Ora Armoni, *Friend and Confidant* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2008), p. 206. The incident was mentioned for the first time by Yair Evron, based on conversations with Azaryahu. According to Evron, according to Azaryahu, Dayan's suggestion came up at a meeting on the night between October 8 and 9, 1973. See Yair Evron, *Israel's Nuclear Dilemma* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 71-72.
 - 8 Avner Cohen, *The Last Taboo* (Or Yehuda: Kinneret, Zemora Bitan, 2005), p. 53 (Hebrew edition).
 - 9 Azaryahu did not remember the exact date of the meeting (this also came up in my conversations with him), and it is Cohen who correctly determined after the later interview with Azaryahu that the meeting took place on October 7, 1973.
 - 10 A transcript of the current conversation, which was conducted with Azaryahu on May 16, 1995, is in my possession.
 - 11 Bar Lev's comments were widely published in the media and appeared on the front pages of newspapers. See Nehama Dwek, "The Bar Lev Diaries," *Yediot Ahronot*, September 12, 2013. However, as opposed to what was reported, this was not a diary that Bar Lev wrote, but a limited number of notes that the commander of the southern front wrote to himself, typed up in an orderly fashion after the war, and kept in his safe. This is what his son, MK Omer Bar Lev, who gave the notes to the media, told me.
 - 12 Hersh, *Samson Option*, p. 166. Hersh does not reveal his sources, but he claims that some information was brought to his attention by a senior official who heard it from Meir's military secretary, Yisrael Lior.
 - 13 Yuval Ne'eman, "The Operational Link between Israel and the United States in the Yom Kippur War," pp. 124-40 in *Jews, Israel, and the Nuclear Issue: An Anthology of Articles Written by Professor Yuval Ne'eman*, ed. Shmuel Sabag (Ariel University Center of Judea and Samaria, 2007). The quote is from pp. 128-29.
 - 14 During the war, the Soviets launched a Cosmos observation satellite once every three days, which scanned the area of the fighting.
 - 15 See William B. Quandt, "How Far Will Israel Go?" *Washington Post*, October 24, 1991. Quandt was convinced the airlift took place as a result of fears that Israel would be forced to rely on its nuclear forces.
 - 16 See note 58 in Colby et al., "The Israeli 'Nuclear Alert' of 1973," pp. 34-35.
 - 17 Colby et al., "The Israeli 'Nuclear Alert' of 1973," pp. 33-34.
 - 18 Ne'eman, "Operational Link," p. 125. Compare Cohen's comments on Quandt's testimony at the meeting, which reinforce Ne'eman's testimony.

See Cohen, *The Last Taboo*, p. 50. On the face of it, this is more or less what Quandt claims in the 1991 article cited.

- 19 Amir Oren from *Haaretz* served as a consultant for the series and edited the interviews. The quotes appear in his article cited in n. 1.
- 20 Colby et al., "The Israeli 'Nuclear Alert' of 1973," pp. 36-37. It could be argued that the US officials who were interviewed were reluctant to tell the truth about this incident because of their commitment to maintain the policy of Israeli nuclear ambiguity. However, in contrast to Kissinger, for example, whose positions on the nuclear issue are moderate, Schlesinger held more hawkish views.
- 21 Ibid., p. 37.
- 22 Presumably if the Egyptians had picked up Israel's raising of its nuclear alert level, this would have served as fuel in the Egyptian controversy about development of nuclear weapons at earlier stages. At the very least, the publication of reports in 1976 about the incident discussed here, which led to a lively debate in Egypt about the Israeli nuclear project, would likely have led high ranking Egyptian officials to reveal that they had picked up the raised nuclear alert level. On the Egyptian attitude to Israel's nuclear image, including mention of the incident, see Ariel Levite and Emily Landau, *In the Eyes of the Arabs: Israel's Nuclear Image* (Tel Aviv: Papyrus, Tel Aviv University, 1994), pp. 43-44, 77-79.
- 23 See interviews in the film *1973: A War Diary*, which was broadcast on channel 22.
- 24 Ne'eman, "Operational Link," p. 139.
- 25 The interview on channel 11 is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8T5jyIy7eU&feature=endscreen&NR=1>.
- 26 In Israel, too, there is confusion about various incidents and different ground-to-ground missiles. In their book *Real Time* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2003), p. 49, Ronen Bergman and Gil Melzer address the discussion that took place a few hours before the fighting began, in which Dayan, Dado, Benny Peled, and others talked about "the most extreme response measures." In the discussion, Dayan ordered that the Ivry missile be prepared, which, the authors write, "according to the foreign press, is a different name for the Jericho ground-to-ground missile and is also capable of carrying nuclear weapons." Seemingly, this story could have conformed with Quandt's testimony in one way or another. However, the Ivry (the MAR-290 medium-range artillery rocket) is not a great secret, and if foreign media reports identify the Ivry with the Jericho, then this is evidence of the foreign correspondents' knowledge. See also pp. 136-37.
- 27 Colby et al., "The Israeli 'Nuclear Alert' of 1973," p. 50.
- 28 Ibid., pp. 53-54.
- 29 Ibid., p. 54.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid., pp. 55-57.

- 32 More about the Yom Kippur War can be learned from Dayan's proposal. See Adam Raz, "The Voice is Dayan's voice, but the Hands are the Hands of Zeira – Why the 'Special Means' were not Activated on the Eve of the Yom Kippur War," *Yisraelim* 5 (2013): 162-213, especially p. 209.
- 33 See Adam Raz, "On the Way to Dimona: The Beginning of the Dispute over Israeli Nuclear Policy," *Politica* No. 22 (winter 2013): 107-34.
- 34 On June 1, 1967, several days before the fighting began, Peres suggested conducting a nuclear test in the south of Israel, which, he said, would deter the Arabs and prevent the war. His suggestion was made a few hours after Dayan was appointed defense minister. Peres's suggestion, which has varied and diverse sources, was tabled. The suggestion to conduct nuclear signaling shows that Peres (like Dayan) thought that it definitely could and should play a role in military conflicts. See Adam Raz, "The Nuclear Dimension on the Eve of the Six Day War," *Kivunim Hadashim* 28 (June 2013): 147-60.
- 35 On aspects of this debate see Adam Raz, "The Value of Nuclear Ambiguity in the Face of a Nuclear Iran," *Strategic Assessment* 14, no. 3 (2011): 19-32.
- 36 *Maariv*, July 2, 1965.
- 37 "Dayan: We Should Not Expect that Nuclear Weapons Will Not Come to the Region," *Davar*, November 29, 1974; "Dayan: We Must Acquire a Nuclear Option so that the Arabs Know We Can Destroy Them," *Yediot Ahronot*, March 11, 1976.
- 38 "Dayan: Nuclear Weapons: The Answer to the Danger of Destruction of the State of Israel," *Yediot Ahronot*, March 28, 1976.
- 39 I agree with Shlomo Aharonson on this. See Shlomo Aharonson, *Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East*, Volume 2 (Jerusalem: Akademon, 1995), p. 180. On Dayan's nuclear doctrine, see an article by his close associate Avraham Schweitzer, "The Importance of the Nuclear Option," *Haaretz*, March 5, 1975.
- 40 The various references in different episodes over the years to Israel's nuclear capability most certainly led to a heated debate in neighboring countries about nonconventional weapons. The Vanunu affair, which, while it does not fall under the category of nuclear signaling, definitely led to increased tension in the region on the issue of nonconventional weapons.
- 41 "Dayan: I Cannot Imagine Joining the Likud," *Davar*, May 6, 1976.
- 42 "Egyptian Military Leaders Support View that Cairo Must Develop Nuclear Weapons," *Yediot Ahronot*, October 31, 1976.
- 43 In the days prior to the Six Day War, Dayan gave an order related to the nuclear project of his own accord, and only afterwards went to ask the opinion of Prime Minister Levi Eshkol. However, this is not like the episode under discussion.
- 44 See Adam Raz, "State Without the Means," *Maarachot* No. 452 (December 2013): 60-65.