



US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger on the Yom Kippur War:

Meeting of Leading Figures in the State Department, October 23, 1973

Zaki Shalom

Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) – Tel Aviv University

On October 23, 1973, United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger called a meeting of senior State Department figures to discuss the still ongoing Yom Kippur War and its ramifications. At that time, it seemed clear that Israel had the upper hand. It had succeeded—albeit with many fatalities—in overcoming the initial shock of the surprise outbreak of the war and the collapse of its security approach, which to a large extent was based on the ability of the front line troops in strongholds along the Suez Canal to block any Egyptian invasion.

The atmosphere at that meeting, as far as can be assessed from the minutes, was fairly relaxed, occasionally even lighthearted. Israel was considered an ally of the United States, and the sense of Israel's success, with its soldiers controlling large areas of the western side of the Canal and imposing a blockade on the Third Army, pleased the Nixon administration. It gave it good reason to estimate that the war would strengthen the regional and international status of the United States and promote the chances of an Arab-Israeli settlement.

This was a closed meeting for senior administration figures, with the participation of Secretary of State (and former National Security Advisor) Henry Kissinger, who presented his views with much candor, as befitting a discussion at such a senior level among people who know each other well, and hence its importance. Indeed, Kissinger took control of the discussion and gave others limited time to express themselves. The minutes of this closed meeting give a fascinating glimpse into the administration's positions regarding one of Israel's most traumatic events. However, it is important to stress that these positions represent the opinions of Kissinger in just one discussion—important in itself—out of many that took place during the war. Therefore, these views do not necessarily represent the “final” positions throughout the entire war and its aftermath.

What follows are the main points from this fascinating document.

The Surprise and the US Involvement

Kissinger opened by relating how he learned of the outbreak of the war. In New York for a meeting of the UN General Assembly, Kissinger was awakened by his deputy, Joseph Sisco, on Saturday, October 6, 1973, at 6 am (12 noon, Israel time), who told him that Israel was reporting that the outbreak of war was “imminent,” and was asking leaders in the administration “to use our influence to get it stopped” (Kissinger, 2004, p. 14).¹

Kissinger repeated this story several times in different forums. It was impossible not to form the impression that the repetition was intended, *inter alia*, to stress that not only Israel but the administration, too, was surprised by the outbreak of war. It is very possible that beyond the factual description, embellished with a touch of piquancy, Kissinger used this story to dispel the stubborn rumors, circulating in Israel as well as in the United States, that Kissinger himself was actually involved in the war initiative.

According to this theory, Kissinger understood that it was not possible to break the impasse in the Middle East following Israel’s crushing victory in the Six Day War and move forward toward a peace process without a military conflict that would exact a heavy price from Israel and oblige it to soften its negotiating position. Kissinger himself hinted at this in a conversation with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad on January 20, 1974, when he said:

If you had not started the war, I would have started a diplomatic offensive in November. I said it to the Arab diplomats at the UN in September. But it would have failed. Without the war it would have failed. So I would have to say that military actions were necessary....I do not think the Arabs could have settled without restoring their dignity. And the Israelis could not have settled [as they are now] without

a military setback. (Memorandum of Conversation, 1974)

At the State Department meeting of October 23, 1973, examined in this article, Kissinger, relying on his extensive historical knowledge, also underscored that in a good settlement between the parties, each can feel it has gained something from the arrangement. In a remark that was almost certainly related to the circumstances created in the Middle East following the decisive defeat of the Arab armies in the Six Day War, Kissinger noted that a good settlement cannot survive for long if it is based on “unconditional surrender” by the other side (Minutes of the Secretary of State’s Staff Meeting [hereafter Minutes], 1973).

Later in the meeting, Kissinger explained that in any case, the administration’s policy in the Middle East was drafted in forums with the participation of senior administration personnel; the present forum, which meets almost on a daily basis, was the most important. Kissinger named the following members of the staff: Kenneth Rush, Joseph Sisco, David Popper, Tom Pickering, and Larry Eagleburger.² This system, Kissinger appeared to imply, does not allow one individual, however senior, to initiate a strategic move like the one attributed to Kissinger. The significance is that decisions regarding the Middle East in the period prior to the war were made in a broad forum and did not express purely personal positions (Minutes, 1973).

During the meeting, there was an effort to make Israel responsible for the failure of US intelligence agencies to assess the imminence of the war. Even during the war, Ray Cline, the State Department’s Intelligence chief, claimed that “we were brainwashed by the Israelis, who brainwashed themselves” (Minutes, 1973). Kissinger, it should be noted, did not contradict this harsh statement.

In fact, this stance began already on the morning of October 6, 1973. In his meeting with Prime Minister Golda Meir, United States

Ambassador to Israel Kenneth Keating referred unambiguously to Israel's responsibility for the fact that the administration was also taken by surprise when war broke out: "There were exchanges of telegrams between embassies and Washington [the United States Embassy in Israel and the security establishment in Israel] over troop concentrations on both borders," he said to the Prime Minister. "In the first telegram [that arrived from Washington], there was almost [an air of] panic. [But] the attaché [of the United States Embassy in Tel Aviv] visited the IDF and received a reassuring briefing." In addition, the previous day, the Embassy asked for answers to questions from Washington, and above all: did they know of any "non-scheduled" Soviet flights to Syria and Egypt? Israel's response was that it did know about them, but was not clear about their purpose (Diary of Eli Mizrahi, 1973, p. 5).

The issue of the preemptive strike occupies an important place in Kissinger's references to the war. He claimed that the United States did not stop an Israeli preemptive strike before the war.

And again, Keating specified, we asked the Israelis: do you know of any Egyptian deployment and what it indicates. Israel's reply: we know about the deployment, and it is of a defensive character. We asked the same things about Syria and got a similar response. We asked if they knew about the return of the Sukhoi bombers to the airfield north of Damascus. Their reply: we knew that there were aircraft of this type there, but they left, and we don't know whether they have returned, and if they have returned, what this means" (Diary of Eli Mizrahi, 1973, p. 5).

Keating's report seems to imply that the tremendous prestige of Israel's intelligence capabilities at that time led the United States intelligence personnel to show complacency in the face of the rapidly approaching offensive. Abba Eban, in his testimony to the Agranat

Committee, said that since the Six Day War, "there was an impression that [Israeli] intelligence is a successful matter [organization]... following that huge, shining victory, [which] made a name not only for the IDF, its commanders, and fighters, but all over the country and all over the world, our intelligence service had [gained] a special reputation" (Agranat Committee, 1973, p. 20).

Did the United States Block an Israeli Preemptive Strike?

The issue of the preemptive strike occupies an important place in Kissinger's references to the war. He claimed that the United States did not stop an Israeli preemptive strike before the war: "There have been many stories," said Kissinger, "that we prevented a pre-emptive attack by the Israelis and that their setbacks are due to our urging them not to engage in a pre-emptive attack. This is total nonsense" (Minutes, 1973).

Kissinger continued, "We did not urge them not to engage in a pre-emptive attack because we didn't believe that a war was coming. And we had no reason to tell them this." Israel too did not assess that war was about to break out. Moreover, even if Israel had initiated a preventive strike, "it would not have changed the outcome in any sense," in part due to Israel's rigid, single-minded thinking (Minutes, 1973).

The picture presented by Kissinger at that meeting is only partly correct. This argument was perhaps valid until the early morning of October 6, 1973. According to what we can learn from documents available to the public, there was a growing assessment from that time onward that war was certain. The question of a preemptive strike was highly relevant during those critical hours: "As for a preemptive strike," said the Chief of Staff on October 6, 1973, "it naturally [gives Israel] an enormous advantage; it will save many lives." Later, as required by his position, the Chief of Staff specified the expected outcomes of a preemptive attack:

In operational terms, today at 12:00, we can destroy the Syrian air force

entirely. After that, we need another 30 hours to destroy their missile system. If they intend to attack at five (17:00), at that time, our Air Force will act [will be able to act] freely against the Syrian army. That's what we can do. It is very tempting to me in operational terms. (Summary of Consultation with the Prime Minister, 1973, p. 4)³

Later Kissinger sought to reinforce the impression that the US administration, unlike the Israeli government, had many worries over the possibility of war. At the meeting, he referred to his meeting with the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Simcha Dinitz, before the war, on Sunday, September 30, 1973. Kissinger made it a point that insisted on a meeting on Sunday, although the State Department was not set up for working at weekends. This should obviously enhance his argument that he was genuinely concerned over the danger of an imminent military confrontation in the Middle East:

I asked him what he thought. He assured me there was no possibility of an attack. And I was sufficiently uneasy about it to ask for intelligence estimates...both of which, however, agreed on the proposition that an Arab attack was highly improbable. These intelligence reports were confirmed during the week. And indeed the morning of the attack, the President's daily brief, intelligence brief, still pointed out that there was no possibility of an attack. For all these reasons, we had no incentive in the world to tell anyone not to engage in a pre-emptive strike. (Minutes, 1973)

Returning to the Meir-Keating meeting: the Prime Minister arrived for this meeting already completely determined to avoid a preemptive strike. Before the meeting, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan asked her if she wanted an

intelligence officer to accompany her. Golda Meir said no, and clarified that she wanted to be alone with the Ambassador (Diary of Eli Mizrachi, 1973, p. 2). She began the meeting by telling the Ambassador that Israel had received information "from completely reliable sources" that Egypt and Syria were planning a combined attack on Israel in the late afternoon. She likewise reported to the Ambassador about the hasty departure of Russian advisors from Egypt and Syria. At first, said the Prime Minister, we thought they were worried about an attack by us, and so they built a defense system. There was also a suggestion that their departure was linked to a rift between Egypt and Syria and the Soviet Union. However, in the last few hours, the assessment has changed, and we expect a combined attack from Egypt and Syria "late in the afternoon" (p. 4).

During the conversation, the issue of the preemptive strike arose several times. Right from her opening remarks, the Prime Minister explained that the purpose of the meeting was to report on the situation to the US administration and clarify that "we won't start the war." Later she added: "We have no doubt that we will win, but we wish to inform the Egyptians through the Americans and the Soviets that we are not planning an attack, although clearly, we are ready to repel their attack." Ambassador Keating did not seem entirely convinced by the Prime Minister's promises. He likely found it hard to believe that in such serious circumstances, Israel would waive the option of a preemptive strike that could perhaps give it an operational advantage.

Toward the end of the meeting, he again asked whether Israel would strike Egypt and Syria before they attack. And again, the Prime Minister said, "Absolutely no, although it would make things much easier for us." Again, she asked the administration to contact the Soviet Union and Egypt urgently and make it clear that Israel had no intention of attacking (Diary of Eli Mizrachi, 1973, pp. 5-6) and that it wanted to avoid a "blood bath" (Burr, 2003a). The Prime

Minister ended the meeting by stating that Israel had called up some of its reserves but was avoiding a full mobilization (Memorandum from William B. Quandt, 1973).⁴

Later there would be criticism of the Prime Minister for giving such a fateful commitment to refrain from a preemptive strike without informing the government. The main protest came from Justice Minister Yaakov Shimshon Shapira. The Minister also wondered why the government was summoned to discuss the approaching war only at 12 noon when in the early hours of the morning there were already clear signs that war was imminent. The Justice Minister argued that until that meeting, he was completely unaware of the security tension that threatened the State of Israel. Minister Shapira claimed that many other ministers supported him and that he had to express his protest publicly for it to be taken seriously. He recalled that criticisms of British Prime Minister Chamberlain's actions before the Second World War were also expressed openly in the British Parliament (Goldstein, 1973).

In a conversation with President Nixon on November 1, 1973, Meir claimed that the Defense Minister and the Chief of Staff wanted a preemptive strike, but she overruled them: "I said that we would assume the risk; a terrible risk. We had to be in a situation where our friends would know exactly what happened, how the war broke out" (Prime Minister's Meeting, 1973, p. 2).

Kissinger's statement that the United States did not try to prevent a preemptive strike by Israel does not faithfully represent the situation. There is evidence that Washington certainly put pressure on Israel to avoid such a strike before the war, notwithstanding that it could assume that the set of understandings that had been formulated between the United States and Israel in the years prior to the war would in any case lead Israel to refrain from taking preemptive action against Egypt (Six Day War Center, 2021b). More specifically:

- a. On October 6, 1973, at 08:29 in the morning Washington time, the Israeli attaché in Washington, Mordechai Shalev, called Kissinger to report that he had just received reports from Jerusalem that during the government meeting, ministers learned that the Egyptian-Syrian attack had begun, mainly with aerial shelling along the Suez Canal and in the Golan. Kissinger replied that Egyptian sources were claiming that Israel had carried out a marine attack near the town of Suez, thereby implying that Egypt was just responding to an Israeli preemptive strike. Kissinger certainly knew this Egyptian information was fake. Nevertheless, he felt it was right, under these circumstances, to ask Israel to restrain its actions (Kissinger, 2004, p. 34).
- b. In Kissinger's report to President Nixon, who was in Florida that day, he said that he had called the Israeli attaché in Washington, Mordechai Shalev, and warned him that "there must be no preemptive strike" (Burr, 2003).
- c. Prime Minister Meir told the ministers on October 6, 1973: "We had a piece of information that war was due to start at six in the evening... Dado [Chief of Staff David Elazar] suggested [a preemptive strike] that could destroy [our enemies'] aerial array. Meanwhile we got an order [!!!] from the Americans not to start with that [preemptive strike]" (Diary of Eli Mizrachi, 1973, p. 9).
- d. At the government meeting on the morning of October 7, 1973, Meir hinted that she was not comfortable with the decision taken under American pressure to avoid a preemptive strike: Kissinger "is constantly informed about the military situation and also what our problems are. We never miss an opportunity to tell him again and again that if we were not such decent people, perhaps too decent, our situation would have been completely different. But we all

decided together [to avoid a preemptive strike]—at least there is the advantage that America is with us at present...and he [Kissinger] understands that and appreciates that” (Minutes of Government Meeting 5, 1973, pp. 3-4).

- e. At the government meeting on the evening of October 7, Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon said: “By not taking a preemptive initiative, at least we’ll have a political gain...and you know that the Americans very much wanted that we would not be the first” (Minutes of Government Meeting 6, 1973, p. 38).

In this context, consider the views of some researchers on the topic discussed above. Hagai Zoref and Meir Baumfeld reject the claim of a prior understanding between Israel and the United States about avoiding a preemptive strike (2022, p. 177). In their book *Golda Meir, the Fourth Prime Minister*, Hagai Zoref and Arnon Lamprom (2016) write: “Later Kissinger denied the charge that he pressured Israel to avoid a preemptive strike. However, the documents clearly show otherwise” (p. 513). William Burr, a senior researcher in the United States National Archive, reached a similar conclusion: “Kissinger has never acknowledged that he recommended against preemption, although his recent collection provides more confirming information on this point” (Burr, 2003).

Indeed, it is hard to understand what motivated such an experienced statesman with such a developed awareness of history, as Kissinger certainly was, to deny a well-documented historical fact so forcefully. He should have known that this would necessarily put him in the embarrassing position of someone not telling the truth. He certainly knew the realities of that times. Though we have no proof, we may assume that as a Jew who survived the Holocaust, he felt great sorrow over the heavy losses Israel sustained in that war. Perhaps he was experiencing doubts, and even pangs of conscience, whether his pressure on Israel to refrain from a preemptive strike was the right thing to do.

Who was Responsible for Thwarting Efforts to Reach a Settlement?

Kissinger’s remarks at the October 23 meeting suggest that most of the responsibility for the lack of a settlement with Egypt before the war lay with Israel. Kissinger reported at the meeting that he met Foreign Minister Abba Eban a few days before the outbreak of war to try and promote a peace process. According to Kissinger, Eban claimed “that there was no real need for a peace initiative...because the military situation was absolutely stable and could not be changed, and politically there was nothing to be gained by a peace offensive.” Kissinger said that he tried to persuade Eban of the necessity of a political initiative (Minutes, 1973).

Admittedly, in the circumstances prevailing before the war, Israel indeed had an interest in maintaining the status quo created after the Six Day War. The overall assessment was that Israel’s control of the territories conquered in 1967 significantly strengthened its strategic position, intensified its deterrent ability, and reduced the danger of war. The posters of the Alignment party for the elections scheduled for October 1973 gave visual expression to this view, showing an IDF soldier bathing in the Suez Canal, with the caption: “Our situation has never been better” (Tekuma, 1998).

However, at the official level, the leadership in Israel kept repeating that in the framework of a peace settlement, Israel would be ready to make territorial concessions, here and there even adding the words “painful concessions.” Overall, the nature and extent of these concessions remained amorphous. However, this readiness by the Meir-led government was never put to a real test prior to the Yom Kippur War. The Arab countries headed by Egypt, it was argued, used a variety of formulations, mostly vague, to explain the nature of the relations that would be created by a settlement (Vanetik & Shalom, 2021a).

At the same time, from the viewpoint of the Israeli government, the Egyptian government had never shown willingness to accept Israel’s

unequivocal demand—to institute a system of peaceful relations and normalization as was eventually agreed upon in the peace treaties a few years after the war. In September 1972, Meir said:

Israel will not return to the June 1967 borders, and neither will it agree to small territorial changes. The changes must be big...Sadat does not want peace...Sadat did not expel the Russians in order to pave the way for peace with Israel. In my opinion, Israel must wait quietly and let Sadat “stew in his own juices” until he makes his calculation and decides which way he wants to go. (Goldstein, 1972, p. 13)

Kissinger claimed that in the Yom Kippur War, Israel wanted to continue with the tactics it used in the Six Day War, under the mistaken assumption that what worked once would work again. It did not consider the possibility that the Arabs had learned to deal with these tactics.

In his remarks in the October 23, 1973 meeting, Kissinger chose not to criticize Egypt's opposition to Israel's basic request to carry out direct negotiations on a peace settlement with Israel. Nor did he even raise reservations on Egypt's positions, which seemed highly uncompromising to the Israeli leadership at that time. He also ignored the fact that the administration itself had reached the conclusion that there was no possibility of making progress toward a settlement before the elections in Israel, scheduled for October 1973. In other words, he ignored the fact that responsibility for the absence of a political process also lay with the US administration, and not only with Israel: “Impending Israeli elections have precluded any new initiatives and have led to a hardening of Israeli policy toward the occupied areas” (Paper prepared by the National Security Council staff, 1973).

His words in the meeting clearly create the impression that the main, or even sole, responsibility for the outbreak of war lay with Israel. It is impossible to escape the feeling that his words also indirectly imply that Israel “deserved” to pay the price for its stubbornness.

Why Israel Failed in the War

Kissinger claimed that in the Yom Kippur War, Israel wanted to continue with the tactics it used in the Six Day War, under the mistaken assumption that what worked once would work again. It did not consider the possibility that the Arabs had learned to deal with these tactics. This meant largely relying on anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, for which Israel had no effective response. In Kissinger's opinion, the Arabs had learned the lessons of the Six Day War better than the Israelis (“the Israelis continue to adopt the tactics of '67. The Arabs developed tactics to thwart the tactics of '67”) (Minutes, 1973).

Here again, Kissinger found it necessary to stress that Israel should have known that a preemptive strike would not change the situation since there were new dimensions to the war. The Arabs, Kissinger claims, had also demonstrated the good quality of its military leadership and better morale. This was shown in the way they did not surrender when Israel surrounded them (he was most likely referring to how the Third Army behaved when besieged by Israel) (Minutes, 1973).

Did the United States Want an Israeli Victory?

Kissinger was careful to avoid stating that the United States wanted Israel to win the war, though this could be expected from a partner to the so-called “special relationship,” which is often defined as a relationship between “allies.” Kissinger limited himself to emphasize that from the start of the war, it was clear that the administration “could not tolerate an Israeli defeat.” He did not clarify exactly what the

administration would do if the military situation would not be headed in this direction (Minutes, 1973). On the other hand, in a conversation with senior members of the administration, Kissinger also clarified that the United States did not want another “Arab debacle” (Memorandum of Conversation, 1973).

In this meeting, Kissinger allowed himself to admit frankly that emotional as well as personal considerations regarding Israel and historical contacts played a part in the administration’s decisions in the course of the war.⁵ However, when referring specifically to the issue of the airlift (discussed below), he stressed that in the end, global strategic considerations played a decisive role in the decisions made during the war. With specific reference to the airlift to Israel, Kissinger explained the strategic consideration that eventually led the administration to carry out the airlift: if another US ally [he apparently meant in addition to South Vietnam] were defeated by a country supported by the Soviet Union and equipped with Russian weapons, then the unavoidable lesson for many countries will be that perhaps they should rely increasingly on the Soviet Union and not on the United States. That would undermine America’s status in the Middle East in the eyes of its allies, such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and bolster the radical countries supported by the Soviet Union (Minutes, 1973).

In the intensive discussions between Israel and the US administration during the war on accelerating the airlift, ceasefire agreements that would end the war, agreements on a separation of forces, and the interim agreement with Egypt, the heads of the administration tended to stress the level of sacrifice for Israel involved in the decision regarding the airlift. The purpose of this tactic was of course to push Israel to agree to the administration’s demands as a “reward” for US activity on its behalf. It is not surprising that the strategic considerations that were dominant in the decisions regarding the airlift, as mentioned above, were played down (Shalom, 2017).

While stressing the need to support Israel at this tough time, Kissinger made it clear that the United States could not permit a situation in which its policy would be “hostage” to Israel, thus limiting its freedom of action:

Our interests, while parallel in respect to that I have outlined, are not identical in overall terms. From an Israeli point of view, it is no disaster to have the whole Arab world radicalized and anti-American, because this guarantees our continued support. From an American point of view, it is a disaster. And therefore throughout we went to extreme lengths to stay in close touch with all the key Arab participants... On the whole we kept the anti-Americanism in the Arab world, even though this war lasted much longer than the war in 1967, to a much lesser proportion than was the case in 1967. (Minutes, 1973)

The war had clearly changed the status of Israel in the eyes of the United States administration: Israel was regarded as a “preferred state,” a confidante of the United States, and an esteemed ally against its rivals. Yet after the war it was seen as a state whose strategic, political, and military weaknesses (notwithstanding its intelligence capabilities, which were the source of most of its glory) had been embarrassingly exposed. In other words, Israel’s status as a strategic asset for the United States suffered a severe blow as a result of the war. Meanwhile the United States labored to restore its relations with the Arab world. Israel was required to pay the price of realizing this goal. During the war, in the eyes of many Israelis, this American ambition was regarded as an effort to deny Israel the option of achieving an unequivocal victory and defeating the Egyptian army.⁶

The declining status of Israel as a result of the war was well reflected in a letter of October

21, 1973 from President Nixon to Prime Minister Meir. The President wrote that the matter at hand is a US-Soviet agreement on an immediate ceasefire: “Since the attack on your forces on October 6, we have worked tirelessly for an end to the fighting and bloodshed on terms that would enable you and your neighbors to make a new beginning towards peace.” After indicating the benefits of an agreement for Israel, the President clarified to the Prime Minister that he expected a prompt reply to this letter, a reply that would express “full support” for the actions of the United States. The letter was couched in polite terms, but in effect it left Israel no choice but to accept the administration’s dictates without delay (Letter from President Richard Nixon, 1973).⁷

The European Countries

In reference to the European countries, Kissinger expressed a very critical and even scathing opinion of their conduct during the war—although this position did not receive prominent public expression. Kissinger said that the Europeans “behaved like jackals. Their behavior was a total disgrace. They did everything to egg on the Arabs. They gave us no support when we needed it. They proclaimed loudly that the Russians had double-crossed us in the declaration of principles we had signed with the Russians,” and for them, this justified waiving the policy of détente. Yet they ignored the fact that they themselves had signed similar declarations of principles with the Russians. “Nor were they willing to have any joint moves in the United Nations” (Minutes, 1973).⁸

Kissinger explained that once this crisis was over, in another few days, it “will be absolutely imperative for us” to reassess “just where we are going in our relationship with our allies in Europe. We must also examine what exactly we mean when we speak about the indissolubility of our interests and the total indivisibility of our interests on all issues that are likely to come up” (Minutes, 1973).

The Role of the Soviet Union in the Operation

Kissinger believed that the Russians were not part of the belligerent initiative by Egypt and Syria (“the Soviets did not start it”). They most likely also assessed that the Arabs had no chance of defeating Israel. In the US estimation, said Kissinger, “the Soviets became aware of it around October 3—maybe a little earlier. But it gave them a massive problem, because if they told us and the Israelis pre-empted them, then they would not only have prevented the war, but they would have brought about the defeat of their friends” (Minutes, 1973).

Later, said Kissinger, the Russians began evacuating their personnel from Egypt and Syria. At the military level, the Russians maintained neutrality until the airlift began. Politically, said Kissinger, they pointedly avoided any critical attack on the United States. There was no direct criticism of the United States either in UN debates or in the Russian media, and the military actions of their forces did not feature the kind of provocation that occurred in the Six Day War in 1967 (Minutes, 1973).

At a later stage, there was a massive airlift to the region. Perhaps the Russians assessed that their (Arab) clients would lose and did not want to be blamed for this, or they were trying to generate any possible profit from the crisis by showing loyalty to their allies in the region. He rejected the suggestion that the US would terminate the détente and determined that it was the Soviet Union that initiated the events that eventually led to the war. In Kissinger’s view, the détente between the blocs did not interfere with the actions of the United States during the operation (Minutes, 1973).

The Airlift

In the early stages of the war, according to Kissinger, it appeared that Moscow was not eager to agree on a ceasefire. The situation on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts indicated that Israel was in a difficult position and that the Egyptian-Syrian attack would achieve

its objectives. The Soviet Union, therefore, believed that time was on its side and on the side of its allies. In these circumstances, the administration decided that it must find an alternate way of operating to show the Russians that the United States was also able to send an airlift to Israel, its ally in the Middle East ("We could match strategically anything they could put in the Middle East"), and these weapons would reach "more capable hands," i.e., the IDF (Minutes, 1973).

As a result, said Kissinger, the military picture would change and reflect Israel's superiority. This meant that it would be the Soviet Union asking for a ceasefire. That was the main reason why the United States began the airlift to Israel on Saturday, October 13, 1973 (actually October 14). Kissinger said that "having failed to bring the war to a conclusion by diplomatic methods, we concluded that the only way to end the war would be to demonstrate to the Soviets and to the Arabs that the war could not be won by military methods," and that the longer the war continued, the more likely it was that they would ask for a ceasefire" (Minutes, 1973).

Apart from that, Kissinger clarified, the administration estimated that the price the United States would have to pay to maintain relations with the Arab world would increase the longer the war continued. Thus, the administration wanted the fighting to end as quickly as possible. However, "we could not permit Israel to lose" the war, though it was clear that this was what would satisfy the Arabs and bring them to a ceasefire. Therefore, said Kissinger, the US decided to move massively and rapidly. "And this is what we did" (Minutes, 1973).

However, various documents indicate clearly that Kissinger's position on the issue of the airlift to Israel was rather ambivalent, at least in the early stages of the operation: in discussion with leading administration figures on October 9, 1973, Kissinger said explicitly that the administration had four options with respect to Israel's requests for arms: a) approve the requests; b) deny the requests; c) grant

Various documents indicate clearly that Kissinger's position on the issue of the airlift to Israel was rather ambivalent, at least in the early stages of the operation.

partial approval; d) blur the administration's position. Kissinger said that approving the requests would "immediately drive the Arabs wild" (Memorandum of Conversation, 1973a).

In another discussion of senior administration figures on October 13, 1973, on the subject of the airlift, Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements expressed his opinion that the United States should send a massive airlift to Israel. Kissinger had doubts about this position and claimed that it would mean that the United States would lose all its friends in the Arab world. At that discussion, Kissinger explained that Israel was requesting Hawk missiles. He had doubts whether the United States should approve this request. He argued that the United States could not risk losing its friends in Africa because of Israel. Those states were apparently also asking for Hawk missiles (Memorandum of Conversation, 1973b).

After the war, there were numerous critical allegations about Kissinger's actions with respect to Israel during the war. These claims made Kissinger's blood boil. At a personal meeting with Simcha Dinitz, Kissinger furiously refuted all the allegations: "The campaign against us in Israel and among Jewish organizations," he complained, "is completely out of control. How can they say I am struggling against an Israeli victory when we all know the details." Kissinger claimed that Ambassador Dinitz arrived in the United States on Sunday night (October 7). The talks about Israel's military needs began on Monday and Tuesday. On Wednesday, President Nixon approved the transfer of arms to Israel. Two and half days later, US planes bearing arms landed in Israel: Kissinger said there had never been such an achievement in history. "Nobody could have executed such a thing

so quickly. And all this when in the early days everyone was of the opinion that Israel could destroy the Arabs within a few days.” Dinitz rightly avoided challenging the Secretary of State by asking him the obvious question: why did the administration have to wait until Dinitz arrived in the United States? Why did they not initiate contact with the most senior ranks in Israel as soon as the fighting erupted to find out what they could do for Israel in its hour of need, as befitting relations between allies? (Dinitz Conversations, 1974, p. 10).

In an effort to shake off responsibility for the entrenchment of the status quo that led to war, Kissinger hinted that until the outbreak of war, Israel often threatened that excessively heavy pressure on it to join political moves, likely including territorial concessions, would lead to war with the Arabs.

The Profit and Loss Account

Later, said Kissinger, the military state of affairs turned drastically against the Arabs, and the Soviet Union faced a scenario that forced it to decide what it would do if Egypt and Syria faced total collapse. In this situation, said Kissinger, it was possible for the United States and the Soviet Union to reach a joint decision in the Security Council. Referring to the proposal at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on October 22, Prime Minister Meir stressed, “We are not the ones who asked for a ceasefire, and we did not ask anyone to seek a ceasefire on our behalf. There were very difficult and harsh days, but we did not go for this [a ceasefire request]” (Foreign Affairs & Defense Committee, 1973, p. 4).

“This,” according to Kissinger, was Security Council Resolution 338, which includes the following main clauses: a) a call to all the parties involved in the fighting to cease firing and end all military actions immediately, and no later than 12 hours after receiving this resolution, at the positions they currently hold; b) a call to

the parties concerned, immediately following the ceasefire, to start implementation of all parts of Security Council Resolution 242; c) a decision that immediately, and concurrently with the ceasefire, negotiations will begin with the parties involved, under suitable auspices, in order to bring about the sense of a just and sustainable peace in the Middle East (Backchannel Message, 1973).

Kissinger said that the fact that the proposed resolution was submitted jointly within a short time by the two powers resulted from the administration’s policy from the start of the crisis, which was designed to maintain a respectful dialogue with Russia. We never claimed, said Kissinger, “that we relied on good personal relations with the Soviet leaders. We have never believed that we could substitute charm for reality. All we have said is that we could add into the calculations of reality, as the Soviet leaders saw it, an element of their relationship with the United States to be used when objective conditions permitted it” (Minutes, 1973).

The proposed resolution, Kissinger clarified, stipulates a ceasefire at the current lines held by the forces. In effect, Israel now held more territory than it held before the war, due to its control of the west bank of the Canal. The Soviets had no strategic achievement, since Israel’s control of both banks of the Canal meant the Canal would not open for shipping without its consent. The resolution also stipulated implementation of Security Council Resolution 242, passed after the Six Day War, although he said that nobody knew what it really meant. The resolution required them to negotiate directly with Israel under suitable auspices, in effect, the United States and the Soviet Union. For many years, the Arabs refused to participate in direct talks with Israel (Minutes, 1973).

The Arabs scored one achievement in the war, said Kissinger: “respectability. They did not surrender. They fought effectively. And while they were defeated, they were not crushed.” But their main gain was to shatter Israel’s feeling

of superiority (“this cockiness of supremacy is no longer possible”). Like other countries in history, Israel now understood that it could achieve security only through a combination of military power and diplomacy (Minutes, 1973).

In Kissinger’s view, Israel had achieved the following: a) it “avoided the precipice”; b) it won yet another war, albeit at a heavy price; c) it obliged the Arabs to recognize the necessity of direct negotiations; d) its support from the United States received practical validation (Minutes, 1973).

In an effort to shake off responsibility for the entrenchment of the status quo that led to war, Kissinger hinted that until the outbreak of war, Israel often threatened that excessively heavy pressure on it to join political moves, likely including territorial concessions, would lead to war with the Arabs. And Israel assumed that in war, it would achieve a great victory, thanks to US weapons in its arsenal. The outcome of the war would certainly neutralize any political initiative. This concept, Kissinger argued, was no longer valid after the war. The Israelis now understood “that if they get into another war, they must do it with our enthusiastic backing, or they are lost” (Minutes, 1973).

Israel, said Kissinger, was in a state of enormous shock due to its heavy losses. It suffered 6,000 casualties, including 2,000 dead [the source of the figures in this context is not clear] in just two weeks, equivalent to 600,000 American casualties. “That is World War I type casualties. So it will take them a couple or three weeks to absorb the impact of what has happened to them. As far as Israel is concerned, we have to be taken even more seriously than we have been in the past. And our insistence on a more politically oriented policy cannot go unheeded” (Minutes, 1973).

The Soviets had no real achievements, said Kissinger. This is the third time since 1953 that they have lost the weapons they sent to Arab states; they have been defeated once again. Their only achievement was that they succeeded in limiting the extent of the disaster.

This situation gives the United States a chance to upgrade its status in the Middle East if it acts wisely and with discipline (Minutes, 1973).

The US situation vis-à-vis the Arabs, said Kissinger, is relatively simple. “We are besieged now with oil company executives who tell us that we have thrown away everything in the Arab world.” In the current circumstances, none of these allegations are very relevant. Even those who hate the US know very well “there is no way around us. If they want a settlement in the Middle East, it has to come through us. And that incidentally is the theme that I want us to adopt in a very friendly and conciliatory fashion; that it does not pay to antagonize us, that we cannot be pressured into doing things we do not want to do. So they better get us to want to do [things for] them” (Minutes, 1973).

“We will tell them that we are prepared to make a major contribution to remove the conditions that produced this war... But we will do it as an act of policy and not because somebody is blackmailing us.” The Arabs understand this, he said. Egypt stopped its propaganda against the US “because we told them the basic fact of the matter is that they would need us in the post-war diplomacy, and we would not play if they behaved in such a way. So I think now we have a good opportunity to try to move towards a fundamental settlement. We have the forum which was established by the Security Council resolution. We have the reality which was established by the war,” which is pushing the parties to move toward a settlement. Today, Israel captured more territory in Egypt. The Soviets and the Arabs are “screaming for another Security Council resolution” (Minutes, 1973).

Kissinger summed up by stating that overall, the events of the Yom Kippur War were a huge success for the United States, but that was not all. In his opinion, the events reflected the success of US policy toward the Soviet Union in the period prior to the war. Without the US success in building close relations with the Soviet Union, there would have been a great risk

of the war escalating into hostilities between the powers. He added, “Not that I am saying that the Soviet Union behaved in a friendly fashion, but that there was enough in the relationship to moderate them at critical points. Paradoxically, we are in a better long-term position in the Arab world than we had been before this started. And finally, we have a better position to bring about a permanent settlement than before” (Minutes, 1973).

Conclusion

The focus of this research is on two major aspects: civil-military relations in Israel and the relations between Israel and the United States.

In retrospect, it is impossible to judge if the decision by the Israeli leadership to avoid a preemptive strike was right or wrong. The Prime Minister and the Defense Minister had to take several critical factors into consideration, including relations with the Nixon administration; the commitments perhaps already made to the administration; the need to ensure United States support for Israel during the war and in its aftermath; and more. The political leaders were well aware of the advantages of a preemptive strike, but the political, economic, and military considerations led them to a solid rejection of the proposal by the Chief of Staff to undertake such a strike.

This decision making reflects proper relations between the political and the military echelons in a democratic state. The Chief of Staff can work to convince the political level to adopt his views and can even exert pressure on the political leaders through various channels. However, the military level is never privy to the wider considerations of the political level, and the last word belongs to the political leaders. These inviolable principles were dictated by the leaders who established the state, foremost among them David Ben Gurion, and were upheld firmly since independence was proclaimed in May 1948 (Shalom, 2022).

Since the end of the Yom Kippur War, dramatic changes have occurred in Israeli civil-

military relations. There has been an excessive enhancement of power at the military level and a concomitant decline in power at the political level. This development has led researchers in Israel to suggest that Israel has an army that has a state rather than—as should be the case—a state that has an army.

Indeed, recent months have seen these changes in civil-military relations reach unprecedented levels, with protests and demonstrations throughout the country against the government’s proposed judicial overhaul. As described by Kobi Michael (2023), “The IDF, against the wishes and not at the instigation of the top military leadership, but specifically because of the mishandling of developments within the military due to the political crisis, has become a political actor.”

The overall balance of the US administration’s conduct toward Israel in the various stages of the Yom Kippur War invites questions regarding the bilateral relations. In particular, it raises doubts regarding the common belief that Israel’s relations with the United States can be defined as a relationship between allies, even though there is no formal treaty between them. Over the years, several elements have been cited to justify this definition: a) shared values, above all, a commitment to democracy, freedom, and individual rights; b) a deep commitment by the United States to defend Israel’s right to exist as the state of the Jewish people; c) the commitment on both sides to fight the axes of evil and the supporters of terror in the international arena; d) close and extensive cooperation on matters of security intelligence and warfare against terror (Ben-Zvi, 1993).

The definition of an alliance between states is based first and foremost on a commitment by each to come to the aid of its ally, if and when the other side is attacked by another state. Over the years, Israeli leaders have stressed that Israel is determined to defend itself with its own forces and does not want direct US military involvement. In certain periods, Israel has weighed the option of a bilateral alliance

with the United States and membership in NATO (Shalom, 2005). However, the formulators of Israel's security policy were always concerned that such an alliance would severely limit Israel's freedom to maneuver and take the initiative against its enemies. Moreover, they have always stressed that such an alliance could not replace Israel's independent defense capabilities but only add to them. At the same time, Israeli leaders clarified that they presumed the United States would give Israel suitable tools for its defense and support it politically in order to provide a political base for its military achievements.

In the Yom Kippur War, Israel, a *prima facie* ally of the United States, was attacked by countries that were obviously supported by the Soviet Union, at that time the adversary of the US. In such circumstances, it appears that the US administration, while expressing support for Israel, acted in ways that seem incompatible with a relationship between allies:

- a. Especially in the critical initial stages, the administration turned a cold shoulder toward Israel. It did not initiate close contacts at the most senior levels in order to demonstrate its commitment and support of an ally at such a difficult time.
- b. It worked intensively, if not aggressively, to deny Israel the option of a preemptive strike. In the view of many in the political and military leadership, such a strike would have completely changed the face of the war and given Israel the chance of a dramatic victory.
- c. Finally, throughout the discussion, Kissinger made it very clear that the United States had no interest in an unequivocal Israeli victory and the defeat of its enemy, Egypt, as would have been expected from a close ally.

Hopefully Israel will never again find itself in such a terrible position as it was at the opening of the Yom Kippur War. However, current threats from Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, and other hostile elements compel it to recognize that a new dire scenario is quite possible. The Yom Kippur

War teaches that a country such as Israel must assume that even scenarios that it assesses are of very low probability may be realized. It is not impossible that a situation will arise when Israel finds itself in a military confrontation that would again require massive assistance from the United States. Israel must take into account that such assistance may not be forthcoming, certainly not at the time and to the extent that it would like. That Israel must be ready for the worst possible scenario and confront it with its own forces must continue to be the guiding directive for the Israeli leadership.

*

The author would like to thank the interns who assisting him in his research: Zhanyang Liu, Linor Gormezano, Shai Shoval, Amit Olami, Michal Bakshi, Sharon Melamed, Ignatius Rivas, Almog Alon, Neriya Gerafi, Sophia Schmidt, and Ben Zion Berkowitz.

Prof. Zaki Shalom is a senior researcher at INSS and a professor emeritus at Ben Gurion University. He has published numerous papers on various historical and contemporary aspects of Israel's security policy, the Arab-Israeli conflict, superpower involvement in the Middle East, Israel's fight against Islamic terror, and Israel's nuclear option. Prof. Shalom holds a doctorate from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Prominent among his books: *Between Dimona and Washington: The Struggle over the Development of Israel's Nuclear Option, 1960-1968* (2004); and *Fire in His Bones: David Ben-Gurion and his Struggle for the Country's Image, 1963-1967* (2004); in 2007, Prof. Shalom won the prize in memory of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion for this book. zakis@inss.org.il

References

- Agranat Committee. (1973, December 10). Abba Eban's testimony, Session no. 16, p. 20. The Yom Kippur War Center. <https://tinyurl.com/yey7xn54> [in Hebrew].
- Backchannel message from President Nixon to Egyptian President Sadat. (1973, October 23). Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973, note 3. *Office of the Historian*. <https://tinyurl.com/4xb2tn68>
- Ben-Zvi, A. (1993). *The United States and Israel: The limits of the special relationship*. Columbia University Press., pp. 1-27.

- Burr, W. (Ed.) (2003, October 7). *The October war and U.S. policy*, Documents 9, 10. National Security Archive. <https://tinyurl.com/5dp5uht8>
- Consultation with the Prime Minister, October 6, 1973, at 08.05 a.m. (1973). State Archive. <https://tinyurl.com/4hb5v68r> [in Hebrew].
- Diary of Eli Mizrahi (head of the Prime Minister's Office). (1973, October 6). State Archive. <https://bit.ly/3BhZaqE> [in Hebrew].
- Dinitz conversations. (1974). File 7051/15-A, State Archive. <https://tinyurl.com/8e3vvd6f> [in Hebrew].
- Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. (1973, October 22). Minutes no. 327. State Archive. <https://tinyurl.com/n6mpjemd> [in Hebrew].
- Goldstein, D. (1972, September 8). Golda Meir: I'm not listed in Dayan's plan or in Allon's plan, nor is there any Golda plan, but I have my principles for peace. *Maariv*. <https://tinyurl.com/528pjmfm> [in Hebrew].
- Goldstein, D. (1973, November 16). Interview of the week with Yaakov Shimshon Shapira, former Justice Minister. *Maariv*. <https://tinyurl.com/ywkjxpxf> [in Hebrew].
- Harvard University. (2012, April 11). A conversation with Henry Kissinger. [Video]. *YouTube*. <https://bit.ly/42Mul42>
- Kissinger, H. (1982). *Years of upheaval*. Little, Brown and Company. pp. 451-452.
- Kissinger, H. (2004). *Crisis: The anatomy of two major foreign policy crises*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks. pp. 14, 34.
- Letter from President Richard Nixon to Prime Minister Golda Meir (1973, October 21). State Archive. <https://tinyurl.com/4jj9mdnh>
- Meeting between Prime Minister Golda Meir and President Richard Nixon, on November 1, 1973. (1973) Material for reports: PM Golda Meir's visit to the US, p. 2. State Archive. <https://tinyurl.com/yupd66eb> [in Hebrew].
- Memorandum from William B. Quandt of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft). (1973, October 6). Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973, p. 287. *Office of the Historian*. <https://tinyurl.com/57s5xc6v>
- Memorandum of conversation. (1973a, October 9). Special WSAG—Principals only. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973. *Office of the Historian*. <https://tinyurl.com/3y6p8u7y>
- Memorandum of conversation. (1973b, October 13). Special WSAG—Principals only. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973. *Office of the Historian*. <https://tinyurl.com/3ddsemfj>
- Memorandum of conversation, Hafez Assad, President of Syria, and Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State. (1974, January 20). National Archives of the United States, NND009031
- Michael, K. (2023). A sea change and a slippery slope: When the military becomes a political actor. *INSS Insight*, 1710. <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/idf-politics/>
- Minutes of government meeting 5, October 7, 1973 (at 10:00). (1973). State Archive, p. 38. <https://tinyurl.com/bdrjxu3t> [in Hebrew].
- Minutes of government meeting 6, October 7, 1973 (at 21:00). (1973). State Archive, pp. 3-4. <https://tinyurl.com/bdrjxu3t> [in Hebrew].
- Minutes of government meeting 20, October 22, 1973 (at 22:00). (1973). State Archive. <https://tinyurl.com/4uravmah> [in Hebrew].
- Minutes of the Secretary of State's staff meeting. (1973, October 23). Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973. *Office of the Historian*. <https://tinyurl.com/3p8jefjb>
- Paper prepared by the National Security Council Staff. (1973, September 24). Middle East developments and the prospects for an Arab-Israeli settlement, p. 278. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973. *Office of the Historian*. <https://tinyurl.com/29a6ujp7>
- Shalom, Z. (2005). Israel and NATO: Opportunities and risks. *Strategic Assessment*, 7(4), 14-20. <https://tinyurl.com/mvrz5vsz>
- Shalom, Z. (2017). The first Yitzhak Rabin government and promoting the peace process: Interim agreement with Egypt. *Studies in the Revival of Israel*, 28, 44-83. <https://in.bgu.ac.il/bgi/iyunim/28/zs.pdf> [in Hebrew].
- Shalom, Z. (2022). Deliberations on the appointment of Moshe Dayan as chief of staff, November-December 1953: Background, processes, and lessons. *Yesodot*, 3, 254-255. <https://tinyurl.com/55dnds5k> [in Hebrew].
- Sheffer, G., Barak, O., & Oren, A. (Eds.). (2008). *An army with a state? A new look on civil-military relations in Israel*. Carmel [in Hebrew].
- Tekuma. (1998). Our situation has never been better: Israel between the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War (1967-1973). *Tekuma*, chapter 9. (Television video). Kan Archive. <https://tinyurl.com/82ak7rc4> [in Hebrew].
- Vanetik, B., & Shalom, Z. (2010). The role of the White House in subverting the partial settlement between Israel and Egypt in 1971. *Israel*, 17, 91-130. <https://tinyurl.com/yckdbpa7> [in Hebrew].
- Vanetik, B., & Shalom, Z. (2012a). *The Yom Kippur War: The war that could have been avoided: How the efforts to reach a political settlement before the Yom Kippur War were foiled*. Riesling [in Hebrew].
- Vanetik, B., & Shalom, Z. (2012b). The same lady in another guise: The meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and US President Richard Nixon, March 1, 1973. *Cathedra*, 146, 143-172. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23408809> [in Hebrew].
- Yom Kippur War Center. (2021a, February 19). Interview with Dr. Henry Kissinger for the Yom Kippur War Center Association [video]. *YouTube*. <https://tinyurl.com/yvyr5fxd>

Yom Kippur War Center (2021b, 18 May). Discourse of Yom Kippur War writers: Dr. Yigal Kipnis talks about his book 1973: *The way to war* [video]. YouTube. <https://tinyurl.com/4wc4ezps>

Zoref, H., & Boimfeld, M. (2022). “*The day will come when they open the archives*”: *The Golda Meir government and the Yom Kippur War*. Carmel, p. 177 [in Hebrew].

Zoref, H., & Lamprom, A. (Eds.). (2016). *Golda Meir, the fourth Prime Minister: Selected documents and introductions to chapters from her life (1898-1978)*, State Archive, p. 513. <https://tinyurl.com/44w3b3p6> [in Hebrew].

Notes

- 1 Kissinger noted that Sisco told him that Egypt and Syria were about to attack Israel. It happened about an hour and a half before the operation began. Israel estimated that firing would only start four hours later. See also Harvard University, 2012.
- 2 Present at the meeting: Kenneth Rush, Deputy Secretary of State from February 1973, Acting Secretary of State, September 3–September 22, 1973; Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs; David H. Popper, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, June 25, 1973–January 2, 1974; Thomas R. Pickering, Special Assistant to the Secretary and Executive Secretary of the Department; Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Executive Assistant to the Secretary of State from October 1973, member, National Security Council Staff from June 1973. For the views of various elements in the administration regarding the arrangement before the war, see Vanetik and Shalom (2010).
- 3 [Chief of Staff David Elazar said at the pre-dawn meeting on October 6](#) (p. 3): “A preventive strike could be launched at around 2-3 o’clock in the afternoon.” In May 1973 Commander of the Air Force Benny Peled referred to the option of a preventive strike, saying: “If we have grounds or the opportunity or the possibility of delivering a preemptive strike—the first consideration: to hit the Syrian and Egyptian air forces simultaneously, with the following division of force: hit and destroy most of the Egyptian Air Force’s airfields, and shut down and destroy all the Syrian Air Force’s airfields. After that we will attack the missiles to help the IDF.” See [presentation of aerial plans to the Minister of Defense, May 22, 1973](#), p. 4.
- 4 Foreign Minister Abba Eban confirmed this in his [speech to the UN General Assembly](#) on October 8, 1973: “The United States Ambassador was informed, several hours before the assault, that Israel would not take any pre-emptive action [and] would bear the sacrifice which that renunciation implied.” See also: Kissinger, 1982.
- 5 In his interview with Prof. Uri Bar-Yosef and Dr. Ronen Bergman about the Yom Kippur War, Kissinger reminded them that he comes from a German Jewish family that managed to flee Germany before the Holocaust (Yom Kippur War Center, 2021a).
- 6 On Israel’s status in the eyes of the administration before the war, see Vanetik and Shalom (2012b).
- 7 In fact, Israel’s response to the President’s letter included a demand for clarifications of various items, stressing the significance of various formulations in Israel’s eyes. See [Minutes of Government Meeting 20](#).
- 8 The Basic Principles of Relations Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics [was signed](#) (Note 12) by the two countries after the summit meeting between Presidents Nixon and Brezhnev on May 29, 1972.