



From “Shock and Awe” to Asymmetric Warfare in Modern Military Warfare

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Received: 6 June 2021 ▪ Accepted: 6 November 2021 ▪ Published Online: 16 November 2021

Abstract

This study aims to present the strategies from “Shock and Awe” to asymmetric warfare in modern military warfare. The main points in the article are: Introduction: The lessons of a war - The Yom Kippur War; In the years before the Yom Kippur War; After the Yom Kippur War, the American military understood that it had to focus on mobile and rapid warfare against regular armies, an issue that had been neglected over the past decade; The “Shock and Awe” battle strategy. In conclusion: a very important element for coping with asymmetric warfare is the psychological strength of the civilian population. As stated, one of the ways of warfare of the weak side against the strong side is the marking the psychological sensitivity of the civilian population of the strong side as a target. A psychological attack on the civilian population can manifest itself in the launching of missiles at it, the control of its information, the multiplicity of casualties of its soldiers and the sowing of a sense of frustration in it due to prolonged confrontation.

Keywords: Yom Kippur War, “Shock and Awe”, modern military warfare.

1. Introduction: The lessons of a war

The Yom Kippur War, also known as the October War (Hebrew: מלחמת יום הכיפורים), was a war waged by a coalition of Arab countries, led by Egypt and Syria, against Israel between 6 and 25 October 1973. It was fought mainly in the Sinai War. the peninsula and the Golan Heights, territories that have been under Israeli control since the 1967 Six-Day War. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat also wants to reopen the Suez Canal. The goal was not to destroy Israel, but the Israeli authorities could not be sure of that.

On 6 October 1973, the day Yom Kippur, Egypt and Syria invaded the state of Israel. The attackers are also supported by other Arab countries: Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

In this war, the Arabs attacked first. The Egyptians crossed the Israeli military line Bar-Lev on the Suez Canal. Israel did not expect an attack on two fronts (Egypt and Syria were

attacking at the same time), and this made it easier for the Arab allies at the beginning of the war. Egypt, on the other hand, is armed with surface-to-air missiles that help the Arab side repel Israeli airstrikes (the losses are so great that Prime Minister Golda Meir bans the use of aircraft). Egyptian soldiers are also armed with new weapons that hit ground targets, namely, new bazookas, which can be carried in small suitcases and assembled easily.

Israel seems to be pressed against the wall when the Arab command orders troops and missiles to enter the peninsula. Then the Israeli air force discovered a shortcoming of the Soviet missiles – they have a fixed head. Jewish planes began destroying missiles more easily and with significantly less damage.

Losses:

The losses on both sides are heavy. In the Golan Heights, the losses of the Syrians were 3,500 people, and of the Israelis – 722 people (they lost 1,150 tanks, Iraq lost more than 100 tanks, Jordan – 50 tanks). Israel lost 100 tanks to the Golan, and another 250 tanks were damaged.

The human losses of the Jewish state were 2,552 people.

2. In the years before the Yom Kippur War

In the years before the Yom Kippur War, the State of Israel waged three military campaigns – the War of Independence, the Sinai War, and the Six Days War. All three of these campaigns ended with a crushing Israeli military victory. It is possible certainly to say that, from the very fact that the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) “cleared the field in battle” in these military campaigns, the political leadership and the military leadership in Israel did not believe that Israel was facing an enemy that could present it with a military challenge.

These military campaigns caused the IDF to understand what its strengths were and what its weaknesses were. The IDF reached the conclusion that its strengths were its Intelligence, Armored Forces, and Air Force, so these three components were kept in high readiness for war. All the other components of military force (reserve forces, infantry, artillery, and so on) were kept at low readiness, from the fundamental assumption that it would take time to organize them for war. The IDF acted out of the assumption that the three strong components of force would succeed in halting and repelling the enemy in every possible attack.

What the IDF did not take into account, however, is that the Arabs also understood what the Israeli strong points are, and therefore they acted to develop military capabilities that would curb these strengths. They used deception exercises against the intelligence corps (such as: compartmentalization between different units in the army, frequent exercises of the military forces), and they bought anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles from the Russians (Sager, 2-SA, 3-SA).

After the war, it was not only Israel that learned lessons. The American military also commenced with a process of the learning of lessons and the building of a renewed force following the war. Why?

The reason was that the equipment of the Israeli military for the most part was American equipment while the equipment of the Arab militaries was Russian equipment. Furthermore, the Arabs used Russian combat tactics, which included use of Sager missiles in Sinai and massive tank attacks in the Golan Heights.

For the American military, the Yom Kippur War was a miniature version of war with the Soviet Union and the armies of the Warsaw Pact in Central Europe. They understood that the

same tactics that were used by the Arab armies in the Yom Kippur War would be used by the Russian army in a future war with the United States and NATO.

3. After the Yom Kippur War, the American military understood that it had to focus on mobile and rapid warfare against regular armies

It is important to remember that in those years the American army had completed a war of eight years in Vietnam, and there it focused on combat against guerilla armies. However, after the Yom Kippur War, the American military understood that it had to focus on mobile and rapid warfare against regular armies, an issue that had been neglected over the past decade.

While the American army was busy in Vietnam, the Russian army had greatly strengthened in Europe. In the framework of the military armament program, they accumulated a large number of tanks and upgraded their weapons. It is necessary to remember that in the past wars (until the 1970s of the 20th century), the American army had time to organize its fighters and the equipment at its disposal before it commenced the fighting on the battle field, and therefore the commanders of the American military understood that they could not withstand a rapid massive attack of the Russian army in Europe, similar to the attacks of the Syrian military in the Golan Heights.

Therefore, American generals such as William DePuy, who served as the aid of the Chief of Staff, and Donn Starry, who served as the commander of the United States Armored Army School, began to formulate a new military doctrine for rapid and mobile warfare.

One of the things that made DePuy special was the fact that he was a veteran of the invasion of Normandy and the fighting in France during World War II. During the war, he developed a professional respect for the ways in which the German army fought. Thus, one of the first things he did after 1973 was to identify the German military officers who fought on the Russian front and to share with them the ideas he attempted to develop.

In these meetings, DePuy attempted to integrate German combat methods into the combat doctrine of the American army. DePuy developed a method of fighting called “active defense”. In this framework, he understood that the Russian attack method would be a large and focused attack of tanks at certain places in Central Europe that enable large attacks of tanks that would include a regular flow of reinforcements to these weak points on the front line (reinforcement of success).

Hence, DePuy identified the places that would allow a large focused attack of tanks in Central Europe, concentrated there large NATO forces, and built combat tactics that included the infliction of losses on the armies of the Warsaw Pact with gradual retreat in stages and then the flow of reserve forces that would remove the enemy from the battlefield.

The American military practiced this method of combat during the 1980s in exercises it called “War Games”. However, during these exercises it encountered a problem. The forces of the Russian army and the Warsaw Pact in Eastern Europe were composed of two forces (called by the American military echelons): the first echelon was the forces of the Warsaw Pact (the satellite states of the Soviet Union) and the second echelon was the Soviet military.

The Russian strategy was that the first echelon would in essence serve as “cannon fodder”, namely, it would be totally destroyed but in the framework of its fight it would greatly weaken the forces of the NATO alliance. Then, the second echelon would come and completely destroy the American forces and the NATO armies and would gallop quickly through Western Europe until the channel in France.

In every exercise in which the Americans attempted this tactic they always ended the exercise with a nuclear attack on the power centers of the Warsaw Pact in Eastern Europe, in order to stop the second echelon. This is where Donn Starry came in. Starry invented a military combat tactic that includes cooperation between the air forces and land forces, which recalled the German combat tactic of the “Blitzkrieg”. This tactic was called ALB (Air-Land Battle), and it meant the cooperation between the forces of the air and the forces of the land. Starry thought of the idea of air assistance to the land forces because the commanders of the United States military deliberated the question of how to cope with the second echelon.

In addition, Starry understood that beyond the air assistance, the American military would need to base on advanced battle technologies, in order to help the American armament to be more precise in order to cope with the innovative weapons of the Russian that were discovered on the battlefields of the Yom Kippur War, such as Sager missiles and infra-red binoculars.

4. The “Shock and Awe” battle strategy

Starry’s understanding led the American army commanders to understand that it is necessary to think one step further and to formulate an attack strategy that would include the elimination of all the enemy infrastructures before the enemy manages to organize forces against the American army. This understanding led to the “Shock and Awe” battle strategy. This strategy states that if you can eliminate all the infrastructures, warfare, communications, command, and control, of the enemy already at the start of the combat, through the use of a “bank of targets” you can defeat the enemy rapidly, prevent the enemy from responding, bring the enemy to a situation of powerlessness, and avoid a prolonged conflict that can be harmful socially and politically to the American public.

This strategy was developed by the American army in the 1980s and implemented in the invasions of Granada and Panama and in the First Gulf War. The Arab world, mainly after the First Gulf War, attempted to develop a counter-strategy that would harm the weak points of the Western army.

Hence, the thinking of asymmetric warfare developed. This thinking is different from most of the military doctrines in that it does not aspire to eliminate the enemy but to cause the enemy to carry out the actions that your side wants. This perception drew considerably from the elements of the guerrilla strategy that the North Vietnamese used against the American military in the Vietnam War.

The first component in this doctrine is the component of defense. Namely, the component that thinks how to survive the attack of “Shock and Awe” that is expected to come on the government and military infrastructures from the enemy. The way to protect your side against the “Shock and Awe” attack is through the element of survival. Namely, the goal is not combat against the weapons of the enemy but first and foremost how to survive the first attack. The armies of the Middle East do this from the assumption that they do not have an effective way to stop the initial attack of the enemy that is far stronger than them. Thus, for example, Hezbollah interpreted its survival against the IDF attacks as victory during the Second Lebanon War.

The way to implement in the most effective way the element of survivability is through camouflage and movement of the weapons and personnel that use them. Camouflage of the enemy’s intelligence capabilities can be manifested in the concealment of weapons among the civilian population, in the use of international war laws that prohibit harm to civilians, concealment among vegetation, concealment of equipment between mountains and wadis, and so on. Movement (movement of weapons) can be expressed in the installation of wheels on

combat equipment, the placement of weapons on railway tracks, and so on. Thus, for example, the batteries of SA-6 and SA-15 are differentiated from older systems in the placement of the wheels on the anti-aircraft missile systems to make them more mobile.

The component of the attack with asymmetric warfare is differentiated from the components of the attack in other military doctrines in its objectives. The main objective is not to destroy the fighting capabilities of the enemy but to carry out the psychological attrition on soldiers, commanders and citizens of the enemy state. The main objective is to convey a feeling to the enemy that he cannot destroy you, even if he uses all the military powers at its disposal. The goal is to cause a situation in which he will prefer to stop fighting against you following a high level of frustration with the inability to destroy you.

The tactics are small guerilla attacks over a long period time against the enemy soldiers in order to create losses and psychological fear on the part of the enemy soldiers, the prevention of victory pictures and the multiplicity of the pictures of the funerals of the enemy soldiers, the adoption of a strategy of prolonged and unending conflict, and attacks on the enemy's rear to create civilian psychological attrition and ensure the independence of units (not to be dependent on commands from a command and control system assuming they are destroyed in the initial stage of combat) and to try to influence the enemy's public opinion to convince it of your position.

Defense

Survival – Movement & camouflage

Offense

Psychological Attrition

To know how to fight this new combat doctrine, it is necessary to improve the existing war doctrine carried out by the Western militaries. First, it is necessary to improve the intelligence abilities of the West. It is necessary to shift from the collection of intelligence on the enemy infrastructures to the collection of more individualized intelligence on the units of the enemy army on the individual level. This is because asymmetric warfare requires every soldier to inflict heavy losses on the enemy, even at the cost of his own life.

In addition, in order to avoid harm to the small units of the strong side by the small units of the weak side, the preferred method of combat to deal with asymmetric warfare is to move all the army forces together, with mutual cover, at a small pace.

In contrast to the perception of “Blitzkrieg” that encouraged the large movement of armored forces with the cover of the air forces, in order to attack and encircle the enemy and block his retreat, the most effective way to fight against asymmetric warfare is to move all the army forces together against the enemy when there is full cooperation between the various forces striving to fight as one body.

One of the means with which a weak side learned to use for its benefit to fight a strong side is the mass media. The weak side understood that with the media he can control the information leaving the battlefield and he can change the public opinion of the strong side in his favor. A prominent example of this is the Vietnam War. In this war, the Vietnamese calculated that if they had intelligence officers who would work as local correspondents for the American newspapers, they could filter the information leaving the war and present the United States army as “war criminals” and “baby killers”. While the American public primarily saw the damages of the American weaponry on the civilian Vietnamese population, it did not see the war crimes and massacres carried out by the North Vietnamese military and the Vietcong against the civilian Vietnamese population that objected to communism.

Therefore, a modern military must understand the importance of the reports in real-time from the battlefield in order to make certain that the civilian population in the country will receive the utmost information about the fighting. Today, using the Internet in general and the

social networks in particular, modern militaries are not dependent on the conventional means of media for reports from the fighting but rather have the possibility of documenting the fighting with the help of the fighters and bringing these documentations directly to the citizens of their country through the Internet and social networks.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, a very important element for coping with asymmetric warfare is the psychological strength of the civilian population. As stated, one of the ways of warfare of the weak side against the strong side is the marking the psychological sensitivity of the civilian population of the strong side as a target. A psychological attack on the civilian population can manifest itself in the launching of missiles at it, the control of its information, the multiplicity of casualties of its soldiers and the sowing of a sense of frustration in it due to prolonged confrontation.

Therefore, in a future war, strong Western armies will need to understand that military strength is not sufficient to defeat the enemy. It is also necessary to develop the mental strength of the civilian community. Since the citizens of the state who did not serve in the military in most Western countries are not accustomed to military coping, the government system needs to develop a feeling that will avoid the losses of people in a continuous conflict and even military-operative harm on the part of the enemy (such as, for example, surface-to-surface missiles) from psychologically influencing them and encouraging them to continue to support the fighting and not to protest against it in different civilian-democratic forums.

Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The authors declare no competing interests.

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