5-2009

David vs. Goliath: Offense-Defense Theory and Asymmetric Wars

Alexander Ely
College of William and Mary

Recommended Citation

Ely, Alexander, "David vs. Goliath: Offense-Defense Theory and Asymmetric Wars" (2009). *Undergraduate Honors Theses.* Paper 283.
https://scholarworks.wm.edu/honorstheses/283

David vs. Goliath:
Offense-Defense Theory and Asymmetric Wars

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in
Government from the College of William and Mary.

by

Alexander Ely

Williamsburg, VA
April 30, 2009

Accepted for Honors

Committee Members:

Amy Oakes
Dennis Smith
Christine Westberg

Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Historian and military strategist Carl von Clausewitz once wrote that a "war

between states of markedly unequal strength [is] absurd, and so impossible."[1] Yet wars

often do occur between states of markedly unequal power. More interesting, still, is that,

over the past two centuries, increasingly it has been the clearly *weaker* power that has

responsible for initiating the war. Since 1816, more than half the conflicts involving great

powers were initiated by a state that was weaker than the adversary it attacked.[2] In last

half century, these conflicts—including Egypt's attack against Israel in 1973; Uganda's

invasion of Tanzania in 1978; Argentina's attempt to reclaim the Falkland Islands from

the United Kingdom in 1982; Saddam Hussein's annexation of Kuwait in 1990;

Georgia's provocation of hostilities against Russia in the summer of 2008—have had

significant international repercussions. And these are but a few examples of the puzzling

international phenomenon of asymmetric wars initiated by weak states—what I term

"David and Goliath wars."

Why do states, knowing that they face an overwhelming disadvantage in arms,

personnel, or financial and industrial resources, provoke wars with powerful adversaries

with the intent of making gains, from enhancing their international reputation to annexing

a disputed territory?

The question is important to scholarship and policy makers for at least three

reasons. First, despite the frequency of these David and Goliath wars, they are

understudied and, indeed, are largely absent from the literature on the causes of war.

---

[1] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 33.
[2] Fischerkeller, Michael P. "David Versus Goliath: Cultural Judgments in Asymmetric Wars." *Security Studies*. Vol. 7, no. 4. June, 1998. P 1.

Second, the prevalence of this type of war seems is at odds with traditional realist theories of international relations. Faced with a powerful adversary, many realists predict that most states, acting in their own self-interest, will balance against threats by forming alliance with other states and increasing military spending to deter a conflict. Picking a fight – particularly with a state that could easily destroy the attacker in a full-scale war – is rarely wise (the exception being the preemptive use of force to gain a strategic advantage if conflict seems inevitable). Third, the issue is policy-relevant. In light of the frequency of these conflicts and the relative decline of great power war in the international system, it follows logically that the literature on the causes of war should shift to explain more prevalent forms of global conflict.

The existing literature on David and Goliath wars fails to provide a compelling argument for the causes of these conflicts for three reasons, which I address in this thesis. First, while many variables are said to explain David and Goliath wars, it is unclear which causes are most important, that is, which may be necessary and/or sufficient conditions. Second, the scholars have identified factors that make hostility more likely, but they cannot explain the timing of a decision to launch a war. In other words, the existing literature can, in certain cases, explain why a David state is predisposed toward conflict, but they cannot predict *when* the initial offensive will occur. Third, the existing literature does not identify and explain the tactical and strategic actions taken by David states to overcome the power gap between that state and its stronger adversary.

In addressing these shortcomings, I argue that offense-defense theory can be used to explain these wars. In particular, I argue that a state's perception of the dyadic offense-defense balance is a compelling explanation for why these wars occur, and most

importantly their timing. Perceptions of the offense-defense balance as being (even temporarily) in the weak state's advantage is hypothesized to be a necessary condition for David and Goliath war. I do not argue that variables identified by other authors -- including the importance of cultural assumptions, regime type, and expectations of great power assistance or neutrality – do not matter in particular cases, but rather this thesis identifies a key and necessary condition for the initiation of a David and Goliath War, arguing that regardless of other factors influencing a state's desire to change the status quo, no military action will be undertaken by weak states until they believe they have a favorable offense-defense balance. Additionally, perceptions of the offense-defense balance are the key explanatory variable for the tactics and strategies undertaken by weak states to create and maximize advantages over a more powerful adversary. My theory of David and Goliath wars, based on offense-defense theory, produces the following hypotheses:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Weaker states adopt strategies based on their perceived ability to conduct offensive operations cheaply against powerful adversaries.

> *Hypothesis 2:* Weak states will only attack powerful states if they believe they have a favorable offense-defense balance.

These hypotheses are tested using the method of comparative case studies. Each case study contains examples of previous crises in the dyad where war did not occur, thus allowing for a significant number of observations within each case. This method is consistent with contemporary qualitative research design in order to maximize the validity of the theory.

I test these hypotheses on two case studies: Egypt's incursion into the Sinai in 1973 that provoked a war with Israel, and Argentina's invasion of the British-owned

Falkland Islands in 1982, both of which involved long-standing disputes that were finally

settled by war. These case studies are appropriate for at least two reasons. First, with the

numerous theories that exist on the causes of war, detailed case studies provide the best

method to compare my chief variable – perception of the offense-defense balance – with

the variables of other theorists. Second, in all three cases, crises in previous years nearly

led to war, which gives us an opportunity to explore why some crises did not escalate

while others resulted in a war. I argue that David states wait until they believe the

offense-defense balance is favorable and then attack. Additionally, these cases have been

tested before using past theories, which will allow me to compare my findings with those

of other authors.

The in-depth analysis of these two case studies supports my argument that the

perceived dyadic offense-defense balance is key to understanding the timing of David

and Goliath wars. In the case of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the case study shows that

Egypt – despite its inferiority in arms, troops and industrial output – believed that it could

successfully conduct offensive operations against the Israelis by developing tactics based

off of Cairo's perceptions of the offense-defense balance. I find that in the run-up to the

war Egypt devised a new strategy using weapons systems, including deploying defensive

weapons for offensive purposes, to shift the offense-defense balance in their favor. I also

find that that geography was a major factor in determining the timing of the Egyptian

offensive across the Suez Canal, as they studied tide and weather patterns and used water

cannons to eliminate the effectiveness of sand barriers that the Israelis had built for their

defenses. These tactical innovations allowed the Egyptians to cross geographic barriers

once deemed insurmountable and achieve early successes against Israel's superior army.

Competing explanations are also examined, and I demonstrate that these variables, such as domestic pressure by Egyptians angry with Israel's occupation of the Sinai Peninsula, contributed to Egypt's underlying desire for war but do not explain the timing of the war.

In the second case study on the Falklands/Malvinas War, my research shows that offense-defense balance theory explains two key facets of the conflict. First, it explains why the Argentine junta planned to retake the Falkland Islands from Great Britain in the southern hemispheric winter months of June and July. I hypothesis that states make military policy choices based off the whether they believe conquest will be easy. And, in this case, the junta knew that the winter weather and oceanic conditions would make a British response impossible, shifting the balance in Argentina's favor. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's decision to withdraw London's main naval presence in the region also factored in to Argentine decision-making because they believed that Great Britain was losing interest and would have no way of generating a quick response. Second, the theory can explain why the junta ultimate chose to forego its original plans and seize the islands in April, several months early. The junta received intelligence, which led them to believe that a British naval force was on its way to the South Atlantic. If the junta did not act quickly, the offense-defense balance would again shift away from Argentina. The results also show that regime insecurity, and domestic unrest at home, were necessary conditions for war and served as an additional trigger for the junta's decision because the generals believed they would be overthrown if they waited.

The thesis contributes to the existing literature by showing a causal link between the independent variable – favorable perceptions of the offense-defense balance – and the dependent variable – war initiation. It explains that while other factors matter, a favorable

offense-defense balance is a necessary condition for war. The findings effectively reinforce the importance of military technology and geography in state strategic calculations, and concludes that even when one state is far superior to another in terms of military might and personnel, the offense-defense balance can still favor a weaker power. Later in the thesis, I explain the policy implications for the study, showing that the theory allows scholars and decision-makers to better predict the behavior of weaker powers in international crises, in particular the timing at which David States are most likely to launch wars.

My thesis has four chapters which follow this introduction. First, I review the existing literature on the causes of David and Goliath Wars and discuss its limitations. I present my theory, explaining how it deviates from orthodox offense-defense theory. I discuss how the two variables that shape perceptions of the offense-defense balance – military technology and geography – are operationalized, I emphasize the critical role that perceptions of the balance play in state decision making and policy formation. I conclude with a note on methodology and case selection. In the next two chapters, I present two case studies of interstate disputes that resulted in David and Goliath Wars: The Yom Kippur War and the Falklands War. In the final chapter--the conclusion--I present the findings from my case studies and reflect on the usefulness of the dyadic offense-defense balance for predicting future David and Goliath wars. I also discuss the implications of my findings for policy-makers. Lastly, I present suggestions for further research and analysis.

Chapter II

Explaining David and Goliath Wars

In August of 2008, war broke out in the Caucasus between Georgia and Russia. While the international community and the western media blamed Russia for bullying its weaker neighbor, many observers – even Georgians – now have a somewhat different idea, namely that Georgia had started the conflict against a powerful adversary, based largely on misperception. "It was possible to avoid this war," said Nino Burjanadze, a former political ally of Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili who formed an opposition party in the wake of the catastrophe. "Because of miscalculation, my country was involved in a war it was clear that it would lose."[3] This kind of conflict is far from unusual. The South Ossetian War is just the most recent example of David and Goliath wars – asymmetric wars between states where the minor power is the aggressor.

The question asked by many observers following Georgia's initial assault on South Ossetia was: why? Georgia's decision to provoke a conflict with its powerful neighbor led to a loss of control over valuable oil pipelines and jeopardized its relationship with the West. Georgia's defeat demonstrates that picking a fight with a stronger power is often a costly mistake. This leads one to ask why weak states ever initiate wars against stronger adversaries when the potential losses are so great. What explains the outbreak of David and Goliath wars?

David and Goliath Wars are an interesting puzzle of international relations. Not only are they understudied, but they seem to contradict much of what students of international relations are taught. Realist international relations theory hold that states act

---

[3] Kristof, Nicholas. "Obama, Misha and the Bear." *New York Times*. Nov. 20, 2008.

rationally and in their own self-interest.[4] In an anarchic international system, states make decisions, adopt military postures, maintain or disrupt the status quo, all in the name of their own national interest. In choosing peace or war against a vastly stronger opponent, according to realists, states will choose peace in order to ensure the survival of the state. Why would it ever be rational to attack a state that was superior militarily, aside from a preemptive, "fight or die" situation where an attack by the stronger adversary was imminent? Why would a David state ever launch such a war with the principal purpose of making gains? Many of the 20th century wars instigated by weak states involved a belligerent that would not only beat the weaker, attacking state, but would destroy them in a battle of conventional forces.[5] What explains the prevalence of these conflicts, and what factors contribute to a weak state's decision to attack a stronger foe?

The existing research on the subject of David and Goliath wars is limited and suffers from three key problems. First, while many variables are said to explain David and Goliath wars, it is unclear which causes are most important, that is, which may be necessary and/or sufficient conditions for a state to launch an attack against another. Second, the scholars have identified factors that may make David and Goliath wars more likely, but they cannot explain why some crises result in war while others do not . In other words, the existing literature can, in certain cases, explain why a David state is predisposed toward conflict, but they cannot explain the timing of the initial offensive. Third, the existing literature has overlooked the tactical and strategic actions taken by

---

[4] Here, we are generally referring to realist theories of international relations. The chief architect of the theory of the state as a rational actor is Hans J. Morgenthau. For more details, see *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, originally published in 1948.

[5] For example: Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982, Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, and Egypt's attack on Israel during the Yom Kippur War in 1973.

David states to overcome the power gap between that state and its stronger adversary. Each of these will be discussed in greater depth below.

My objective in this thesis is to address these existing limitations. The existing literature provides causal variables which are neither necessary nor sufficient to explain the timing of attacks, and I argue that by modifying offense-defense theory one can predict the timing of David and Goliath Wars. The theory I advance explains how perceptions of technological and geographic factors involved in a state's relationship with an adversary contributes to David state decision-making. Lastly, this theory is more policy-prescriptive than its competitors. Based on the results of the research, it becomes easier to observe and analyze state behavior. It also has strong implications for predicting future conflicts, as a clear pattern emerges which details the various points along the continuum from when a state desires a change in the status quo to when the state actually opts for a military policy.

This chapter has five sections. In the first section, I review the scholarly debates on the causes of David and Goliath Wars and identify the importance of this study to scholarship and the policy community. Second, I offer a brief discussion and critique of orthodox offense-defense theory. In the third section, I propose modifications to offense-defense theory that will enhance its usefulness for explaining the causes of David and Goliath wars. Fourth, I present hypotheses derived from offense-defense theory's two principal variables – military technology and geography – and postulate that states' perceptions of these two factors influence when weak states will initiate an asymmetric war. Finally, I conclude with a note on methodology and research design.

Identifying David and Goliath Wars

This study considers David and Goliath wars, that is, interstate wars launched by a weaker power, where the use of force is "explicit, overt, non-accidental, and government sanctioned."[6] The key requirement is "government sanctioned," as I will not consider asymmetric conflicts involving terrorist groups or wars where a non-state actor is one of the principal belligerents.[7] David and Goliath wars are cases where one state possesses overwhelming superiority in armaments, troop levels, or economic and monetary resources that allow it to adopt postures or tactics that the other state cannot. The asymmetry is usually self-evident, such as in the conflicts between great powers like the United States, Russia and Britain against weaker foes like Georgia, Iraq, Argentina, and others. For the purposes of this study, a conflict is deemed to be asymmetric if one state possesses conventional forces at a ratio of 2:1 to its adversary, which is the measure that has been used in previous works on the subject.[8]

In many ways David and Goliath wars are more puzzling than decisions by non-state actors such as terrorist groups to attack powerful states using asymmetric tactics. Terrorist groups and other non-state actors have no concerns over state accountability, while the governments of David states do. Military action undertaken against a powerful adversary will generally prompt intense retaliation from the Goliath state, therefore making the weaker state's aggressive policy all the more counterintuitive. While the theory will not necessarily explain the behavior of non-state actors, it may offer some

---

[6] Charles S. Gochman and Zeev Maoz, "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1916-1976," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 28, no. 4 (December 1984) p. 587.
[7] It is important to note again that while this does not include terrorism and similar international phenomena, the results of the study may have implications for policy-makers dealing in these areas as well.
[8] See Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, 36.

insights into their decisions since non-state actors seeking to change the status quo also encounter obstacles in powerful states. I will revisit this possibility in the conclusion.

Acts of Suicide? War-making by Weak States

David and Goliath wars have received scant attention from scholars, and there are only two noteworthy works directly addressing this question. T.V. Paul's groundbreaking study *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* first tackled the phenomenon of a clearly weaker state attacking a vastly stronger one. Paul's main argument is that weak states that believe they can successfully adopt a limited aims/fait accompli strategy may instigate a David and Goliath War.[9] A fait accompli, in strategic terms, is a quick action undertaken by one state that is completed before the target state can react. An example might be a swift strike to seize an island or a small part of an opponent's territory. A limited aims strategy is a related tactic, in which a state uses force but does not expect a full-scale, winner-take-all war that concludes with the destruction of one army or the surrender of the state. Rather these are short conflicts that are resolve before the enemy's overall military superiority can be fully exploited, often ending with a ceasefire brokered by a great power or United Nations intervention. Paul argues that if decision-makers in a weak state expect a limited war, the "superior aggregate military and economic power of the defender need not deter a challenger."[10] In short, if David can avoid a war of attrition against Goliath, Goliath's materiel and troop advantages may be moot.

---

[9] Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, 35.
[10] Ibid.

Paul also cites additional variables that may also influence the decision-making of weaker states. The first such variable is whether the David state has an alliance with a great power: the expectation of great power support or neutrality can cause a state to discount its adversary's superiority. An example is China's intervention in the Korean War against the United States/United Nations joint forces in the belief that the Soviet Union would come to their aid. A second is regime insecurity or militancy. Domestic pressures, such as economic troubles or the presence of a particularly militant regime, can lead a state's leaders to choose a bellicose policy Lastly, the possession of short-term offensive weapons, such as highly-mobile tanks or technically advanced fighter planes, can lead a state to believe it has temporary advantage because it can accomplish limited goals quickly, even if its overall weapons arsenal is much smaller than its enemy's. Any of these variables, Paul contends, may reduce Goliath's ability to deter David from attacking either by pressuring the weaker state to adopt a military policy (generally domestic factors) or convincing it that it will might win if it does (alliance patterns and offensive weapons).

Paul's argument about the importance of a limited aims/fait accompli strategy to the outbreak of David and Goliath Wars is compelling: it seems plausible that David states will believe the war is winnable when they provoke the conflict under these conditions, even if they have fewer material capabilities. However, the real question is why David states come to adopt fait accompli strategies. Which factors cause a state to believe that a limited aims/fait accompli strategy will be effective? Is it simply the only military option available, or is it more attractive to weaker actors because they have more

to lose in a larger war? Further, what explains the specific strategies and tactics that states adopt in their pursuit of limited aims?

An additional limitation of Paul's argument is his claim that a range of variables "mattered" in different cases, a more useful theory of David and Goliath wars will specify whether these are necessary or sufficient conditions for militarized conflict. For example, is the expectation of great power intervention enough for a state to discount its disadvantages in materiel and troops? If not, then Paul must be able to identify *when* each variable is important and even how these variables might *interact* under various circumstances to make these wars even more likely. As he himself writes, "although the arrival of particular conditions and factors is hypothesized to have resulted in wars, the sheer presence of these factors is not sufficient to explain war initiation in all historical contexts."[11] The variables, in short, appear to be background factors that, under certain conditions, will mix in such a way where they may cause a state to go to war. It remains unclear, however, what this mixture is.

A final difficulty with Paul's theory is that it cannot predict the timing of the outbreak of war. Paul's four variables contribute to the climate of tension preceding a war, but they do not explain the *timing* of the decision to use force.

The other major study in this research program is Michael P. Fischerkeller's article, "David Versus Goliath: Cultural Judgments in Asymmetric Wars." Fischerkeller argues that the belief that an adversary is culturally inferior may explain why weaker powers launch wars against powerful adversaries. More specifically, a David state may ignore the obvious advantages in arms enjoyed by another state, if they view the stronger opponent as culturally inferior; that is, if they believe an adversary is less capable of

---

[11] Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, 23.

fighting because of certain perceived innate flaws. Cultural judgments can lead states to discount intelligence on the quantitative capabilities of its adversary, causing the David state to adopt a more aggressive policy than it might otherwise. Fischerkeller concedes that cultural judgments are unlikely to be the most important factor in the decision-making calculations of the weak state. He simply argues that they "matter."

This explanation does highlight the fact that many David and Goliath wars result from long-standing conflicts between states that often harbor deep resentments toward one another (e.g. India-Pakistan, Arab-Israeli conflicts, etc.). But the explanation, as Fischerkeller admits, is not a sufficient condition for war. He writes: "these hypotheses do not make direct causal claims between the effect of cultural judgments on assessments and the adoption of a strategy."[12] Thus, cultural assumptions may play a role in some cases, and may even be necessary conditions in others—but the cultural judgments argument does not fully explain why weak states attack strong states. Many of the asymmetric conflicts of the 20th century involved states that had deep-rooted cultural differences, but in most cases these negative cultural assumptions were always present while war was not.

For Fischerkeller, explaining the timing of a decision to use force is again a problem. Since he does not argue that there is necessarily a causal link between cultural judgments and war initiation, one can really only view the cultural variable as a background condition that may influence a state's assessment of an adversary's capabilities, but cannot explain timing because when it does exist, it is a constant. Furthermore, a brief examination of David and Goliath Wars over the past two centuries showed that while some conflicts were marked be cultural antagonism on one side or the

---

[12] Fischerkeller, "Cultural Judgments and Asymmetric Wars," 11.

other, or both, not all cases have been. A more concrete and broadly applicable explanation is thus necessary.

In sum, the existing literature fails to explain two phenomena related to the outbreak of David and Goliath wars. First, the literature does not identify which conditions are necessary and/or sufficient for a David state to choose war with Goliath? If the four variables outlined by Paul are not enough or required to cause a David state to choose a military policy, what variables have been overlooked? Second, the extant literature does not identify the factors that *trigger* the outbreak of conflict.

Filling the Gap: Offense-defense Balance Theory

The goal of this study is to provide a better explanation for David and Goliath wars using a variation of offense-defense theory.[13] I argue that a weak state's rationale for attacking a stronger adversary lies in a decision maker's perceived ability to conduct offensive operations cheaply. This belief, I argue, is formed by the David state's views of the offense-defense balance between the two states. In other words, it is David's perceptions of its strategic position relative to Goliath, based on the perceived state of military technology and geography, which causes it to adopt an offensive military doctrine. Before explaining how I operationalize the balance, I first briefly review orthodox defense-defense theory.

The offense-defense balance (ODB) was introduced in Robert Jervis's seminal article "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," where he argues that during periods

---

[13] For a good review of the variations of offense-defense theory, see Gortzak et al. "Offense-defense Theory: An Empirical Assessment." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. February, 2005. Also see: Biddle, Stephen. "Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-defense Theory." *The Journal of Politics.* Vol. 63, No.3. August 2001.

when offense has the advantage in the international system, conquest and attack will be

more likely and the security dilemma will be exacerbated.[14] If the balance favors the

defense, then the security dilemma will be eased, and war and conflict in the international

system will be less likely. The "relative ease of attack and defense," as some authors have

conceptualized the ODB, is determined by the aggregation of military technology and

whether the technological advantage lies with the offense (generally characterized by

high mobility and maneuverability) or the defense (firepower).[15] It was assumed that

individual weapons are inherently offensive (e.g., tanks and other heavily armored

vehicles) or defensive (e.g., trenches, barbed wire, machine guns).[16]

The original theory was intended to explain arms races and great power war, but

offense-defense theory has been used to explain many other phenomena,[17] such as ethnic

conflict,[18] the formation of alliance patterns in the international system,[19] as well as the

duration and severity of warfare.[20] Stephen Biddle argues that its widespread use is

driven by its intuitive appeal: "it makes that the military prospects for attack ought to

affect the likelihood of aggression or that arms races should be more intense when

technology is better suited for attack than defense."[21] Orthodox offense-defense theory

has a number of critics however, and the validity and usefulness of the systemic offense-

---

[14] Jervis, Robert. "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics,* Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1978).

[15] Biddle, Stephen. "Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-defense Theory." *The Journal of Politics.* August, 2001.

[16] Biddle, "Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-defense Theory," P. 745.

[17] George W. Downs, David M. Rocke and Randolph Siverson, "Cooperation and Arms Races." *World Politics*, Vol. 38 (1985), pp. 118-145.

[18] Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict." *Survival* 35(1):27-57.

[19] Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987).

[20] See, for example: Stephen Van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War," *International Security,* Vol. 22, No. 4 (Spring 1998), pp. 5-43. Also see Ted Hopf, "Polarity, the Offense-defense Balance, and War" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (June 1991), pp. 475-492.

[21] Biddle, "Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-defense Theory," p. 742.

defense balance remain questionable. This study adopts certain features of offense-defense theory and amends others in ways that I explain below.

My thesis departs from conventional offense-defense theory in two ways. First, I argue that conventional offense-defense theory conceives of the balance at the wrong level of analysis. In this study, I modify the theory to focus on the dyadic offense-defense balance. Second, I argue that the balance is a function of the *perceptions* of the two states involved, and that one state may view the balance differently than its adversary—and the actual offense-defense balance. I argue that the balance is subjective rather than objective. Finally, I contend that David states consider more than just the relative capabilities of weapons systems – the totality of their state's arsenal and resources relative to the target– when deciding whether they can conduct offensive operations cheaply against a stronger adversary. A David state is particularly likely to go to war if it believes that it has discovered new tactics will enable it to overcome an unfavorable dyadic offense-defense balance. A discussion of these two modifications follows.

Levels of Analysis

Past scholarship has conceived the offense-defense balance as a systemic variable. Its proponents generally argue that certain time periods in history were objectively either offense or defense-dominant.[22] Based on the type of technologies that were available at certain moments in time, proponents argue, one can determine whether offense or defense had the advantage during various historical windows. As a consequence, we should

---

[22] A good summary table of the historical findings of various scholars can be found in Yoav Gortzak, Yoram Z. Haftel and Kevin Sweeney, "Offense-defense Theory. An empirical assessment," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 49, No. 1, February 2005, p. 87.

observe an increase in warfare and conquest when offense has the advantage, and a decrease when defense does.

The evidence supporting this view, however, is scant, as Gortzak et al. find in their large-N analysis of historical times windows and the prevalence of conflict. They argue that the frequency of global conflict cannot be sufficiently explained by the systemic offense-defense balance.[23] Biddle similarly argues that because force employment – how troops and materiel are used – is an essential component of the balance and it varies from state to state, the balance cannot be systemic; no two wars or interstate relationships are exactly the same.[24] "Though the offense-defense balance matters," he argues, "there is no single, prevailing balance presenting all states at a given time with comparable incentives to attack, to race, or to ally."[25]

Gortzak, et al. suggest that "dyadic offense-defense balances, or the perceptions thereof, may help explain when and why states decide to initiate violent conflicts with particular adversaries."[26] I argue that this is, in fact, the case, and it is particularly true of David and Goliath wars. The balance between David and Goliath is clearly lopsided, making the systemic version of offense-defense theory inapplicable. The systemic ODB measures the state of the art in military technology, capabilities which are generally only available to great powers—and not to weak states. Thus, it makes little difference whether attack or defense happens to be favored *in the international system* because Goliath will most likely defeat David if they wage a full-scale war. If the systemic ODB

---

[23] Gortzak, Haftel and Sweeney. "Offense-defense Theory: An Empirical Assessment," p. 85

[24] Biddle, "Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-defense Theory," 473; Glaser and Kauffman argue that the offense-defense balance should be measured as the ratio of the cost of forces that a state requires to seize territory to the defender's forces. This ratio clearly varies between dyads. See Charles Glaser and Chaim Kauffman, "What is the Offense-Defense Balance and How Can We Measure It?" *International Security* 22(4): 46.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Gortzak, Haftel and Sweeney, "Offense-defense Theory: An Empirical Assessment," p. 86.

is inapposite, then we must look to the state level, where each dyad exhibits its own military (im)balance.[27] It is the dyadic ODB that prompts David to attack Goliath.

Perceptions of the Offense-Defense Balance and the Importance of Tactics

Proponents of orthodox offense-defense theory also assume that individual weapons are inherently offensive or defensive. Stephen Van Evera argues, for example, World War I was fought with primarily defensive weapons – rapid-fire machine guns, barbed wire, and trenches[28] – although it took military leaders on both sides several years to learn this, which explains the repeated frontal assaults and failed offensives that produced so many casualties on the Western Front. On the other side of the coin, the rapid mobility of tanks, coupled with their thick armor, make them a primarily offensive weapon, as illustrated by German blitzkrieg strategy during the early years of the Second World War.

But even these classic cases are problematic. For example, it was not simply the tank column that overran the Low Countries and France during World War II, but how the tank was used, and how the defending forces failed to adapt their strategy to meet the changing nature of warfare. Thus, many scholars now embrace the idea that there is no inherent offense-defense dominance based on technology alone, but rather that doctrine and strategy determine this advantage. States do not fight wars with one or two weapons; rather, they employ entire weapons systems, consisting of air, sea and land-power, in

---

[27] One noteworthy work by Stephen Biddle ("Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-defense Theory," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 63, No 6, August 2001) approaches the balance from the dyadic level. However, Biddle's key thesis centers on "force employment" and the usage of materiel by the two sides. While there are certain parallels between his theory and my approach, he dismisses technology's traditional importance and uses combat outcomes as a dependent variable. The dyadic ODB approach argues for war initiation as a dependent variable and shows that technology is still of chief importance in D&G wars.

[28] Stephen Van Evera. "Taking Offense at Offense-defense Theory," *International Security*, Vol. 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998/99), 195.

ways that *strategists* believe will work to the state's advantage. Bernard Finel calls this an "interaction effect," arguing that battle-systems depend on "employment strategies, doctrine, training and tactics."[29] Which is to say that weapons alone do not fight or launch wars – leaders planning their use do. At the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, Henry V was able to defeat a much larger French army by using longbow archers at great distance, and by drawing the heavily armored French infantry and cavalry into the muddy terrain in between the two armies.

This observation is particularly important for this study because the more powerful state, by definition, always has the advantage in arms over the weaker adversary. It does not matter how many "offensive" or "defensive" weapons the David state has because, in a full-scale conflict, they likely will not be enough. Weaker states in particular then must focus on what strategy, perhaps even employing what are generally considered to be defensive weapons for offensive purposes, or vice versa, will enable them to overcome the advantages enjoyed by the stronger adversary. These states may have to develop creative strategies for conducting offensive operations because they simply have no choice.[30]

In sum, David states choose the moment to initiate war with Goliath based on perceptions of the dyadic offense-defense balance, and their ability to overcome an unfavorable balance through new tactics. The timing of offensive operations can be explained by these same perceptions, making David and Goliath Wars easier to both explain in hindsight and predict for the future. The following section explains the theory advanced in this thesis and the specific hypotheses generated.

---

[29] Bernard Finel. "Taking Offense at Offense-defense Theory," *International Security*, Vol. 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998/99), p. 183.
[30] For an in-depth analysis see the later chapter on the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

However, the strong state may also have veto power over the weaker state's ability to exploit a favorable offense-defense balance. In other words, if a strong state realizes that the weaker state is adopting strategies or acquiring weaponry to shift the offense-defense balance in their favor, stronger states may shift their strategies to counter-balance against the threat. Thus, what is important is the strategic interactions between the David and Goliath states, and the perceptions of the ODB in the Goliath state may be just as important as those of the David state.

The Dyadic Offense-Defense Balance: Theory and Hypotheses

I argue that the perceived dyadic offense-defense balance can explain *when* weaker states attack stronger powers.[31] The principal hypothesis of this thesis is that when geographic and technological factors converge such that the David state believes it has a favorable offense-defense balance, the state will be more likely to initiate a war—assuming David has a desire to change the status quo and believes that it can make tactical or strategic choices which exploit its favorable balance at the expense of the more powerful state. On the other hand, if the weak state does not perceive a favorable offense-defense balance or has no desire to change the status quo, we should not expect to see a war. Additionally, if the strong state correctly perceives the offense-defense balance, we should expect the weak state to refrain from initiating a war. (see Figure 1 below).

---

[31] For the remainder of this paper, unless otherwise noted, the offense-defense balance refers to the dyadic relationship.

Figure 1: The Perceived Dyadic Offense-Defense Balance and War
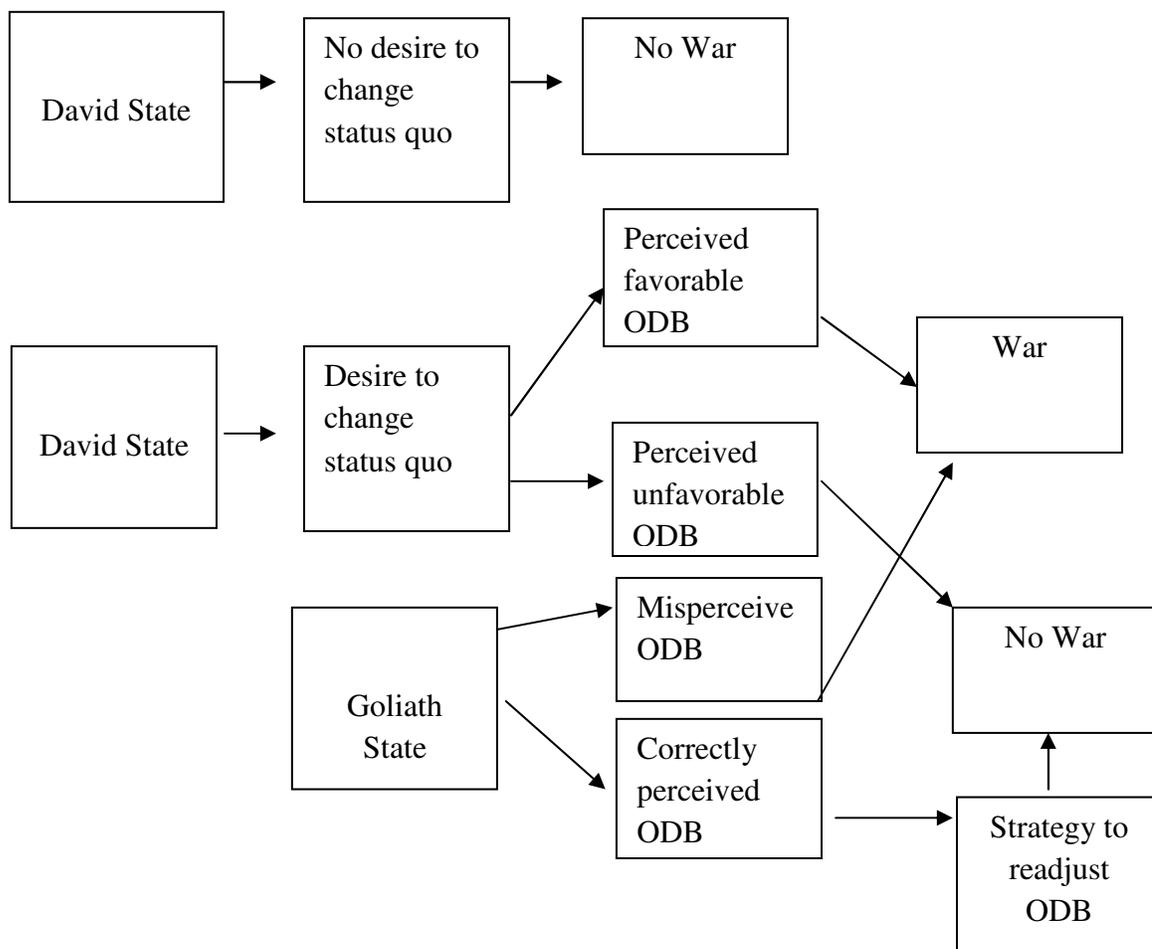
Weaker states adopt strategies based on their perceived ability to conduct offensive operations cheaply against powerful adversaries. A David state decides whether to go to war by reviewing the military and geographic balance between it and its stronger adversary – and whether tactics are available to overcome an unfavorable balance. This may come in the form of newly acquired weaponry, a lack of resolve on the part of the stronger adversary (for example, England's apparent lack of interest in the Falkland Islands in the months prior to the outbreak of violence with Argentina), or a new tactic that gives the weaker side an edge in disputed terrain. While other factors may be

important in particular decisions to launch a David and Goliath war – such as alliance patterns, territorial disputes, domestic regime insecurity, and others – I argue that David will not attack Goliath if does not believe the perception that the balance favors the weak state. In other words, it is a necessary condition for these wars.   Further, it is *when* the dyadic balance is believed to have shifted in favor of the weak state that the David state decides the moment is right to initiate war. Thus, the perceived dyadic balance can explain the *timing* of decisions to use force.

The implication is that David and Goliath wars are not always the result of misperceptions. While states may sometimes get the balance wrong, or misread an adversary's intentions, the theory argues that many past conflicts – initially perceived to be crazy actions taken by desperate states – can be explained as rational and calculated decisions by weaker powers. In the two case studies, for example, one David state went to war with an accurate perception of the balance, while the other did not.

Thus, the theory predicts that weak states, even those with long-standing desires to take offensive action, will not do so until they believe the balance has shifted in their favor. Consequently, one should not expect to see an attack by a weak state until they believe that accomplishing their objectives is *possible*. Even if domestic pressures or other factors may encourage a David state's decision-makers to go to war, weak states will not attack strong states unless they perceive a favorable offense-defense balance.

If plans were drawn for offensive operations and policy-makers were convinced that attacking a Goliath state was feasible, yet no attack took place, this would also be inconsistent with the theory. Indeed, if decision makers in a weak state believe they could accomplish their objectives because of a favorable ODB, but decided against war, this

could signify that other variables are important. For example, a diplomatic intervention might derail plans for war. Or a leader may be worried about his own popularity, fearing that even if he launched a war that his military planners thought would succeed, he might be placing his career or the lives of his citizens at stake.

Research Design and Case Selection

The method of analysis for this thesis is that of in-depth case analysis, and I conduct two case studies: the Arab-Israeli conflict and the 1973 War and the British-Argentine rivalry and the 1982 Falklands War. Both disputes included a weak state (Egypt and Argentina, respectively) and a much stronger adversary (Israel and Britain).[32] Both were long-standing disputes in which there were multiple crises, only one of which resulted in war. Why did war occur at one point in each dispute, but at others? These "near misses" will serve as cases within a case, allowing me to generate observations on why war did not occur during those periods. By studying the conflicts over time, I will be able to determine whether, regardless of a David state's desire to go to war, it will wait until a favorable balance develops, or until it can take steps to create one.

The key to this research design is maximizing the number of observations in each case. Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba emphasize the importance of this method by explaining that within individual cases, there may be numerous observations – sometimes at different levels of analysis – that lend credence to the theory.[33] The main point in such a case study, of course, is to establish causality between the independent

---

[32] A review of the conventional forces that each side possessed reveals that each conflict fit the 2:1 conventional force ratio necessary to label it an asymmetric war.

[33] Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 208.

variable and dependent variable: "disciplined comparison of even a small number of comparable case studies, yielding comparable observations, can sustain causal inference."[34] Therefore, what appears to be a small-N study can generate a substantial amount of results for each case, thus increasing the theory's explanatory power. In examining the phenomenon of David and Goliath Wars, detailed comparative case studies are a more appropriate method than quantitative research because the theory is built off perceptions and the actions and thought processes of various decision-makers, both of which are difficult to measure quantitatively.

Finally, both cases were also examined by T.V. Paul, providing an opportunity to contrast his thesis with the dyadic offense-defense balance theory I have articulated. Paul's 1994 study on war initiation by weaker powers remains the only comprehensive and authoritative work on the subject. Accordingly, it is important to test his cases using dyadic offense-defense balance theory, to see if similar conclusions on the causes of these conflicts are reached.

When examining these cases, I explore how each David state perceived the dyadic offense-defense balance. The perceptions of the balance can be uncovered by, for example, examining the minutes of meetings of military planners, and/or by reading the personal narratives of the relevant policy-makers. I am particularly interested in when the David state first decided that war was desirable. If they waited to launch their offensive, why? Did military planners believe the other side would fight? Did they evaluate the geographic barriers that factored into the balance? Was military technology an important concern? These questions are the answer to whether the theory's observable implications are accurate, as the hypotheses predict a time lag between a state's decision to change the

---

[34] Ibid.

status quo and the actual offensive, during which time changes in tactics and strategy can shift the offense-defense balance in favor of a weak state, or external factors (such as the stronger state weakening its military presence in a given region) can also shift the balance.

Factors that are likely to shape perceptions of the offense defense balance are military technology and geography.   The military technology variable measures whether the David state believes its opponent will use certain weapons in battle. This can range from trenches, fortifications and troop numbers to tanks, airplanes and naval units. For example, the Goliath state may have a large arsenal of nuclear weapons, but, if the weak state can determine with confidence that these weapons will not be deployed against them, the state can disregard this advantage; the offense-defense balance then becomes more favorable for the weak state, and, consequently, they may be more likely to initiate a war. Additionally, the technology variable includes the totality of weapons systems and the ways in which individual weapons can be employed as part of a state's larger tactical selection. Tactics are developed as a result of assessments of the offense-defense balance in the hope that the weak state can develop a more favorable balance.

The second variable, geography, refers to how the David state perceives the terrain and topographic characteristics of the relevant area(s). The factors that might favor the offense for a David state are natural barriers like mountains, as the Soviet Union found out in Afghanistan in the 1980s, or oceans, which once helped to ensure America's security from other world powers. Another key factor, however, is belief that one has a superior knowledge of terrain and geography.[35] The presence of significant geographic

---

[35] Barry Posen describes geography as a "situational variable" that makes offense more appealing for different states at different times. See: "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict." *Survival*. Vol. 33, no.

barriers, or the confidence that the David state can use knowledge of terrain to its advantage, can shift perceptions of the offense-defense balance to make the weaker state more confident and potentially more aggressive. For instance, if a state knows that a counterattack from a powerful adversary would be especially difficult, they may be more likely to initiate a war and disregard the superiority in weapons that the powerful state possesses.

Alternative Explanations

Several hypotheses proposed in the extant literature on David and Goliath wars will also be examined in the case studies, namely those relating to alliance patterns, regime insecurity and the efficacy of limited aims/fait accompli strategies. Other case specific explanations, for example, the role played by historic grievances between the combatants (particularly with regard to the 1973 Middle East conflict) and ethnic and cultural differences will also be considered. As the method of research is qualitative, these variables will be analyzed in a similar manner to the military technology and geographic perceptions variable. The alliance pattern variable examines the major diplomatic relationships on both sides of the conflict to determine what roles they may have played in determining the strategy of weaker actors. This measurement of great power support (as it is usually these states whose contributions matter most) includes combinations of military, economic and diplomatic aid.[36] Also of importance is changing alliance patterns in the international system. In other words, if a David state believes that

---

1. Spring 1993, p. 32. However, he also takes military technology at face value rather than operationalizing it for the purposes of his study on Ethnic Conflict and wars between groups in areas where a long-standing government has recently collapsed.
[36] Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, 21.

the external great power support for its stronger adversary is decreasing in some way, this may affect their decision to choose a belligerent policy.

Offensive weapons and limited aims/fait accomplish strategies can be measured in two ways. First, there is the simple matter what weapons were available to the weaker state at what time. There are a number of reliable sources on this subject which use think tank reports and other documents pertaining to the military balance. The strategic aspect can be measured by reviewing the minutes of meetings, reading memoirs of relevant officials, and reading the history of the battlefield tactics adopted by these actors in the early stages of each conflict. The key measure is the extent to which certain weapons and strategies played in both the decision to attack and the timing of the offensive.

The domestic structure variable considers the effect that changing power structures, economic difficulties, and regime insecurity have on the state's foreign policy decision-making. Are diversionary conflicts – wars launched to distract a domestic audience by uniting the nation around a common goal – an effective explanation for the frequency of David and Goliath Wars? Did the regime of the David state fear a loss of power or overthrow? Did constituent demands for action in a foreign crisis cause the state to act?

The next chapter examines the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict, also known as the Yom Kippur or October War. I begin with a background on the conflict, including the defense and security postures of the belligerents. I then show how Egypt made a decision for war some two years before they finally launched their attack in the Sinai Peninsula in October of 1973, and provide an overview of the events during that two-year period which shifted the balance to Egypt's favor. I focus primarily on the decision-makers in Cairo, using

first-person accounts of the war and planning process. I then address competing

explanations and show how all the factors interacted to cause Egypt to choose a military

posture. I conclude that my theory of dyadic offense-defense balance and strategy

resulting from its two fundamental factors, military technology and geography, is the

most compelling explanation for explaining this conflict.

Chapter III
The 1973 Yom Kippur War

The Surprise of the Century: Egypt's Assault in the Sinai

Henry Kissinger, the U.S. National Security Advisor and Secretary of State, was woken early in the morning on October 6, 1973, to an urgent message from Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir.[37] He was surprised to hear from her. It was Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement and the holiest of all Jewish holidays, and Kissinger knew that virtually nobody in Israel worked on that day. "We may be in trouble," Meir said. Egyptian troop movements along the Suez Canal, which Washington and Tel Aviv had assumed to be training exercises, "had suddenly taken a threatening turn," the message said. To the north of Israel, Syrian troops could also be seen mobilizing at a blistering rate near the Golan Heights. Meir continued: "Since the Arabs believe they are the weaker party, then the crisis must arise from a misunderstanding of Israel's intentions."[38] She then implored Kissinger to intervene and reassure Egypt and Syria – as well as the Soviet Union, their ally – that there was no reason to fear; Israel was not planning a strike on its Arab neighbors and that since the whole incident had resulted from a misunderstanding, Cairo and Damascus should stand down to avoid bloodshed. Ninety minutes later, it would be too late.[39]

The Israeli Prime Minister, who in the midst of the war would reportedly order that Israel's nuclear arsenal be on alert in the event that Jewish state's existence was

---

[37]This incident is recounted in Henry Kissinger's memoir on the Yom Kippur War. See Henry Kissinger, *Crisis: The Anatomy of two Major Foreign Policy Crises* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 14.

[38] This direct quote is cited in Egyptian Field Marshal Mohamed Abdel Ghani El-Gamasy's *The October War* (American University in Cairo Press, 1993), 219. Kissinger, in his account, does not directly quote Meir, but writes: "Since the Arabs were certain to be defeated, she suggested, the crisis must result from their misunderstanding of Israeli intentions." Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

threatened,[40] got a few things right in this message. Egyptian forces were gathering along

the Suez Canal, the de facto boundary between Egypt and Israel since the 1967 Six Day

War. They were the weaker party militarily, which the leadership in Cairo had long

known. And, as Meir was strongly implying, they were about to attack. But contrary to

the beliefs held in Washington and Tel Aviv, Egypt was not attacking preemptively

because it feared an imminent Israeli assault. Nor was Egypt a rogue state attacking a

vastly superior enemy out of anger, insanity, or insecurity triggered by domestic political

factors--although the first of these certainly played a role.

Meir, her military and civilian advisors, and their counterparts in Washington

were all operating under the assumption that a weak state would never attack a powerful

one. In traditional international relations literature, the most plausible explanation for this

phenomenon is if a weak state thinks that war with a powerful adversary is imminent, it

will launch a preemptive strike to inflict as much damage possible before they are

attacked.[41] This logic explains the beliefs of Meir, Kissinger, and other Western

observers.

But even a cursory review of the literature on the war shows that this was not the

case. In fact, Israel was satisfied with its strategic position and occupation of buffer zones

in the Sinai and Golan Heights, as Abraham Rabinovich, one of the preeminent scholars

on Israeli history, points out: "Convinced it could stand up to an Arab world thirty times

its size, Israel was waiting for the Arabs to formally recognize the Jewish state and agree

---

[40] See: Philip Jacobson, "How Golda Meir won the Yom Kippur War," *London Sunday Times*. June 22, 2008. Meir reportedly had ordered thirteen nuclear bombs loaded onto Phantom jets, ready to scramble if it appeared that Israel would "face a second holocaust."
[41] Fischerkeller, *Cultural Judgments and Asymmetric Wars*, 12.

to new borders."[42] It was Egypt, not Israel, which hoped to change the status quo, and while the possibility of Israeli attacks were always present, Egyptian decision-makers clearly had other reasons for war. What were they?

This chapter seeks to answer this question: why would Egypt – with the help of Syria and token contributions from Iraq and other Arab states[43] – launch an attack against the most powerful military in the Middle East, which was backed by the most powerful country in the world, the United States?

In this case study, I present evidence showing that Egypt was keenly aware of its military inferiority – it had been painfully demonstrated in 1967 – but had worked diligently to narrow the gap and circumvent geographic barriers that favored Israel's defense. In short, Egypt knew that it had to shift the offense-defense balance (ODB) in its favor before it could take on its stronger foe. Most importantly, I argue that while other factors, such as domestic pressures and the influence of Soviet support, might explain Egypt's revisionist aims, Cairo's perceptions of the ODB determined the timing of the offensive.[44]

I then consider the explanations advanced by Paul and Fischerkeller, concerning the importance of alliance patterns, regime militancy or insecurity in the weaker state, the pursuance of a limited aims/fait accompli strategy, and the presence or influence of cultural assumptions on the part of the weaker state, Egypt. I find that while other factors

---

[42] Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter that Transformed the Middle East* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004), 7.

[43] Despite efforts at pan-Arab collaboration, many countries were hesitant to help Egypt and Syria, fearing a repeat of the disastrous 1967 Six Day War. After the war began, Iraq contributed forces, and Jordan, Libya and some of the smaller Arab states pledged financial support, but Egypt and Syria were largely left to go it alone.

[44] The war is generally referred to as the October War, or Ramadan War, in Egypt and the Arab World. It is also known as the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the Fourth Arab-Israeli Conflict, as well as simply "The Middle East War."

mattered, the offense-defense balance provides a better explanation for the cause of this conflict, including choices relating to the timing of the war and tactics adopted by the Egyptians in their initial assault over the canal.

The only option left: the Egyptian decision for war

In June of 1967, the Arab states suffered a debilitating defeat at the hands of the Israelis. In just six days, Israel crushed the armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan and captured the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria, thereby increasing its territory threefold. The defeat badly bruised the Arab psyche, particularly that of the Egyptians, who had been considered the most powerful of the Arab states at the time. At the same time, Israeli leaders felt invincible, as Rabinovich observes: "The euphoria that followed the lightning victory in 1967 over the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian armies gave Israel a sense of manifest destiny similar to that which impelled the United States westward in the nineteenth century."[45]

This euphoria had several consequences. While Israeli officials initially seemed amenable to a peace agreement following the 1967 War – a deal that would have returned the Sinai to Egypt in exchange for normalized relations – they withdrew this offer and began to consolidate their position. After the June War, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) dug in on the east bank of the Suez Canal, established a long line of fortifications known as the Bar-Lev line (named after IDF Chief of Staff Haim Bar-Lev, one of the heroes of

---

[45] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 7.

the Six Day war), and built a large sand dune in front of these fortifications that was up to 47 feet high.[46]

For the next several years, a political stalemate emerged: Israel would not withdraw from the occupied territories, and the Arab armies were unable to compel a retreat. Egypt's relative weakness was underscored during the War of Attrition. Shortly after their defeat in 1967, while the Arab hero Gamal Abdel Nasser was still in power, Egypt began a heavy bombardment of Israeli positions along the ceasefire line. The Israelis responded with attacks of their own, using their overpowering air force to strike back at Egyptian positions west of the canal, and also conducting bombing raids at strategic targets inside Egypt. With little chance of progress for the Egyptians, a ceasefire was reached in August 1970, a month before Nasser's sudden death.

Unable to retake the lost territory with military force, Egyptian leaders attempted a diplomatic solution. Anwar el-Sadat came to power seeking an end to the hostilities. While he initially was regarded as a placeholder for Nasser, Sadat "would metamorphose into one of the most imaginative and daring national leaders of the twentieth century," who "reveled in his peasant origins and was imbued with a mystic view of himself as the embodiment of Egypt's destiny."[47] On February 5, 1971, several months after assuming power, Sadat declared his willingness to make peace with Israel if certain conditions were met (a monumental decision for any Arab leader). If Israel would withdraw its forces from the east bank of the Suez Canal, Sadat would allow the canal to be dredged and reopened for international commerce. The two sides could then extend the UN-brokered ceasefire, until a new agreement could be reached under the direction of Gunnar Jarring,

---

[46] Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 244.
[47] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 12.

the United Nations special envoy to the Middle East. Israel, reluctant to give up its

positions along the Suez Canal and confident in its ability to repel any military challenge,

refused.[48] The failure of diplomacy prompted Egyptian observers to describe the impasse

as "no peace, no war."[49]

The Israeli rejection of Sadat's peace terms in early 1971 is likely the moment

when the President realized that Egypt could only reacquire the Sinai through force of

arms.   In January, Israeli Chief of Staff David Elazar told a meeting of the General Staff

that Sadat had no other option but military action, saying "the likelihood of war is

strong."[50] Lt. General Saad el Shazly, who would be appointed Chief of Staff of the

Armed Forces in 1972 and who was largely responsible for destroying the Bar-Lev line

during the war, recalled that Sadat "persisted in beating the drums of war, in speech after

speech calling 1971 the 'year of decision.'"[51] It seemed to many people, including

Shazly, that Sadat's constant references to "the year of decision" were designed to

generate popular support among the Egyptian citizenry. But it is difficult to believe that

he saw any other option. At a conference of his military advisors in November 1971, he

silenced a skeptical general by saying "For your information, I have informed the

Americans that we are going to enter the Sinai even if we only have rifles."[52]

---

[48] Gamasy, *The October War*, 171.

[49] "No peace, no war" was a popular refrain among Egyptian leaders when describing the situation in the Middle East. For an example, see Gamasy, *The October War*, 173.

[50] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 17. Note: Fittingly, Elazar would be one of the shrewdest Israeli decision-makers during the Yom Kippur war. While Defense Minister Moshe Dayan – the hero and architect of the Six Day War – panicked in despair and even suggested surrender, Elazar calmly reassured Golda Meir that an Israeli counterattack at the Suez Canal and in the Golan Heights would be effective with time. Ironically, with the Israeli public looking for blood, he was sacked after the war.

[51] Saad el-Shazly. *The Crossing of the Suez* (San Francisco: American Mideast Research, 198), 30.

[52] Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez*, 114.

During the next two years, Sadat would repeatedly affirm that Egypt was intent on war with Israel over the Sinai, using whatever weapons and forces it had.[53] Accepting Israeli control of the Sinai was impossible for Egypt's leaders. Israel's dominance– including the annexation of the Sinai and the Golan Heights – was an embarrassment for the Arab states, particularly Egypt, whose disastrous decision-making during the Six Day War of 1967 was a principal reason for Israel's swift victory. Thus, as Gamasy recalls, "war was seen as a patriotic necessity, both nationally and at the Arab level, in the face of the continued deadlock despite all Arab political and diplomatic efforts.

The question is therefore not why Egypt chose a military response, but why, when Sadat had called 1971 his "year of decision,"[54] Egyptian policy-makers waited until October of 1973 to initiate the war.

David and Goliath

In reflecting on the war, one Egyptian General recalled that "our forces went to war under difficult and complicated conditions in October 1973."[55] This was a significant understatement. While Israel maintained limited defense forces along the boundaries with Egypt and Syria, it was inconceivable that Egypt could defeat the Israelis if their reserves – that is, the entire nation – were fully mobilized. The Egyptians, Israelis, and just about everyone else knew that Israel's army could not be challenged (at least with conventional weapons) by any Arab state. Such was the difference between the two armies when Sadat took power that the Egyptian leader angrily told the Soviets "I don't mind, my friends, if

---

[53] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 25.
[54] This phrase was echoed repeatedly by Sadat in 1971. For examples, see: Gamasy, *The October War*, 140, 179; Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez*, 30; Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, 142.
[55] Gamasy, *The October War*, 192.

you keep me one step behind Israel [in armaments] but I find it a bit too much to be twenty steps behind her."[56] In summing up the military situation in the lead up to October, 1973, Kissinger described what seemed to be an insurmountable asymmetry favoring Tel Aviv as follows: "Every Israeli and American analysis before October 1973 reinforced out belief that Egypt and Syria did not have the necessary military potential or capability to regain their territories by force of arms. The Arab armies were thus doomed to fail, which led us to think that they would not go on the offensive."[57]

How the Israelis were caught so unprepared on October 6th speaks to the extent of their comfort level and their firm belief that the gap between their army and those of their adversaries was insurmountable. The remainder of this section discusses the relationship between Israel and Egypt in terms of both the military balance and also the geographic factors that gave them such an advantage, or so they thought.

Israel's superior military technology: the IAF

Israel had built the most powerful air forces in the Mediterranean basin. Chief of Staff Shazly, at a meeting of military commanders, said the Israeli Air Force (IAF) was "ten years ahead of ours,"[58] adding that he expected the gap between the two air forces to widen rather than narrow over time.[59] During the War of Attrition, it was apparent that even under the most auspicious conditions, the Egyptian Air Force was no match for the IAF.[60] According to Egyptian estimates from 1972, "the IAF could deliver a payload of

---

[56] Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 226.
[57] Gamasy, *The October War*, 222.
[58] Uri Bar-Joseph, *The Watchmen Fell Asleep: The Surprise of Yom Kippur and its Sources*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 16.
[59] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 27.
[60] Bar-Joseph, *The Watchmen Fell Asleep*, 19.

2500 tons of high explosives per day while the combined forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan could carry only 760 tons."[61] The ability of the Israeli Air Force to strike deep within Egypt would put strategic targets, as well as its citizens, in grave danger. The Israeli Air Force could also expose any Egyptian armor in the Sinai to relentless bombardment, and the desert terrain was seen as favoring the Israeli tank battalions, even if they were outnumbered.

These advantages came chiefly from two places. First, the United States was a huge source of Israeli weaponry. Indeed, the importance of American assistance was revealed during the 1973 war. Facing growing evidence that an Egyptian attack was imminent, Meir decided against a preemptive strike after Kissinger had told the Prime Minister that Israel would not get any assistance from Washington if they were seen as the instigators. When Israel looked as if it might lose, U.S. President Richard Nixon ordered an airlift to resupply the IDF, paving the way for the Israeli counterattack that pushed the Egyptians back across the Suez Canal and put Israeli armored columns within striking distance of Damascus.

The second reason for this asymmetry was Israel's ability to produce weapons domestically. Israeli arms production increased from $90 million in 1966 to $428 million in 1972, while the Arab states output stagnated at $93 million.[62] This discrepancy was highlighted when it came to advanced weapons, for which the Egyptians came to rely solely on the Soviet Union. In 1975, Ahmed Khalidi observed: "Israel is the only country

---

[61] Ibid.
[62] Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez*, 196.

in the Middle East with a wide enough scientific and technological base to allow for the development of advanced weapons locally."[63]

As a result, Tel Aviv was confident that Egypt would not acquire the Surface-to-Air missiles (SAMs) and other anti-aircraft weapons necessary to protect their armor and infantry, at least until 1975, and without such weapons, an attack was perceived as highly unlikely.[64]

Israel's geographic advantage: the Suez Canal

Perhaps even more than Israeli advantages in materiel, the geographic reality in the Middle East appeared to overwhelmingly favor Israel. With its territory now stretching to the Jordan River, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights after the Six Day War, the Israelis enjoyed natural buffer zones against Arab attacks. These barriers meant that Israel could protect these borders with a small number of forces. As long as their famously capable intelligence services could forecast an attack days before it occurred, Israeli reserves could then be mobilized to crush the invading army.

Nowhere did the geographic advantage appear to be more poignant than at the Egyptian-Israeli front along the Suez Canal. The 180-yard wide man-made water barrier had effectively served as the ceasefire line since 1967. Both sides recognized that the canal was one of the most difficult water barriers in the world; its only peer was the Panama Canal, which could only be traversed with mechanized weaponry and vehicles.[65] Strong tides produced wild shifts in water levels. The sides of the canal were built of

---

[63] Ahmed S. Khalidi, "The Military Balance," in *Middle East Crucible: Studies on the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973*, ed. Naseer H. Aruri (Wilmette, IL: Medina University Press International, 1975), 47.
[64] Chaim Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East,* (New York: Random House, Second Vintage Books ed., 2005), 227.
[65] Gamasy, *The October War*, 192.

solid rock to protect against Sand erosion, and the 47 foot sand barrier built by the Israeli army on the east bank of the canal was almost certain to cause fits for Egyptian tanks, vehicles, and infantry. When Israeli officials invited military experts from all over the world to survey the canal, all deemed it insurmountable.[66]

To make matters worse for the Egyptians, Col. David Lascov of the Israeli army had developed a system that could, literally, set the Suez Canal on fire in the event of an Egyptian crossing. Large fuel tanks were installed underground, and pipes were built from the fuel canisters to the edge of the canal.[67] There has been considerable debate about the efficacy of this inferno-creating system. Rabinovich argues that it was known to be faulty but that the Israelis kept the charade going in order to deter an Egyptian attack.[68] At the same time, in their respective memoirs, Shazly and Gamasy, argue that the system had been operational but that Egyptian commandos destroyed it the night before the invasion. The important point, however, is not whether the system could have been deployed, but rather that the Egyptians firmly believed that it was viable and that it shaped perceptions of the balance between the two sides.

Finally, the Bar-Lev line was built by the IDF to fortify likely crossing points along the canal. Israeli engineers had built thick concrete bunkers to withstand heavy fire. Because of the relatively small defense force at each outpost of the Bar-Lev line, the Egyptians would initially have an advantage in artillery. But as Shazly writes, this advantage was almost irrelevant because "the enemy would be sheltered in the underground fortresses of the Bar-Lev line which, we knew, successive layers of earth

---

[66] Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez*, 9.
[67] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 20.
[68] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 21.

and concrete had secured against every shell we possessed."[69] As late as October 5, the day before the Egyptians destroyed the Bar-Lev line, top Israeli officials assured Golda Meir that a successful Canal crossing was impossible.

In sum, any successful large scale crossing of the Suez, according to the Israelis and the Americans, would take hours, and it was believed that the IAF could pin down an invading army until the reserves could be fully mobilized. Military planners in Egypt recognized that a rapid, successful crossing would be "unprecedented in military history."[70]

<div align="center">

Shifting the Balance

</div>

Once they decided on war to retake the Sinai, Egyptian leaders had to find a way to redress the unfavorable ODB with Israel. The gap was not going to be closed by Egypt's alliance with the Soviet Union. Soviet support for Cairo, although it played a crucial role in rebuilding Egypt's army, developing new tactics, and learning to use newer equipment and weaponry, was largely offset by American military aid to Israel. As Egyptian Field Marshal and Director of Operations Gamasy ruefully explained:

> The United States since the June War had become an open and reliable ally of Israel, providing political backing and military and economic support. It poured all kinds of weapons into Israel at a rate, which would ensure its uninterrupted superiority over the Arabs as a whole. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was not providing the kind of military support to Egypt and Syria, which precluded any advantage over Israel, claiming that it did not want an arms race in the region. In this way, the superpowers promoted their interests in the region within the framework of a mutual 'understanding.'[71]

---

[69] Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez,* 22.
[70] Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 244.
[71] Gamasy, *The October War*, 128

Instead, between 1971 and 1973, Egypt engaged in an arms build-up and detailed strategic planning to overcome the key geographic and technological challenges that would confront the Egyptian army when they attacked. The planning on both fronts was, in a word, impressive. Below, I examine the tactical choices made by the Egyptian army in the lead-up to war.

Overcoming Israel's military superiority

The main goal for Sadat and his military planners was to neutralize Israel's air force. Bar-Joseph, in his detailed study of the war, argues that Egypt's ability to limit the IAF's freedom of action in the theater of operations was essential before war could be launched.[72] However, Egyptian decision-makers realized quickly that their own air force was not the answer. As the War of Attrition demonstrated, Egypt's pilots were inexperienced, and their equipment was faulty and vastly inferior to that of the Israelis. Most importantly, they lacked the capabilities to change either of these to the degree necessary for their troops to have a chance. Whatever could be done had to be done from the ground.

The Egyptians decided that the solution was to create a 'missile wall' of Surface-to-Air missiles (SAMs) that could protect their tanks and infantry for several miles.[73] Shazly, who was largely responsible for this strategy, described the plan in his memoir on the October War. "With enough preparation, my judgment was that we could cross the canal and advance some six to eight miles, while remaining under the SAM umbrella, which we could deploy right on the west bank of the canal in quickly prepared field sites

---

[72] Bar-Joseph, *The Watchmen Fell Asleep,* 16.
[73] Herzog, *The Arab Israeli Wars,* 227.

during the course of the battle."[74] The SAM umbrella would require the acquisition of modern anti-aircraft weapons, and the ground campaign necessitated anti-tank weapons that could counter the IDF's expertise in tank warfare. The Egyptian President recalled that "without these weapons we will not be able to act decisively and Israel will therefore find it unnecessary to change its stubborn position with regard to a solution."[75]

In order to acquire these weapons, Egypt turned to the Soviet Union. The Kremlin did not favor of Egyptian military action against Israel – largely because it believed the incursion was doomed to fail – but was nevertheless eager to increase its influence in the region in order to balance Washington's influence over Israel. Although the relationship was prickly at times, and Sadat had to make multiple visits to Moscow to plead his case, the weapons finally trickled in, and Soviet advisors were present to instruct the Egyptian army in their use.

Egypt acquired from the Soviet Union some of the most advanced anti-aircraft weapons in the world, including SAM-2, SAM-3, and SAM-6 technology. Cairo believed that if these devices were used to create the 'missile wall' Egypt would have the upper hand, for the first time ever, against the Israeli Air Force. Phillip Jacobson, who at the time was covering the war for the *London Sunday Times*, recalled interviewing Israeli pilots during the early days of the war. "Once that thing [SAM-6s] gets behind you, it's all over," said one IAF pilot who had been shot down, but had ejected safely. "We have orders to eject as soon as it locks onto our exhaust."[76] By the end of 1972, Egyptians

---

[74] Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez*, 26.
[75] Gamasy, *The October War,* 144.
[76] *The Yom Kippur War*. By the Insight Team at the *London Sunday Times*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1974), 188.

were fully trained to operate these SAMs.[77] And during the war, Egypt would fire a quantity of surface-to-air missiles comparable to all of NATOs stocks in Europe.[78]

Moscow also supplied Cairo with a brigade of SCUDs, ballistic missiles with a range of up to 150 miles, and the technology was designed and used in part as a deterrent against Israeli attacks deep within Egypt. Although at an October 24, 1972, meeting of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, Sadat had said that he would not wait on Moscow to deliver the SCUDs, he delayed the war for a full year because the missiles were so essential to Egypt's military success.[79] The brigade began training in Egypt in April, 1973, just six months before the war.[80] The October War was reportedly the first time that SCUDs were used in combat.

To deal with Israeli armor, one of the most polished military forces in the world, the Egyptians acquired the RPG-7, a shouldered rocket-propelled grenade launcher, as well as the guided anti-tank missile Sagger (called Malotka by the Soviets).[81] The Sagger was believed to be crucial to Egypt's success in the October War. It could be handled by a single person, and it had a range of 3000 yards, the same as Israeli tank guns. It was also perfect for the terrain. An Egyptian infantryman could hide in a foxhole or behind shrubs, and quickly fire the guided weapon at a distant Israeli tank before its operators even knew the soldier was there.[82] The weapon was so powerful that it could instantly pierce through the armor on Israeli tanks.[83] The Egyptians focused on supplying their forward-most columns with these new weapons to ensure that the first troops to cross the

---

[77] Bar-Joseph, *The Watchmen Fell Asleep,* 20.
[78] *Sunday Times*, p. 189
[79] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War,* 25.
[80] Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars,* 228.
[81] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 29.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Jacboson, *London Sunday Times*.

canal would have the most sophisticated technology available to respond to the expected vicious counterattack by Israeli tanks.[84]

Overcoming Israel's geographic advantages

The Suez Canal and the immense sand barrier built by IDF engineers were among the biggest challenges facing the leadership in Cairo as they planned for war from 1971 to 1973. The most hi-tech dynamite and bulldozers proved dreadfully slow at shifting the sand from the large barrier on the east bank, and the Egyptians knew that breaking through this barrier as quickly as possible was essential because tanks and troops needed to reach Israel before the IDF could launch a counterattack.[85]

A young Egyptian engineer arrived at a solution. Water cannons, which had been effective in the construction of Egypt's Aswan Dam, could be used to blast openings in sand dunes.[86] After discovering that the plan worked, hundreds of pumps were purchased in Britain and Germany from companies that supplied firefighters. The Egyptians, however, planned to use these pumps to turn the water of the canal into a weapon.[87] It worked. During the early days of the war, openings were cut in the otherwise imposing sand barrier, and the outer edge of the Bar-Lev line would resemble the crenellations of medieval castles.

Importantly, the final date for attack was selected largely because of the geography, although many assume that the attack was launched on Yom Kippur because Israel would be less prepared. The selection of the most appropriate day for attack fell to

---

[84] Shazly, *Crossing of the Suez,* 34. See also: Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War,* 30.
[85] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War,* 29.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.

Gamasy, whose research into the canal and the surrounding area was meticulous. "We studied the technical characteristics of the Suez Canal, the ebb and flow of the tides, the speed of the currents and their direction, hours of darkness and of moonlight, weather conditions, and related conditions in the Mediterranean and Red Seas," he recalls.[88] He also adds that in coordinating with Syria, weather conditions deteriorated on Golan Heights after October, and the likelihood of snowfall made October the appropriate cut-off period for joint military action against Israel.[89] Faced with Gamasy's findings, Sadat "decided to postpone the war until the next propitious period of tides, which would be in September or October of 1973."[90]

The preparations for war and the precision with which the Egyptian staff studied the canal conditions were painstakingly chronicled in *The London Sunday Times*'s account of the war and is, therefore, quoted at length:

> The first and trickiest proposition was the canal itself. Its current is always strong, but at certain times of year it can rip through the southern end of the canal at almost a hundred yards a minute—adding immensely to the problems of bridging the flow rapidly. On top of that, at certain phases of the moon the water level between high and low tide in the canal can rise and fall as much as six feet at the southern end. To keep bridges and landing stages for ferries operational, the planners would have to find times of least tidal variation … [Egyptian War Minister Ahmed] Ismail then imposed the requirement of a long night, so that the Egyptian buildup on the east bank might have cover of darkness. But he also wanted a night when the moon shone through the first half and then set. The last bridges might have to be laid by moonlight, by the tanks could find their way across by starlight … Only in September or October would there be ten or twelve hours of darkness. And the need to have moonlight—but now a full moon, because that would swell the ebb and flow of the tide—cut the possible dates in any one month to four or five days.[91]

---

[88] Gamasy, *The October War,*180.
[89] Gamasy, *The October War*, 181.
[90] Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars,* 228.
[91] "The Yom Kippur War," *London Sunday Times*, 74-75.

This rather lengthy analysis displays the critical role that geography played in the Egyptian calculations. Although the weapons needed to neutralize the IAF were in place by April, Cairo waited an additional six months because of considerations over tides, moonlight, snow, and other factors. Additionally, while Syrian assistance was by no means enough to overcome the gap between the Arab armies and that of the Israelis, it was important. Cairo knew that the Israeli army would be fighting a two-front war with a large distance separating the battlefields. The Suez Canal and the Golan Heights represented the southern and northern-most borders of Israel between 1967 and 1973, and the Arabs knew that communication and reinforcements between the two fronts would be difficult.[92]

Ultimately, the fact that October 6th was Yom Kippur was also an additional bonus for the Egyptian planners, or so they thought. Communication lines, radio, and television were essentially shut down. Roads were empty, and no one was at work. However, this would ultimately backfire. With most of Israel shut down, IDF officers knew where to find their reserve troops: at home or at synagogue. The clear roads on Yom Kippur, coupled with the predictability in the locations of their reserves, made the Jewish Day of Atonement the easiest day for the Israelis to mobilize.

The moment for war was decided by Cairo's perceived ability to shift the offense-defense balance in its favor. While Egypt still faced the region's most dominant air force, Sadat was able to delay war until his military acquired the technology needed to reduce Israel's air advantage. Egypt used geographic and climactic data to identify the best dates to cross the Suez. Finally Egypt's engineers developed ways to punch holes in the Sand Barrier that separated the canal and the Bar-Lev line. Indeed, without a favorable ODB, it

---

[92] Khalidi, "The Military Balance," 45.

is unlikely that war would have broken out, despite Sadat's public promises to enter the Sinai with rifles if he had to. As the editors at *The London Sunday Times* argue, the war was delayed for the simplest reason: "After reviewing the state of Egypt's forces with his advisors, Sadat decided that they were in no state to confront the thoroughly alerted Israeli army."[93] While no decision involving warfare is ever simple, an examination of the events prior to the war shows that perceived changes in the ODB was the key factor for explaining Egypt's timing for war. Sadat had always been anxious to force a solution to the 'no peace, no war' deadlock, but was shrewd enough to wait until the offense-defense balance was in his favor.

Competing Explanations

What other factors—in addition to those identified by dyadic offense-defense theory --explain Egypt's final decision for war in October 1973? I maintain that while arguments advanced by Paul and Fischerkeller may explain why Egypt had revisionist aims, they cannot account for the timing of the war. They also do not explain the preparations for war made by the Egyptians during the two years before the outbreak of war. In the following section, I examine these explanations in this case. While a limited aims strategy was both logical and important, this strategy would have in all likelihood failed had Cairo not developed shrewd ways of shifting certain variables in their favor. It also does not explain the timing. Domestic political pressures were influencing Cairo's desire to adopt a revisionist strategy, and military hardware and assistance from the Soviet Union were also important, but these factors lack the explanatory power of the dyadic offense-defense balance and also cannot explain timing.

---

[93] "The Yom Kippur War." *London Sunday Times,* 51.

Limited Aims/Fait Accompli Strategies

Paul argues in *Asymmetric Conflicts* that a weak state may go to war with a stronger power if it has limited objectives, which it believes can be accomplished quickly before the enemy can react (fait accompli strategies). This was certainly true of decision makers in Egypt. Egyptian military planners understood that any attempt to advance deep into Israel would fail. Moving outside of the SAM umbrella would expose their ground forces to fire from the Israeli Air Force, and the United States would never allow Israel to be overrun by the Arab armies. Thus, the Egyptian plan called for "a limited attack": its forces would cross the canal, destroy the Bar-Lev line, and dig in several miles away from the canal, forcing Israel to either negotiate over the Sinai from a position of weakness or attack well-entrenched forces.[94] Rabinovich agrees, arguing that Sadat thought that by gaining a foothold in the Sinai, he could trigger superpower intervention and force Israel to withdraw to the Pre-1967 borders.[95] The belief that Egypt *could* fight a limited war to force a political solution in the Sinai was a necessary condition for the war. If Sadat did not think that it could achieve its goals quickly, then war would have been avoided. This begs the question: why did Egyptian leaders believe they should wage a successful limited aims war? The answer is that Cairo identified ways to temporarily shift the ODB, making a limited aims war practicable.

---

[94] Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez,* 25.
[95] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War,* 26.

Alliance Patterns

Paul further argues that the expectation of major power intervention may also influence the decision-making of David states. If a weak state expects assistance or neutrality from a stronger power, it may decide that the asymmetry with the Goliath state is manageable. There is no doubt that great power alliances were important in the planning and execution of the Yom Kippur War. Without the help of the Soviet Union, Egypt would never have had the weapons needed to have any hope of shifting the ODB and achieving even limited aims at Israel's expense.

However, the evidence suggests that the support of the Soviet Union was outweighed by U.S. support for Israel. Much like other areas of the world, the Middle East became a chessboard, on which Washington and Moscow played Cold War politics. Sadat reflects in his memoir that he had inherited a terrible foreign policy problem from Nasser, who had made the Soviet Union Egypt's only real ally.[96] The importance of the United States to Israel was demonstrated the day before and during the war, when Meir and her advisors abandoned plans to launch a preemptive strike at Washington's urging. Herzog, a noted scholar on the Arab-Israeli wars, notes that: "the Soviet Union would ensure using the United Nations Security Council to bring about a cease-fire in the event of the attack going badly, and to prevent any interference in the event of everything going well."[97] The United States did the same for Israel.

But the alliance patterns favored Israel, and Cairo knew this. The relationship between Cairo and Moscow was often cold and difficult, and Egyptian military officials have often derided the Soviets in their memoirs. The Soviet Union, though willing to

---

[96] Sadat, *In Search of Identity,* 210.
[97] Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars,* 229.

supply weapons to Egypt, halted deliveries on several occasions to pressure Sadat to avoid war. Nixon and Brezhnev were in the middle of détente negotiations, and neither side wanted to upset the talks. Frustrated by Moscow's actions, Sadat actually expelled Soviet advisors in July 1972. As Sadat recalled: "One of the reasons behind my decision was the Soviet attitude to me; but another important reason was that within the strategy I had laid down, no war could ever be fought while Soviet experts worked in Egypt."[98] Gamasy and Shazly also have argued that, because the Soviets played a critical role in training and supervising Egyptian troops, it was impossible for Cairo to launch a military incursion in the Sinai because Moscow would not authorize it.[99] While Soviet arms shipments were needed for a successful invasion, Sadat realized he could not launch a war with the Soviets in the country, and ordered their expulsion. Cairo then was careful to hide its plans from the Soviet Union, fearing that they would disapprove and stop the war. On the other hand, Israel knew that Washington would never allow its existence to be threatened, while the Soviet Union had much less of a stake in Egypt's geostrategic position.

Thus, while Soviet military assistance was important to Egypt's efforts to shift the ODB, its ties with Egypt, on balance, made a war less likely.

Cultural Judgments

Fischerkeller argues David and Goliath wars, in part, are caused by negative cultural judgments: states may discount an enemy's advantages if they are predisposed toward believing that the more powerful state is culturally inferior in some sense to the

---

[98] Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 230.
[99] See: Gamasy, *The October War,* 141; Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez,* 159.

weaker power. The question is then whether Egyptian leaders exhibited negative cultural assumptions of the Israelis, which caused them to discount Tel Aviv's military advantage and initiate a war. The answer is a firm 'No.'

While the Egyptians hated the Israelis, among other reasons, for occupying the Sinai peninsula after the Six Day war, they were not naïve enough to think that Israel was weak militarily simply because of their longstanding animosity. Cairo knew that Israel's entire population could be mobilized for the war effort. Although they found the Israeli military "arrogant," Egypt had already lost three wars to Israel, each time resulting in a less advantageous position for Cairo.[100] It was well aware of Israel's military advantage, and carefully studied Israeli technology and geography to find ways to overcome it. Scorn for the Jewish state did not cause Cairo to act hastily or unwisely.

That said, Fischerkeller's logic does explain why Israeli officials discounted the possibility of Egyptian military action. This miscalculation made it easier for Egypt and Syria to launch a surprise attack. Military and civilian planners in Tel Aviv held the Arab armies in contempt, particularly after the Six Day war. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan was the main culprit. He once argued that the Arab military weakness resulted from "the low level of their soldiers in education, technology and integrity"[101] and argued that their territory could easily be extended further into the Arab states, because "a dead body doesn't need to be taken into account."[102] In other words, Tel Aviv would easily neutralize the Arab militaries when annexing their territory. Jacobson, in his piece in *The London Sunday Times* on Golda Meir during the war, recounted a popular Israeli joke involving Dayan. A colleague, after hearing Dayan express his boredom at the lack of

---

[100] Khalidi, "The Military Balance," 42.
[101] Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War,* 8.
[102] Gamasy, *The October War,* 198.

battlefield action, suggests that the Israelis invade another Arab state, to which Dayan replies: "What would we do in the afternoon?"[103]

Thus, it was the strong state's negative cultural assessments of the weaker state, that made attack easier and more likely, not the reverse.

Domestic Factors and Regime Insecurity

The final explanation I will consider is the argument that domestic factors may cause a state to launch a diversionary war to generate popular support for the state and/or distract the public from economic or social problems. The question is, therefore, whether domestic and economic issues caused Sadat to launch a war even if victory was unlikely?

During the years between the Six Day War and the October War, Egypt's economy was in trouble and Herzog argues that Sadat's mounting "internal political problems" influenced his decision for war in 1973.   There is some evidence for this view. Egypt's massive rearmament efforts were a strain on an already troubled economy, and the closing of the Suez Canal starved the region, and a wide swath of Egypt's population, particularly students, advocated retaking the Sinai as a measure of national pride. But public support for war against Israel really forced Sadat's hand, we would have expected to see an invasion by the end of 1971. After all, the peace agreement offered by Sadat had failed, Israel retained its fortifications along the canal, and it was clear that the 'no peace, no war' situation would continue. Thus, despite the domestic pressure to retake the Sinai, Sadat refused to undertake military action until Egypt achieved a favorable offense-defense balance.

---

[103] Jacobson, "How Golda Meir won the Yom Kippur War."

The second domestic politics explanation considered here is that militaristic regimes will act more belligerently simply by nature. Based on Sadat's initial willingness to make peace with Israel, it is difficult to argue that his regime was firmly set on war. Sadat, in effect, announced that, should Israel withdraw from the Sinai, he would officially recognize the Jewish state and establish diplomatic ties. This approach was borderline treason for an Arab leader in 1971. Years after the Yom Kippur War, Sadat would become the first Arab leader to recognize Israel by signing the Camp David Accords. Sadat's decision for war, rather, was based on the failure of negotiations and his subsequent ability to shift the ODB.

Conclusion

The Yom Kippur War is a David and Goliath War on which there is rich of literature. But I find that both the timing of Egypt's October invasion and the strategy and tactics undertaken by Cairo in the years leading up to the war can be explained by perceptions of the dyadic offense-defense balance between the two states – an explanation which to date has been overlooked.

The military hardware necessary to overcome Israeli Air Superiority arrived in Egypt by the spring of 1973 and geographic surveys of the Suez Canal by Egyptian engineers and scientists made an October assault practicable. Together, these variables explain why the war began in October 1973. Israel's view that Egypt was incapable of such an attack proved to be of great assistance to Egypt in the surprise attack on October 6th. While other variables contributed to Cairo's decision making, ultimately it was the Egyptian regime's perceptions of the offense-defense balance that led to both their tactical choices and the timing of the war.

Chapter IV

The Falklands War: A Desperate Gamble?

In assessing Argentina's invasion of British-controlled Falkland Islands[104] in April of 1982, American journalist James Reston wrote in *The New York Times*: "The problem in Buenos Aires is not that the calculations of the generals went wrong, or even that their objective to take sovereignty over the Falkland Islands was wrong, but that they did not think or calculate at all."[105] Many western observers and pundits agreed, arguing that the junta was essentially comprised of "ignorant, short-sighted and even foolish men who went to war oblivious to its likely consequences for their nation."[106] The prevailing wisdom in 1982, therefore, was that the junta acted out of desperation, largely as a means of quelling domestic unrest, and that they badly misjudged London's resolve and commitment to the Falklands – a barren archipelago in the South Atlantic whose economy was summed up by Martin Honeywell as "sheep, sheep and more sheep."[107]

At first glance, these assessments seem reasonable. Argentina invaded territory that was administered and protected by Great Britain, which was still a nuclear-armed great power despite having relinquished most of their colonies after 1945. And, in the eyes of just about everyone, besides Argentina, the islands were British. Britain had controlled the Falklands since 1833, when the territory was strategically important because of its proximity to Cape Horn and whaling interests in the area. Most

---

[104] After invading, Argentine leaders claimed these islands as The Malvinas, the traditional Argentine name for the islands. I use "Falklands Islands" in this study because that is the name in use today, as it is still British territory.

[105] Reston, James. 1982. Forgotten Lessons. *New York Times*. May 5.

[106] Richard Ned Lebow, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War," in *Psychology and Deterrence*, ed. Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 108.

[107] Martin Honeywell and Jenny Pearce, *Falklands/Malvinas: Whose Crisis?* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1982), 5.

importantly, in 1983, London offered the Falklanders the right of self-determination, and they overwhelmingly voted to remain British subjects. The United Kingdom then maintained a governor, a small garrison of troops, and an Antarctic survey outpost on the nearby island of South Georgia

In this chapter, I analyze the decision-making of the Argentine junta in the lead-up to the ill-fated invasion of the Falklands and explain why war occurred in the South Atlantic in April 1982.[108]   First, I begin with a brief discussion of the critical events that led to the conflict. Second, I analyze the asymmetric relationship between the two sides and argue that, while Argentina held a small advantage because the islands were in their own backyard, they could not expect to match the British navy. Third, I argue that the original plans called for an invasion of the Falklands and July and were a function of the junta's perceptions of the offense-defense balance (ODB) between the two states. Fourth, I argue that unforeseen circumstances, namely the fact that a scrap merchant planted an Argentine flag on South Georgia island, and the perception the that the ODB was going to shift in Britain's favor, caused Buenos Aires to move up the invasion. Lastly, I examine the accuracy of existing explanations of David and Goliath wars in relation to this conflict.

---

[108] There is limited information available on Argentine decision making because of the secretive and authoritarian nature of the regime. The junta members were put on trial following the war, which ended in disaster and humiliation for Argentina, and their self-serving testimonies and explanations for the decision to invade leaves many questions. Additionally, the nature and structure of the regime makes it difficult to analyze decision making. Each military leader had a separate agenda, and there is speculation that chiefs of different branches acted on their own accord in certain instances.

A Question of Sovereignty: The British-Argentine Dispute

The Argentines first asserted control over the Falkland Islands in November of 1820 as part of their efforts to lay claim to former Spanish territories.[109] Their command of the islands would be short lived, however. The British occupied the islands for the crown in 1833. What followed was nearly 150 years of Argentine frustration and anger at what they viewed as a usurpation of their land. In Argentina the issue became one of immense national significance, and many Argentine governments vowed to one day retrieve the islands, and a number of them attempted to negotiate their return.

At the same time, the issue lost significance in London during the latter half of the 20th century. With other foreign policy concerns, most Britons cared little about the Falklands. Only the efforts of small, vocal lobbying group of Falklanders were able to keep the pressure on Parliament to maintain sovereignty over the islands.

It was in this context that that General Leopoldo Galtieri assumed the Presidency in December 1981. Galtieri, who had been Commander of the Army, replaced President Roberto Viola, who had been deposed in one of Argentina's numerous coups. The junta initially decided that force would be required to retake the Falklands in early 1982 after Buenos Aires repeatedly failed to negotiate a solution to the dispute with Britain. Seventeen years of formal negotiations had produced few results.[110] Facing a powerful lobby that demanded continued British control over the Falklands, London could not given in to Argentine demands. The final straw, many authors argue, came in February of 1982 at the New York negotiations, where the Argentine delegation was sent home

---

[109] Lawrence Freedman and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), xxxi.
[110] Amy Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands," *Security Studies* 15, no. 3(July-September 2006): 444.

empty-handed to a furious Galtieri.[111] Eddy and Linklater argue that while the junta's

invasion plan began to take shape in December of 1981, "it became operative following

the breakup of the New York talks in February 1982."[112]

The question is why the junta came to believe that invading a British territory –

was a *viable* policy choice (even if it was the only way to reacquire the Falklands).

Moreover, what factors contributed to the timing of the invasion?

The asymmetric relationship

The following section elaborates on the military and geographic relationship

between the two parties. While Argentina had one of the more powerful militaries in

Latin America and had spent large amounts of money to acquire newer, hi-tech weapons

from various European countries, the gap between their net capabilities and those of the

British were considerable. While the geographic balance favored Buenos Aires, they

could not expect much success in an actual war with the British navy.

Britain's superior military technology

Argentina was not prepared for war with Great Britain in April of 1982. The

Argentine military was trained to fight counterinsurgency missions on the mainland

against perceived threats from left-wing subversives.[113] Argentine historian Virginia

Gamba argues that "a conventional war had not been considered, and the probability of

ever fighting with a 'direct' adversary had been neglected for many decades. The country

---

[111] See, for example: Lebow, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic," 108; Paul Eddy and Magnus Linklater, *The Falklands War* (London: The Times Newspapers Limited, 1982), 26.

[112] Eddy and Linklater, *The Falklands War*, 26.

[113] Virginia Gamba, *The Falklands War: A Model for North-South Crisis Prevention* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 129.

also did not have the capabilities to cope with more than one kind of warfare at any given time."[114] Indeed, Argentina had not fought a conventional land or sea war since the nineteenth century.[115] Their air force had never been tested in battle,[116] and their ground forces consisted largely of fresh conscripts, as the Argentine military's annual training camp for new troops began during the invasion.[117]

Dabat and Lorenzano also find that the gap between Argentina and Great Britain's military capabilities was sizable. If the entirety of their forces were deployed, Britain would have outnumbered Argentina 2:1 in naval forces, 2:1 in fighter planes, 3:1 in helicopters, and 8:1 in submarines.[118] The great area of weakness for Argentina was at sea. The British navy remained one of the most powerful in the world. As Moro summarizes: "It becomes obvious, when comparing the United Kingdom's military might with that of Argentina, that there is a great difference between the two."[119]

Geography

Unlike the previous case study, this Goliath state did not also enjoy a geographic advantage over the David state. Argentina's location, 400 miles away from the islands, gave them a unique advantage over Britain, whose ships had to travel more than 8000 miles in order to reach the Falklands.[120] It would take two weeks for British nuclear-

---

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ruben O. Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict: The War for the Malvinas* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 20.

[116] Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 83.

[117] Gamba, *The Falklands War*, 130.

[118] Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina: The Malvinas and the End of Military Rule*, 96.

[119] Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 20.

[120] Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 17-21.

powered submarines to reach the South Atlantic archipelago, and three weeks for frigates and other surface vessels.[121]

Additionally, the weather in the region, particularly during the Southern Hemispheric winter months of June and July, was treacherous and nearly impossible to navigate; the 60 to 70-foot waves could capsize the largest of warships.[122] Lebow recounts a statement made by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on April 4, three days after the conflict began. "Several times in the past an invasion had been threatened," she said. "The only way of being sure of preventing it would have been to keep a large fleet close to the Falklands, 8000 miles away from the base. No government has ever been able to do that because the cost would be enormous."[123] These geographic concerns, as I argue in the following section, were a main factor in Argentina's original decision to plan an invasion no earlier than June 1982.

Perceptions of the Offense-Defense Balance

I argue that the original Argentine strategy for retaking the islands in June or July 1982 was based on the junta's perceptions of the dyadic offense-defense balance and it might have worked—if Britain had accepted the invasion.

Overcoming British naval superiority

The junta's strategic planning for taking the Falklands was based on the expectation that Britain would not respond with force to an occupation of the distant

---

[121] Richard C. Thornton, *The Falklands Sting: Reagan, Thatcher, and Argentina's Bomb* (Washington: Brassey's, 1998), 83.
[122] Ibid
[123] Lebow, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic," 93.

islands. Galtieri would later testify that he and his colleagues found a British military response to be "totally improbable."[124] Daniel Gibran similarly argues that "the Argentine junta did not believe that Britain, which was led by a woman prime minister and was experiencing severe domestic economic pressures, would resort to war in a theater eight thousand miles away."[125] Argentina's belief that Britain would not send a naval force to reclaim the islands, according to most scholars, was a necessary condition for war. If London was unlikely to resist, then the junta did not need to be overly concerned with the size of Britain's navy.

There was considerable evidence that the islands were a low priority for the United Kingdom. Thatcher's decision on February 9, 1982, to withdraw the *HMS Endurance*[126] – Britain's main naval presence in the area – from the South Atlantic contributed significantly to the junta's perception that the islands were theirs to take. The prime minister also proposed closing the British Antarctic Survey base on South Georgia, a further sign that London may have been somewhat disinterested about its holdings in the region.[127] With virtually no British naval presence in the South Atlantic, victory would be quick and Argentina could present London and the international community with a fait accompli.

While the drawdown of the royal navy in the region certainly played a role in convincing the junta that the ODB had shifting in Argentina's favor, Buenos Aires was also beefing up their own capabilities for an invasion. The junta had invested some $13

---

[124] Thornton, *The Falklands Sting*, 106.
[125] Daniel K. Gibran, *The Falklands War: Britain Versus the Past in the South Atlantic* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1950), 5.
[126] Thornton, *The Falklands Sting*, 82-83.
[127] Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*, 149.

billion dollars between 1980 and 1981 to modernize its military.[128] Additionally, a series

of new, hi-tech weapons had been ordered from France, West Germany, and Israel.[129]

Shipments of Super Etendard Aircraft and Exocet anti-ship missiles were due to arrive

from France by July.[130]

Geography and the Falklands invasion

     While technological factors were important, it was geography that played the

critical role in convincing the junta that military action was possible. It was also the

variable that determined the original date for the invasion. As previously mentioned, the

South Atlantic winter provided numerous obstacles for military action, making a British

response "near impossible" if the attack was launched during the winter months.[131] So

certain were Argentine policy-makers of this assessment that a running joke in Buenos

Aires was the British would be "pasteurized" before they even got to the Falklands.[132]

     The junta believed they could invade quickly in July, claim the islands for

Argentina, and then use diplomacy to convince the international community that they had

a lawful claim to the land. In the meantime, Britain would be forced to twiddle their

thumbs, as dispatching a task force to the South Atlantic in the dead of winter would have

disastrous repercussions.

     In sum, perceptions of the ODB contributed more than any other factor to the

junta's strategy for reclaiming the islands. And, if all had gone according to plan, it is

---

[128] Dabat and Lorenzano, *Argentina: The Malvinas and the End of Military Rule*, 93.
[129] Thornton, *The Falklands Sting*, 106.
[130] Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (New York: WW Norton, 1983), 48. Note also that conscripts who began their duty in March would be fully trained by the winter months of June and July.
[131] Hastings, *Battle for the Falklands*, 48.
[132] Ibid.

likely that the junta would have been able to occupy the islands in July, with the winter weather prohibiting a quick British response. Argentine troops would have been fully trained, and their navy and air force armed with more advanced equipment and weaponry. Finally, they would have been able to set up more robust defenses on the islands in the event of a British retaliation during the warmer months.

While it is impossible to say what the outcome of the crisis would have been had other factors not intervened, one can make a compelling argument that the junta's decision might not have seemed so foolish then. The disastrous decision to invade in late March and early April was a product of bad luck, impatience, rising domestic unrest, and the perception that their favorable offense-defense balance was slipping away–plus one bizarre incident that put the junta's plans in jeopardy.

Jumping the Gun: Why April 2, 1982?

There were two reasons why the junta decided to abandon their initial plan to invade in July and instead seize the Falkands during the first week of April.

The first was Constantine Davidoff landing on South Georgia. Davidoff was an Argentine scrap merchant of Greek descent, who had received permission to disassemble an old whaling station on the remote island. Upon landing at Leith on March 19, 1982, a member of Davidoff's crew raised an Argentine flag and members of his party sang the Argentine national anthem.[133] While itself an absurd and isolated incident, the "Davidoff Affair" had ripple effects that ultimately would lead to war.

---

[133] Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 9.

Over the course of the next few days, tabloids in London began screaming that Argentina had invaded South Georgia.[134] With the issue blown out of proportion in London, the British Foreign Office issued a message to Argentina that all personnel who had landed on South Georgia must leave immediately. Buenos Aires, citing the fact that Davidoff was there legally and that he had informed the British government of his work, refused. In Thornton's account of the war, "the differences in timing being forced on them by the crisis on South Georgia was the difference between almost certain success as opposed to improbable success…But it was now or never."[135] Britain also threatened to remove the scrapmen from Leith by force, a threat which Galtieri later told an Italian journalist prompted the invasion of the Falklands.[136]

The Davidoff incident left Argentina with a difficult choice: invade early and accept the possibility of British retaliation, or back down in public by capitulating to British demands. As Thornton writes, "Britain would use the Davidoff expedition to maneuver Argentina into a lose-lose situation—the junta would be forced either to decide on an earlier-than-planned seizure of the Falklands, giving Britain time to recover them, or to back down in the face of a British threat, thus losing credibility and risking overthrow."[137]   At a meeting of the junta on March 25th, 1982, the generals determined that they had three options: permit the eviction of the scrapmen from South Georgia, break relations with the UK and lodge international protests, or intervene with the armed forces.[138] Either of the first two options would have resulted in Britain intensifying its naval presence in the South Atlantic and would have likely led to the downfall of the

---

[134] Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 10.
[135] Thornton, *The Falklands Sting*, 112.
[136] Eddy and Linklater, *The Falklands War,* 69,
[137] Thornton, *The Falklands Sting*, 86.
[138] Gamba, *The Falklands War*, 127.

regime. There was therefore only one option left if the junta wanted any hope of survival. The March policy then was "a desperate gamble; it was the last card they [the junta] could play from a bad hand that held out any prospect of success."[139] The end-result, of course, was much worse.

The second factor was the junta's perception that the offense-defense balance, once seen as (at least temporarily) favorable to Buenos Aires might shift towards the British. With the escalation of tensions following the Davidoff incident, the junta believed that Britain had already dispatched a fleet of submarines and frigates to the South Atlantic. British newspaper headlines on March 23 reported that the royal navy had set sail for the Falklands.[140] The evidence is scant, at best, making it difficult to determine with any certainty when the first British submarine left for the South Atlantic. Eddy and Linklater claims that Thatcher and her advisers first decided to send the fleet on March 31, a full week after the British press had announced their departure.[141] Freedman argues that the information "was at best premature and by and large wholly inaccurate," but that their assessment that the British fleet had departed as early as March 25th led to their ill-dated decision.[142] The important thing, however, is not when the actual fleet departed, but the fact that Buenos Aires that they expected a major increase in British naval forces in the region—and that this belief caused the junta to launch their invasion earlier than anticipated.

These two factors were the principal causes for the junta's final decision to move up the invasion. The Davidoff incident was a stroke of bad luck, and the British threat to

---

[139] Lebow, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War," 109.
[140] Moro, *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict*, 14.
[141] Eddy and Linklater, *The Falklands War,* 75.
[142] Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 76.

remove the scrapmen forced the junta with a decision to put up or shut up--.the former

essentially being impossible given the rising domestic unrest. The junta had enjoyed a

favorable offense-defense balance over Britain largely due to their proximity to the

Falklands, but their perception that the balance was shifting with Britain's dispatching of

a naval force – though rooted in faulty intelligence – contributed to their sense of

desperation and their belief that, if they did not act soon, they would lose their window of

opportunity. All these factors interacted in such a way that Argentina was forced to act,

and suffer the consequences.

Competing Explanations

This next section of the case study examines the existing explanations for David

and Goliath wars, to examine whether they explain Argentina's decision to reclaim the

islands through force of arms, and/or the timing of the ultimate invasion. I conclude that

domestic factors are the most viable counterargument for the actual date of the offensive,

with alliance considerations also playing an important role. I find, however, that the

original plans were primarily influenced by perceptions of the offense-defense balance,

most notably the doubts about Britain's intention to retaliate, and fears of an unfavorable

offense-defense balance in the future.

Limited Aims/Fait Accompli

In the case of the Falklands, Argentine policy makers did not expect war. Oakes

argues that since the junta believed London would accept their move as a fait accompli,

the generals "devoted very little time to contingency planning for the possibility of a war

with Britain."[143] The idea of fighting a limited war over the Falklands–where resistance would be confined to whatever opposition the Argentine marines encountered during their initial amphibious assault of the islands– had long existed in the minds of the generals. Britain would be deterred by the possibility of incurring heavy losses to dislodge an entrenched Argentine force from the Falklands, and they would have to risk foul weather and high seas to reach the islands. Therefore, the explanation advanced by Paul – that David states, which believe that a limited aims strategy is viable will discount the superiority of the Goliath power, appears to be compelling in this case.

This explanation encounters problems, however. For years, hawks within the junta, most notably Navy Chief Jorge Anaya, had advocated a military solution to retake the islands. Several times between 1976 and 1982, the junta had threatened action under the assumption that they could capture the islands swiftly and present the British with a fait accompli, yet no war occurred.

What then explains why war occurred in 1982? The answer is that during prior crises the ODB favored Britain. In 1977, for example, with tensions rising, Britain had dispatched a nuclear submarine to the area, which caused Argentina to back down. In 1982, however, Argentina felt that Britain was losing interest in the islands, evidenced by its decision to withdraw the *HMS Endurance* and close the British Antarctic Survey station on South Georgia. The belief that the balance was firmly in their favor in the South Atlantic by 1982, caused the junta to commit to war over the Falklands.

---

[143] Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands," 457.

Alliance Patterns

Did Argentina expect great power support–either diplomatic or the promise of arms–for their invasion of the Falklands? Since the junta did not expect war, they certainly did not expect a third party intervention, but there is significant evidence that Galtieri's positive rapport with U.S. President Ronald Reagan helped convince him that the United States would remain neutral if Argentina attacked the islands.

Galtieri may have had legitimate reasons for expecting American neutrality, although one finds it hard to believe that he would have been foolish enough to think that Washington would intervene on Argentina's behalf against an established and close ally. The United States had always abstained during UN votes on the status of the Falklands, preferring not to antagonize either party.[144] Because of the strong right-wing, anti-communist policies of the junta, Argentina became a natural ally for Washington's containment policy in Latin America, particularly after the Reagan administration downplayed Carter's human rights concerns in the region. Galtieri was courted by Reagan, and was welcomed to Washington on various occasions. In recalling his views of the war, Galtieri would later say of Reagan that "I didn't expect his approval or support, but I was sure that he would behave with balance and neutrality."[145] A British military response, in turn, was almost certain to fail without American support.[146]

There is one critical event, however, which undercuts the explanatory power of alliance patterns in this case. Reagan telephoned Galtieri at his palace on April 1, the night before the Argentine landing at Port Stanley, advising him to order the navy to stand down. "If the only option is a military invasion, I assure you, Mr. President, that the

---

[144] Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 80.

[145] Lebow, "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War," 113.

[146] Thornton, *The Falklands Sting*, 87.

British will respond militarily" Reagan said. "I know Great Britain. Moreover, Ms. Thatcher, my friend, is a very decisive woman and she will have no choice but to fight back."[147] The president added that Great Britain was "a very close friend of the United States" and that the new and prospering relationship between Washington and Buenos Aires would be "irremediably damaged" should Argentina continue with its plans.[148]

Perhaps by then it was too late, but it would have been clear to Galtieri that Washington was not in favor of the assault. Even if Galtieri thought Reagan was bluffing with regard to Thatcher's intentions, the junta would have known at that moment that the United States would most likely intervene on Britain's behalf, or at the very least join in the international condemnation of the invasion, which would further delegitimize Argentina's legal claim to the Falklands. The junta's decision to continue with the conflict shows that the expectation of great power support was not a necessary condition for war, and one could even argue that on the eve of war, they knew they could face a combined U.S.-British force.

Cultural Judgments

There is little evidence that the Argentine junta viewed the British as "culturally inferior," or that judgments of their enemy influenced their decision making. They resented London's century-plus rule of what they viewed as rightful Argentine territory, but were aware of Britain's overall military superiority. One possible exception might be the conviction in Buenos Aires that Britain would back down when faced with pressure,

---

[147] Wynia, *Argentina: Illusions and Realities*, 15.
[148] Ibid.

as they had during the Suez Crisis in 1956.[149] There is also some evidence that Argentina did not expect a British response in part because it was governed by a female prime minister.[150] In the final analysis, Argentina's belief that Britain would not fight was based more on the perception that London was losing interest in the region, and less – if at all – on the assumption that Britain did not have the fortitude to do so.

Domestic Factors and Regime Insecurity

The last alternative explanation concerns the domestic situation in Buenos Aires prior to the invasion. The junta, with good reason, feared for its survival: six years of military rule and repression had angered the public and led to widespread demands for reform.[151] The economy of Argentina was in freefall, with many of its largest financial institutions declaring bankruptcy, and inflation soaring –further inflaming domestic opposition to the state. The fragmentation of military rule and the disorganized nature of the junta's governing apparatus has also been suggested as a possible cause for the invasion,[152] although the alignment of the navy and army under Galtieri and Anaya behind a common goal – at times a rarity in Argentina – perhaps disputes this assertion. The invasion, in short, is often seen as a diversionary conflict, a desperate maneuver by an authoritarian regime to hold on to power, unite the nation behind a patriotic cause, and reduce the likelihood of overthrow.

---

[149] Freedman and Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War*, 78.

[150] Daniel K. Gibran, *The Falklands War: Britain Versus the Past in the South Atlantic*, 5.

[151] Oakes, "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands," 447.

[152] See, for example. Jack Levy and Lily Vakili, "Diversionary Action by Authoritarian Regimes: Argentina in the Falklands/Malvinas Case," in *The Internationalization of Communal Strife*, ed. Manus Midlarsky (New York: Routledge, 1992), 127.

The evidence presented on behalf of these arguments is compelling, and domestic unrest and regime insecurity was a necessary condition for war in this case. First, it contribution to the initial decision to retake the Falklands—that is, it explains the junta' revisionist aims. Second, as I have argued earlier in this chapter, the junta's concern for its own survival made it impossible to back down after the Davidoff affair and caused led them to forego their initial plans to seize the Falklands in July and instead send their fleet during the final week of March. I argue that domestic unrest was a necessary condition for the use of force on April 2, and, in the absence of such unrest, an invasion would have occurred several months later.

The Falklands Case study, and the decision of Galtieri and the junta to invade the islands in April, can perhaps also be explained by the concept of "gambling for resurrection."[153] According to this theory, leaders facing extreme domestic unrest may be tempted to instigate a foreign policy conflict, or escalate a preexisting one, as a means of distracting the domestic populace and earning redemption for themselves and their administration.[154] This explanation is certainly fitting in the case of the Argentine junta, which faced massive protests and demands for the termination of military rule at home. In essence, since the junta equated their own survival with the national interest, an imminent overthrow or coup demanded a foreign policy action that would generate a rally-around-the-flag effect in Argentina, thereby insuring that they remained in power.

---

[153] For discussions on gambling for resurrection and on the theory of diversionary war as a means of overcoming domestic unrest, see: Oakes, *Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands;* George W. Downs and David M. Rocke. *Optimal Imperfection? Domestic Uncertainty and Institutions in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); "Peace through Insecurity: Tenure and International Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47 (August 2003): 445–46; Alastair Smith, "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Democratic Systems," *International Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (March 1996): 133–53.

[154] Downs, *Optimal Imperfection*, 58.

The offense-defense balance was instrumental in their early planning, and it should be reiterated that the junta did not believe that Britain would employ its navy against them to reclaim the islands. In any event, there is compelling evidence that the junta – facing domestic unrest and the prospect of being thrown out of office and imprisoned – decided that action must be taken despite an unfavorable ODB. It was, to borrow a phrase from John F. Kennedy, "one hell of a gamble."

Conclusion

The Falklands case study again shows the importance of the dyadic ODB to the outbreak of David and Goliath wars. The junta's original plan for the invasion and what actually occurred in the South Atlantic in 1982, as I have argued, were both based in large part on the junta's perceptions of the offense-defense balance, including the ultimately incorrect belief that the British would not retaliate. Domestic factors were also instrumental in this decision.

The results of this case study confirm the importance of the dyadic offense-defense balance in understanding weak state decision-making. Like Egypt, Argentina's attack was a result of the perceptions of their leaders. The difference, of course, was that Egypt's perceptions were correct and Argentina's were not. Argentina believed that Britain would not fight, and they feared their own ousting, causing a desperate shift in their original policy preference. Egypt, on the other hand, planned everything down the last detail, and was able to score a quick victory in the early days of the war against Israel before a US airlift and tactical blunders by Egypt's armored divisions shifted the momentum to Cairo's favor. Years later, Egypt was able to regain control over the Sinai

Peninsula through the Camp David Accords, while Argentina's claim to the Falklands remains little more than a claim.

Chapter V
Conclusion

The causes of war and conflict have long fascinated historians and political scientists for a variety of reasons. It is a dangerous and destructive enterprise, yet it still occurs between nations. Studies of war are attractive in the belief that by understanding its causes, we can do more to bring about and increase the existence of war's antonym – peace. This thesis has focused on a particular form of interstate warfare that is largely absent from the literature on the causes of war. The frequency and peculiarity of these conflicts make this a regrettable omission, hence this study.

The results of the case studies point to the effectiveness of dyadic offense-defense theory in explaining David and Goliath wars. In particular, the theory reveals that the timing of these wars is based on the belief that the David state has acquired the capabilities and developed the tactics required to shift the offense-defense balance in their favor. While past explanations have identified factors that make conflict more likely, they are not sufficient conditions for war. That is, they may explain why the David state had revisionist intentions, but they cannot explain why some crises resulted in war while others did not. Thus, perceptions of the offense-defense balance were a necessary condition in each of these cases because if the balance had been seen as favoring the Goliath state, war would not have occurred. In this chapter, I briefly summarize the findings from the two case studies, examine their implications for foreign policy practitioners, and present suggestions for future research.

Comparing the October War and the Falklands Invasion

In the October War, leaders in Cairo developed a sophisticated strategy based off their perceptions of the offense-defense balance, which they believed gave them the advantage in combat with Israel. Chief of Staff Shazly and other Egyptian military planners developed new tactics and capabilities based on the relationship between the two states' forces and the battlefield terrain. They predicted that their innovation of the SAM umbrella could protect their armor and ground forces during the initial assault over the canal by nullifying Israel's superior air power. Their technical innovations and use of water cannons allowed them to overcome what previously was believed to be an insurmountable geographic barrier in the Suez Canal. The timing of the invasion was based chiefly on these new tactics and their calculations of tides in the Suez Canal.

In the case of Argentina, the timing of the Falklands war is explained by perceptions of the dyadic offense-defense balance—and other factors, such as the Davidoff affair and concerns for the survival of the regime. While other variables played a role determining *when* the war occurred, the case nevertheless demonstrates of the importance of the perceived offense-defense to the decision making of David states. First, the original plans for recapturing the Falklands in July were based on the expectation that more advanced weapons would have arrived in full from France and the weather and ocean conditions would make a British response impossible. By this time, the British were also expected to have withdrawn their main naval force from the region and closed their survey base on South Georgia. The junta believed that the British would not commit their forces because London was growing less interested in the region.

In the final analysis, however, the junta launched an invasion of the Falklands in part because they believed the offense-defense balance would favor Britain in the near future, and because the regime's survival was in jeopardy. If they were overthrown, the junta feared having to atone for their involvement in the Dirty War. Their "desperate gamble" – reclaiming the Falkland Islands for Argentina – was their only card to play.

Are the results consistent with the hypotheses advanced in Chapter II? Yes, although the Argentine case illustrates that when the survival of a regime is imperiled, an unfavorable offense-defense balance may not be enough to deter a David state from launching a diversionary war. For the most part, however, the cases illustrate that the offense-defense balance – the perceived ease of attack or defense – is the critical determinant of whether and when weak states will launch wars against more powerful states.

While other factors mattered in each case, none were sufficient conditions for war. In both cases, the governments of the David state were under domestic pressures to act. Economic difficulties in both countries, coupled with threats to the survival of both regimes, were important factors in the decisions to initiate conflicts, but they were not sufficient given that these conditions were present for several years before conflict finally broke out.

While the practicability of a limited aims/fait accompli strategy was also a possible explanation in both cases, the Egyptian example shows that even knowing that a fait accompli strategy was needed to win back the territory Israel had taken was not enough to trigger a war: decision makers needed to overcome an unfavorable offense-defense balance to believe that a limited war was viable. Furthermore, Argentina never

expected a military response from Britain, but as a matter of covering their tracks, they originally planned on an invasion during a time when a British response – even if it was desired in London – would not be possible.

Cultural judgments and alliance patterns appeared to play little or no role in either case. Many of these variables reinforced the attractiveness of a military policy, but without the offense-defense balance, it is unlikely that these wars would have occurred.

Policy implications

What do the results mean for policy makers? One important finding is that the offense-defense balance can favor weak states even when the overall capabilities on either side clearly favor the powerful state. The theory shows that Goliath states may not be able to rely on deterrence to prevent wars with David states, and may have to approach diplomacy with vigor in order to resolve international disputes. Particularly in an era where conflicts often end soon after they begin, whether through the intervention of other great powers or international institutions, weak states may see the use of force to alter the status quo as a viable option if they believe that the offense-defense balance is even temporarily favorable.

The main contribution of this thesis is the ability to effectively predict the timing of David and Goliath Wars. While this may seem to some a minor contribution, timing is arguably the most critical factor of conflict for policy-makers. It is fairly easy to identify ongoing disagreements or conflicts between states over territory or past grievances. What is most important, however, is predicting when conflicts will break out between adversaries. By monitoring arms acquisitions and focusing on intelligence, powerful

states can better predict when wars will actually occur. For the United States, this theory can aid policy makers dealing with ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and South Asia – places where conflicts and crises are frequent, and which involve asymmetric relationships between foes.

The theory may also be increasingly important for policy makers for two reasons. First, while the growing frequency of David and Goliath wars is notable, it is even more so when we recognize the overall decline of great power war in contemporary world politics. There are a number of scholars who have argued that war making among Goliath states – though certainly not between armed groups of thugs and warlords – may be fading. Chief among these is John Mueller, who argues that major power war, much like social customs such as slavery, has become obsolete.[155] While this argument is always risky, and observers once called World War I the war to end all wars, the "Retreat from doomsday" argument does seem compelling. In light of the decline of major war, and the growth of international institutions to resolve disputes peacefully, the literature on the causes of war should shift its focus to the conflicts that do exist, whether they are David and Goliath wars, ethnic wars, or major power "policing conflicts" in troubled hot spots.

The second factor that may make these conflicts particularly important to policy makers in the future is the advanced state of modern weaponry. The Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) that scholars first observed in the 1980s is based on that the invention and availability of new powerful and precise weaponry, which has accompanied the spread of capitalism. The development of new weapons, along with the rise of information technology to create net-centric armies that coordinate and improve

---

[155] See: John Mueller *Retreat From Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989). Also, John Mueller, *The Remnants of War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

the efficiency of their missions using cutting-edge technology – has led to "a revolution" in the way that war is conducted, giving both technologically advanced nations a natural advantage over less developed states, but also increasing the damage that smaller states can inflict using more powerful weapons.

The implication of the RMA for David and Goliath wars is that weaker states can acquire advanced weaponry more quickly and easily. One need only look at the sophisticated weapons and technology used by Somalia's pirates—and the subsequent success in conflicts with great power navies—to see the ease with which these weapons can be acquired and used. Therefore, David states bent on changing the status quo will increasingly be able to acquire the necessary capabilities to do so.

Another significant finding of this study is the irrelevance of nuclear weapons for deterring non-nuclear David states. Israel's nuclear arsenal was insufficient to deter Egyptian aggression. While leaders in Cairo suspected Israel had a nuclear capability, they dismissed the possibility of their use, except in extremis (i.e., if Israel's existence were threatened). Since Egypt's war plans in 1973 were designed to achieve limited aims, Sadat did not believe Israel would consider a nuclear strike. The advanced alert status ordered by Meir and Dayan in the early days of the Eygptian invasion was little more than a knee-jerk reaction to initial Arab successes, which Tel Aviv had considered impossible after its swift victory in the Six Day War. Similarly, the Argentine junta ruled out the possibility that London might use nuclear weapons to defend the Falkland Islands – a safe assumption since Britain was drawing down its presence in the region. Note too, that in August of 2008, the largest nuclear arsenal in the world was insufficient to deter Georgia from launching an ill-fated conflict against Russia.

Suggestions for further research

To increase our confidence in the generalizability of dyadic offense-defense balance theory for explaining David and Goliath wars, it should be tested on additional cases. The recent 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict is also a good starting point for further research. A study of the Russia-Georgia conflict, for example, could explore whether Tbilisi's decisions were influenced by its perceptions of the offense defense balance. Did it suffer from an Argentina-like miscalculation: that is, did it believe that Russia would not retaliate, perhaps because the initial offensive took place during the Olympic Games? Did Georgia believe it would receive support from NATO or the United States? Did it believe the rough terrain would make a Russian counterattack difficult? Or did it simply believe the retaking of South Ossetia, whose citizens carried Russian passports and shared ethnic ties with North Ossetia, the southernmost Russian caucus province, would be accepted by Moscow as a fait accompli?

Another direction for further research is the application of the dyadic offense-defense theory to the behavior of terrorist groups and insurgencies. Terrorism is often referred to as a weapon of the weak against the strong, an obvious example of a David and Goliath conflict. And historically, many insurgencies began as small movements, whose leaders adopted whatever tactics allowed them to achieve their objectives easier. Much like David states, these groups may decide to use force against Goliath because they have discovered ways to conduct operations cheaply and use their advantages, however minimal, in exploiting the perceived enemy's weakness. Thus, the perceived

dyadic balance between terrorist groups and a Goliath state may explain terror attacks or insurgent operations.

In conclusion, the dyadic offense-defense theory provides important insight into the factors that govern weak state decision-making, and explains the puzzle phenomenon of David and Goliath wars. Perceptions of a favorable balance – the ability to conduct offensive operations cheaply against a numerically superior foe – is a necessary condition for war. The findings of this thesis have utility for monitors of global crises, arms deals and negotiations, and foreign policy decision-makers.

Bibliography

Adams, Karen R. "Attack and conquer? International anarchy and the offense-
defense-deterrence balance" *International Security* 28 (Winter 2003/2004): 45-83.

Arreguin-Toft, Ivan, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict"
International Security 26 (Summer 2001): 93–128.

Bar-Joseph, Uri. *The Watchmen Fell Asleep: The Surprise of Yom Kippur and its
Sources*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

Betts, Richard K. "Must war find a way? A review essay." *International Security* 24 (Fall
1999): 166-98.

Biddle, Stephen. "Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-Defense Theory." *The Journal
of Politics* 63 (August, 2001): 741-774.

Chiozza, Giacomo and Hein Goemans, "Peace through Insecurity: Tenure and
International Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47 (August 2003).

Christensen, Thomas, and Jack Snyder. "Chain gangs and passed bucks: Predicting
alliance Patterns in multipolarity," *International Organization* 44 (Spring 1990):
137-168.

Dabat, Alejandro and Luis Lorenzano, *Argentina: The Malvinas and the End of Military
Rule* (London: Verso, 1984).

Davis, James W. "Correspondence: Taking offense at offense-defense theory,"
International Security 23 (Winter 1998/1999): 182-89.

Downs, George W. and David M. Rocke and Randolph Siverson, "Cooperation and Arms
Races." *World Politics* 38 (1985): 118-145.

Downs, George W. and David M. Rocke. *Optimal Imperfection? Domestic Uncertainty
and Institutions in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University
Press, 1995).

Eddy, Paul and Magnus Linklater, *The Falklands War* (London: The Times Newspapers
Limited, 1982).

Fearon, James D. "Rationalist explanations for war." *International Organization* 49
(Summer 1995): 379-414.

Finel, Bernard I. "Correspondence: Taking offense at offense-defense theory. *International Security* 23 (Winter 1998/1999):182-89.

Fischerkeller, Michael P. "David Versus Goliath: Cultural Judgments in Asymmetric Wars." *Security Studies* 7 (June 1998): 1-43.

Freedman, Lawrence and Virginia Gamba-Stonehouse, *Signals of War: The Falklands Conflict of 1982* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

Gaddis, John Lewis. "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System." *International Security.* Spring, 1986.

Gamasy, Abdel Ghani. *The October War* (American University in Cairo Press, 1993)

Gamba, Virginia.*The Falklands War: A Model for North-South Crisis Prevention* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

Gibran, Daniel. *The Falklands War: Britain Versus the Past in the South Atlantic* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998).

Gilpin, Robert. "The Richness of the Tradition of Political realism." In *Neorealism and its Critics*, ed. Robert E. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

Glaser, Charles. "The Causes and Consequences of Arms Races." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 2000.

Glaser, Charles and Chaim Kaufmann. "What is the Offense-Defense Balance and How Can We Measure It?" *International Security* 22 (Spring, 1998): 44-82.

Gochman, Charles C. and Zeev Maoz, "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1916-1976," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 28, no. 4 (December 1984).

Goddard, Stacie. "Correspondence: Taking offense at offense-defense theory," *International Security* 23 (Winter 1998/1999): 182-89.

Gortzak, Yoav, Yoram Z. Haftel and Kevin Sweeney, "Offense-Defense Theory: An Empirical Assessment." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49 (February, 2005): 67-89.

Hastings, Max and Simon Jenkins. *The Battle for the Falklands* (New York: WW Norton, 1983).

Herzog, Chaim. *The Arab-Israeli Wars*: *War and Peace in the Middle East,* (New York: Random House, Second Vintage Books ed., 2005).

Honeywell, Martin and Jenny Pearce, *Falklands/Malvinas: Whose Crisis?* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1982).

Hopf, Ted. "Polarity, the offense-defense balance, and war." *American Political Science Review* 85 (June 1991): 475-92.

Huth, Paul K. "Deterrence and International Conflict: Empirical findings and theoretical Debates." *Annual Review of Political Science.* June, 1999.

Huth, Paul and Bruce Russett. "Testing Deterrence Theory: Rigor Makes a Difference." *World Politics*. July, 1990.

Jacobson, Philip "How Golda Meir won the Yom Kippur War," *London Sunday Times*. June 22, 2008.

Jervis, Robert. "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30 (January 1978).

Jervis, Robert. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

Jervis, Robert. "Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate," *International Security* 24 (Summer 1999): 42–63.

Keohane, Robert O. *Power and Governance in a Partially Globalized World*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Khalidi, Ahmed S. "The Military Balance," in *Middle East Crucible: Studies on the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973*, ed. Naseer H. Aruri (Wilmette, IL: Medina University Press International, 1975).

Kim, Woosang and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. "How perceptions influence the risk of war." *International Studies Quarterly* (March, 1995).

King, Gary, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Kissinger, Henry *Crisis: The Anatomy of two Major Foreign Policy Crises* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003)

Kristof, Nicholas. "Obama, Misha and the Bear." *New York Times*. Nov. 20, 2008.

Lebow, Richard. "Deterrence: The Elusive Dependent Variable." *World Politics* (April 1990)

Lebow, Richard. "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands

War," in *Psychology and Deterrence*, ed. Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

Levy, Jack S. *War in the modern great power system* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983).

Levy, Jack S. "The offensive/defensive balance of military technology: A theoretical and historical analysis." *International Studies Quarterly* 28 (March, 1984): 219-38.

Levy, Jack and Lily Vakili, "Diversionary Action by Authoritarian Regimes: Argentina in the Falklands/Malvinas Case," in *The Internationalization of Communal Strife*, ed. Manus Midlarsky (New York: Routledge, 1992).

Liberman, P. "Offense-defense balance, interdependence, and war." *Security Studies* 9 (Fall, 1999): 59-91.

Lieber, Keir A. "Grasping the technological peace: The offense-defense balance and international security." *International Security* 25 (Summer, 2000): 71-104.

Lynn-Jones, Sean M. "Offense-defense theory and its critics." *Security Studies* 4 (Fall 1995) :660-91.

Mearsheimer, John. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).

Montgomery, Evan Braden. "Breaking Out of the Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance, and The Problem of Uncertainty." *International Security* 2 (Fall, 2006): 151-185.

Moro, Ruben O. *The History of the South Atlantic Conflict: The War for the Malvinas* (New York: Praeger, 1989).

Morrow, James D. et al. "Capabilities, Perception, and Escalation." *American Political Science Review*. March, 1997

Mueller, John. *The Remnants of War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

Mueller, John. *Retreat From Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

Oakes, Amy. "Diversionary War and Argentina's Invasion of the Falkland Islands," *Security Studies* 15 (July-September 2006):431-463.

Paul, TV. *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Pollack, Kenneth M. Arabs *at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

Posen, Barry. "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict." *Survival*. Spring, 1993.

Quester, George H. *Offense and Defense in the International System*. (New York: John Wiley, 1977).

Rabinovich, Abraham. *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter that Transformed the Middle East* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004).

Reston, James. "Forgotten Lessons" *New York Times*. May 5, 1982.

Sadat, Anwar. *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

Schelling, Thomas. *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

Shazly, Saad. *The Crossing of the Suez* (San Francisco: American Mideast Research, 1980).

Smith, Alastair. "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Democratic Systems," *International Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (March 1996): 133–53.

Taliaferro, JW. "Seeking Security Under Anarchy – Defensive Realism Revisited." *International Security* 25 (Winter 2000): 128-161.

Thornton, Richard C. *The Falklands Sting: Reagan, Thatcher, and Argentina's Bomb* (Washington: Brassey's, 1998).

Van Evera, Stephen. *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

Van Evera, Stephen. "Offense, Defense and the Causes of War." *International Security* 22 (Spring 1998): 5-43.

Van Evera, Stephen. "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War." *International Security*. (Summer 1984).

Von Clausewitz, Carl. *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Walt, Stephen. *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987)

Waltz, Kenneth. *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979).

Wynia, Gary W. *Argentina: Illusions and Realities* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986)

The Yom Kippur War. By the Insight Team at the *London Sunday Times*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1974).