

# THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE OCTOBER WAR FOR THE ARAB WORLD

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It may seem strange at first sight that a war like the Ramadan war, limited as to time and place, should have been able to raise a worldwide storm and, indeed, on October 25, to bring the world to the edge of the abyss, to the brink of nuclear war between the two superpowers. The war has shown the extent to which the strategic situation and economic wealth of the Middle East have acquired an importance for the great powers, Western Europe, Africa and the other countries of the Third World that involves them in its major crisis.

In appraising the results of this war some exaggeration has been apparent; some have maintained that as many myths and claims have been exploded as Israeli planes were shot down, as many theories and philosophies have been smashed as tanks and armoured vehicles were destroyed, as many delusions, accepted principles and arguments have been scattered as lives were lost. Just as the balance of forces has been upset, so political and strategic concepts have been turned upside down in the countries of the area and on the international stage. New concepts have been created of what war and peace will be like in the future, and even of life in a new future world. A historical transformation has clearly taken place.

Others belittle these consequences, restricting themselves to the military aspect of the war, which they see as a draw in a sporting contest, with neither victor nor vanquished.

What is certain is that neither by underestimation nor by overestimation can a true judgement of the consequences of the war be reached. History does not advance that slowly or that quickly. The most important thing as far as we are concerned is what door it knocks at and what barrier it pierces when it reaches the crossroads. In this sense the October war wound up one set of

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circumstances and opened a new one, and created new factors which are bound to have no small effect on the course that is followed after the crossroads.

The changes that took place as a result of the war will be dealt with in this article; they can be summarized briefly as follows.

The Arabs are in a good psychological state and the Jews are in a state of dejection, not because the Arabs were victorious and the Jews defeated but because the Arabs' victory lay in the fact that they were not defeated and the Jews' defeat in the fact that they were not victorious. The Arabs, admittedly, were expecting a victory, but it is also true that the Jews never anticipated the courage of the Arabs, nor that the Arabs would inflict on them such losses of life and equipment and destroy the myth that was so firmly fixed in their minds, that the Israeli air force was invincible and its army unconquerable.

Israel is now in a state of diplomatic isolation. Many African countries have severed diplomatic relations, while on the other hand the Arabs have broken their isolation from the West and obtained the full support of the non-aligned countries and the relative support, if only in the form of declarations of intention, of the nine countries of the European Common Market and Japan.

On the global strategic level, NATO has been shaken as a result of the emergence of a serious difference of opinion between the countries of Western Europe and the United States on the policy pursued by the latter in the Middle East. The Arabs have discovered the power of oil and Western Europe has realized the vulnerability of its economy to this weapon. The importance has meanwhile increased of the joint role played in the Middle East by the two superpowers in spite of their conflicting interests.

As regards the major problem, the Palestine problem has achieved greater understanding throughout the world, and the West has begun to have doubts about the arguments on which Israel established its special relations with the Western countries. As regards the derivative of this problem, the Arab-Israeli dispute, the war has opened the door to rapid action on behalf of a political settlement under the auspices of the two great powers and the fixing of a peace conference.

The changes that took place after the Ramadan war, however, may not be deep-rooted and their influence may well be subjected to re-examination. For instance, certainly the fact that the cease-fire resolution adopted on October 22, 1973 was accompanied by a call for immediate negotiations between the parties under specific international supervision and subsequently followed by the initial stages of the Geneva Conference, is an indication of change. But this does not necessarily imply that a settlement of the Middle East problem will be reached, firstly because the problem is difficult and complicated, and secondly because the determining factors in a diplomatic settlement are a

reflection of the military situation and the situation on the field of battle rather than the justice of the cause and its underlying motivations.

I am not being pessimistic, nor advocating war for its own sake. Nor, on the other hand, am I advocating a temporary peace brought about by an unjust solution. Real peace is one that is based on the elimination of the causes of war. For this reason it is important to define the new factors that came into existence after the outbreak of the October war at the Arab level, and assess their repercussions at world level.

### 1. AT THE PSYCHOLOGICAL LEVEL

The most prominent result of the war was the psychological victory attained by the Arabs. Prior to the war, the Arab sense of dishonour, shame and loss of self-respect was overwhelming. The world seemed to be looking askance at the Arabs and a feeling of national humiliation prevailed.

In this atmosphere the inveterate pessimists and defeatists within the Arab world were only too ready to reproach the Arabs for cowardice and submissiveness. It became common club and drawing room talk to say that the Arabs were only good at rhetoric, that the Arab soldier was incapable of fighting and coping with advanced weapons, that he fled the battlefield. The Arab nation was disparaged in such circles for an organic impotence and technical backwardness which ruled out all possibility of its achieving progress, absorbing civilization and living in history and in the contemporary world. According to some, it might even be on the way to becoming a museum piece.

Then came the surprise, and along with it, the psychological shock. The Arab soldiers fought and fought well; they distinguished themselves in attack and defence and were able to cope with advanced weapons. They crossed the Canal and held out against the attacks of the enemy; they had dealings with death, and learned to coexist with it, they killed and were killed. The Arabs recovered their self-confidence and their honour, and wiped out the blow to their self-respect and the disgrace that had befallen them in the June War.

But this psychological victory, important though it is, is still only a means and not an end. The end is still the achievement of victory over the enemy, the routing of its army and the recovery of the occupied territory. Naturally the Arabs wanted this victory, and if it was not achieved, they were nevertheless full of hope that they would do better next time than they did this time.

One further important result of this war was the creation of a new intellectual climate which rescued the Arabs from their mental fog. They began to get inside things, and to get to know the enemy's affairs, problems, advantages

and failings, and took them systematically into account. They abandoned romantic revolutionism, with its leftist and rightist trends, and achieved a realistic revolutionism accompanied by scientific, methodical and rational thought which will enable them, now that they have abandoned infantile leftism for political maturity, to make an accurate appraisal of the world situation and their own situation, to determine their own strong and weak points and to outline a successful policy.

This war taught them that aspirations are not achieved by merely wishing, and that a cause does not triumph merely because they know it to be just, but through profound belief in it, strategic analysis and preparing the means that can transform this analysis into reality and, finally, through a determined and decisive will.

## 2. THE WAR AND THE NATION

When the war broke out all the Arab states immediately made a genuine effort, unprecedented in previous wars, to support Egypt, Syria and the Palestinian resistance in their war against the traditional enemy, either putting their armies into the battle or providing money and arms. In this way the slogan that the battle had an all-Arab character was unanimously made a reality by Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Kuwait, the Gulf Amirates, Sudan, the Maghreb and South Yemen. Neither the classification of some of them as progressive and others as reactionary countries, nor the advocacy by certain revolutionaries "that civil war and class social struggles be given priority," succeeded in dividing these countries from each other.

The importance of what happened lies in the liberation from the Western, and in particular American, sphere of influence, which was embodied in the attitudes taken by some of the Arab countries that had been clients of the West towards the embargoing of oil to the United States and Holland and the reduction of supplies to the other Western countries and Japan on October 17, 1973.

This can only be explained by the fact that the battle with Israel is seen as the battle of all Arab countries; a victory for Egypt and Syria is a victory for all of them and the defeat of these countries is a defeat for all of them. In other words, the realization by Arab countries that they have an overriding common destiny was embodied in this war, and this was the real and effective solidarity that was achieved.

However, this solidarity, in spite of its extreme importance in the present battle, contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction unless it undergoes a change in quality and rises to the level of unity. Common destiny will remain no more than an intellectual expression should it fail to achieve an all-Arab

significance, and should it not adopt as its point of departure the premise of a national unity bringing together the Arab nation. It is to be feared that some Arab governments may take the effectiveness of this Arab solidarity in the military and oil fields as a pretext for freezing it and hanging on to it as a final formula for unity, thereby blocking the way to real Arab unity. This is especially so in that the overwhelming majority of the Arab governments are regionalist in their attitudes, being either conservative or having reservations as regards Arab unity. Some of them take a European unity project as a pattern and a model, although the unity of Europe is a matter of choice inasmuch as Europe is a group of nation states, whereas, inasmuch as the Arab homeland is the homeland of a single Arab nation, Arab unity is a predetermined and inevitable condition of its existence.

Because unity is the Arabs' way to strength, modernization and self-determination, Israel is the objective ally of fragmentation and disunity. Since the war there has been a feeling in the Arab countries and in the world that the Arab world is a great power in this area, that an end has been put to Israel's aspiration to be that great power in the area, spreading the umbrella of colonialism over the Arab countries so as to protect the interests of the West, and in particular those of the United States. It is clear that the West and America were betting on Israel and regarded her, as Herzl once claimed, as the "civilized power" which would resist "Arab barbarism." But one of the consequences of this war has been to cut Israel back down to size and to induce more balanced thinking in the West. It is not excessively optimistic to say that Western Europe, led by France and Britain, now believes that it is more in its interest to deal with the Arab world as a unit with harmonious interests, unambiguous goals and a stable entity than as a number of unstable states with various conflicting interests.

### 3. AT THE MILITARY LEVEL

The Ramadan war was the first real war fought by the Arab armed forces, and it is a mistake to call it the fourth war. It was the first war in which there was a really hard-fought confrontation between thousands of tanks, guns and missiles, and hundreds of planes. This war taught the Arabs, negatively and positively, many things on the purely military plane:

(i) It illustrated the importance of ample supplies of high quality arms, and that it is essential, for the prosecution of war, to establish an Arab armaments industry to produce certain kinds of arms.

(ii) It demonstrated the need for the Arab armed forces to support the Egyptian and Syrian fronts and for these forces to be placed under a joint

Arab command. The necessity for the establishment of a unified Arab army for joint defence under a unified command was also shown.

(iii) The importance was clarified of the military command, the general staff, training, discipline, the *esprit de corps* of the army and centres for military research and defensive strategic studies.

(iv) A profound awareness was generated by the war that the security of the Arab countries is indivisible and that unified defence is required to maintain it, and that the proposals made and decisions taken in this connection must be translated into reality.

#### 4. OIL AND ECONOMICS

One of the most far-reaching results of this war was the discovery by the Arabs of oil as a political weapon. Although it was only after the outbreak of the military action that the potential significance of this means of pressure emerged, it has continued to be significant after the bombardment by artillery and planes has come to an end. The reason for this is that oil has become the lifeblood of civilization and progress to a remarkable extent. No sooner was the decision taken to embargo its export, if only partially, to the industrial countries, than progress there stopped and life was paralyzed, especially in the countries of Western Europe and Japan. In many of these countries, oil rationing and driving restrictions have been imposed, heating and air conditioning in houses and offices is being reduced, and, most important of all, signs of economic stagnation, and of a halt in the rate of economic growth and the increase of national revenue, began to appear.

The oil weapon had been the subject of discussion before the war, but both the fact that it was used and the discovery of how rapidly it was effective were among the surprising results of the conflict.

The oil weapon is, moreover, not the only case of an Arab strategic commodity, the embargoing of which can lead to crisis. There are also the Arab credits in European and American banks, which, experts estimate, amount to some twenty billion dollars invested in European banks alone. Were only half of this sum withdrawn from these banks it would give rise to an unprecedented financial crisis in most Western countries. Whether or not this weapon will be made more effective depends on the new attitude adopted by the Western countries to Israel.

The use of the oil weapon in the Arabs' battle with Israel was accompanied by factors which may well lead to decisive changes in the bilateral relations that existed between the oil producing countries and the foreign exploiting countries, resulting from increasing Arab awareness of the power of their own resources.

One important result of the war was a change in attitude to the oil companies. This reflected the feeling of the oil producing countries that the agreements previously concluded with the oil companies were unequal, and the profound desire of their peoples to recover the ownership of their oil wealth and to control it completely from the economic aspect (production, prices, marketing, etc.), and also the political aspect (embargo of oil supplies to certain countries, reduction of exports, etc.), all of which activities were formerly carried out in accordance with the wishes of the companies. A real change has now taken place in the positions of the oil producing countries and the exploiting companies, and the cartel of the companies has been replaced by a cartel of the producing countries, inasmuch as the latter have now become completely responsible for directing their oil policy. With regard to the exploitation of oil, during the war the American and Dutch companies in Iraq were nationalized and it became certain that Kuwait would raise its partnership ratio of the shares in the Kuwait Oil Company. The same thing may well apply as regards Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Amirates, liberating them once and for all from control by the exploiting companies and enabling them to deal directly with the consumer countries.

This increasing awareness on the part of the Arab producing countries of the importance of oil in the economic development of their countries and in the expansion of industrialization, and defence, and in commercial exchange with the industrial countries, constitutes a key means of escape from economic backwardness. The oil producing countries must, however, realize the necessity for study and research, and for the utilization of Arab experts from all over the world to determine how great Arab reserves really are, to fix production in accordance with the requirements of the producing countries rather than external world requirements, as is the usual economic practice, and estimate the real price of oil and its marketing, refining and processing.

The fact that most of the Arab oil producing countries are underpopulated and most of the other Arab countries overpopulated with large labour forces will make the Arab countries appreciate the importance of their cooperating at the economic and commercial levels and of establishing a development equivalent of OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries) to draw up an Arab strategy, including an economic council, a planning council, a currency fund, a development and construction bank, a scientific and technical research centre and an Arab defence council. The object of all this would be to urge the Arab countries towards Arab unity, for which there is no alternative if the Arab world wants to become a positive civilizational force.

## 5. THE EUROPEAN AND WORLD LEVELS

As a result of the war important changes have taken place in Europe as regards its relations with the Arab world, the relations between the different European countries, and Europe's relations with the United States and Israel.

In the Arab view Europe has become more objective in its policy since Algeria became independent and since de Gaulle formulated his vision of the future of the Arab world. President Abdul Nasser was the first to realize the conflict between the Middle Eastern goals and interests of France and Britain and those of the United States and Israel. Relations between Egypt and these two countries became closer and have continued to become so since the death of President Abdul Nasser and General de Gaulle and the defeat of the British Labour Party.

But there is something that embitters the Arabs and creates a hiatus in these relations. They ask themselves: what have we done to the West that so many of its intellectuals, journalists and politicians should give Israel their unreserved and unconditional support? Why is it that Western public opinion not merely has a pro-Israeli bias but is actually anti-Arab? It is because the Arabs do not have anything in Europe, as the Jews do; they have no influence in parliaments, parties and the church, as the Jews do; they do not control financial, information and publicity establishments, as the Jews do. For instance, when the Munich incident took place and the Arab ambassadors came to help find a humane solution, the German government allowed the Israeli intelligence and other services to carry out a violent solution resulting in the deaths of almost all concerned, and a storm of outrage against the "Arab butchers" swept through Europe. But when the Beirut incident took place and the three resistance leaders were assassinated by Israeli agents in Beirut on April 10, 1973, the Western press was all praise for the audacity, courage, skill and precision of the Israeli intelligence and other services. Similarly, when Israel despises the European countries and makes it impossible for them to press for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 242, the only reaction from Europe is that the Resolution is restated in joint communiqués, while when the Arabs impose a partial embargo on oil supplies to certain European countries, the European press, even in France and Britain which have not been affected by the reduction, immediately raises an outcry about oil blackmail. The strange thing is that the articles on the oil crisis appearing in the European press these days make no mention of the causes of the crisis, the analyses completely missing the point when they make no suggestion that Israel has anything to do with the crisis.

However, the war has removed some of the obstacles which prevented Europe from having a true view of the Arab world, and these are positive elements in the establishment of a European policy vis-à-vis the Arabs and an



Arab policy vis-à-vis Europe. Europe and the Arab world have a rendezvous with each other; when all is said and done, Europe has historical and cultural relations with, and economic interests in the Arab world. The war has shown that it is possible for Europe and the Arab world to agree with and complement one another rather than to conflict with each other.

The Arab world, like Europe, is being drawn towards the establishment of national unity. Both the Arab world and Europe have their own identities, fixed traditions and ways of life which they are not willing to relinquish. They together aspire to a policy of independence and non-alignment either with East or West. This similarity is leading them to cooperation rather than conflict, and is helping each of them to achieve the unity it desires.

One important material factor that brings Europe and the Arab world together is the fact that they are economically complementary. Europe needs Arab oil and the Arab world needs European technology to escape from its economic backwardness, and each of them is tending to side-step intermediaries. The war has, moreover, revealed that peace and security in the Middle East are indispensable for the security and prosperity of Europe. This fact will eventually convince the European countries that the security and stability of the Middle East can only be achieved by safeguarding the security and stability of the Arab world, and by all the European countries pursuing a policy of openness to the Arab world.

Of considerable significance for European strategy was the alert of US forces on October 25, which demonstrated to European countries the extent to which American Middle East policy differs from, and indeed conflicts with, European policy. This has led to a reappraisal of the basic principles of NATO. President Nixon declared the state of alert in American military bases in Europe and the world without previous consultation with the European countries, thereby exposing them to the dangers of a nuclear war in which they had no interest.

Finally, one result of Israel's pursuit of an aggressive policy against the Arabs has been her diplomatic isolation from the group of African countries that have severed their relations with her. This has led to the African nations becoming aware of the common destiny that links them to the Arab world; in fact, Africa's relations with Europe still have a neo-colonialist tinge. But the Arab world, with its resources, its brotherly feelings for the Africans and its historical and religious relations with them, can become the middle world between Europe and Africa, which could result in a non-colonialist cooperation composed of Europe, the Arab world and Africa.

## 6. THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

One major factor brought to light by the October war is the agreement of the two great powers, through the policy of positive coexistence between them, to use their influence with the two conflicting parties to achieve a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This means that the war has terminated the stagnation of the state of no peace and no war.

At the international level this may be considered as a constructive move, but at the local level it indicates that the great powers are obtaining a tighter hold on the destinies of the small countries, and in particular that their role in the area is expanding. This was illustrated by the acceptance by the conflicting parties of the cease-fire on October 22 after the contest between the Soviet Antonov 22's and the American Galaxies, which brought the parties heavy and advanced armaments, accompanied by an implicit expression of hope that they would stop using them when asked to do so.

But to accept a cease-fire is one thing and to accept a peaceful settlement is another, and it is the latter that must be accepted by the conflicting parties if there is to be a permanent peace in the area. In this connection it would be beneficial for the two influential powers to apply the familiar principle that for peace to be achieved the causes of the conflict must be removed, once the facts of it have been understood, and the solution must be found on a basis of justice and right.

Behind the Arab-Israeli conflict lies a major concern, the Arab need for self-fulfilment in the context of a conflict of destiny with Zionism and the Zionist-Israeli presence. The Palestine problem is merely the visible and incandescent face of that problem.

This problem is, in essence, that of the creation of a Jewish national home in the Arab territory of Palestine as a result of the Balfour Declaration. It is not an ordinary or simple problem, nor is it the problem of secure or insecure frontiers. It is a major and complicated problem, with ideological, racist and psychological ramifications, and it is unparalleled in our times.

It is absolutely unlike the German, Korean, Vietnamese or Chinese problems. The territories of these divided states are inhabited by indigenous peoples of a single strong racial stock who have been divided and separated by social ideologies and international affiliations. They can therefore solve their problems by uniting themselves by peaceful means.

The reason for the objection to the Zionist presence in Palestine, the heart of the Arab homeland, is one which the Arab people feel to be of self-defence. The area extending from the Gulf to the Ocean constitutes, geographically and historically, the one Arab homeland, in which there lives a nation with an ancient history and a common language, culture, creed and outlook. Then,

when this nation was in the process of achieving unity, strength and modernization, the Zionist invasion of Palestine destroyed Arab Palestine.

The clash between Israel and the Arab nation was inevitable, inasmuch as Zionism is a dynamic movement, based upon the ingathering of Jews of the world to lead a Jewish life in Palestine, all of which is regarded as a territory to which the Jews have the right. It is, thereby, a movement whose realization can only be achieved at the expense of the Arabs. Arab existence and Zionist existence are conflicting realities which cannot co-exist, and even though in the course of history Arab existence has been enriched by the existence in it of peoples with other languages, cultures and views, and can today be enriched by the presence within it of Jews, it must inevitably reject the presence of an exclusivist Jewish state entity founded on Arab dispossession.

From this it can be deduced that the background of the so-called Arab-Israeli conflict is the Zionist spirit, negative towards the Arabs, on the basis of which Israel built its entity, and that any solution which does not take into account the danger of this spirit for the Arab nation is doomed to failure or merely temporary success. The recent war may have affirmed Palestinian existence and the restoration to the Palestinian people of their national rights, but it must be realized that the Palestinians who fought declared war on the Zionist entity of the state of Israel, expressing themselves as the vanguard of the Arab movement for liberation from Zionism.

## 7. THE PRINCIPLES OF PEACE THROUGH SETTLEMENT

The political meaning of the word "settlement" is that of reaching the solution of a crisis by non-military means, and establishing a real and permanent peace. However, the precondition must be that we Arabs should not relinquish the minimum goals we have declared, and if steps must be taken by stages, the stages must be delimited and short and must advance towards the goal.

Some Arab countries have restricted these goals to two conditions:

1. The restoration to the people of Palestine of their national rights.
2. Total withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories.

The minimum we must require for the fulfilment of the first condition should be the establishment of a unified democratic Palestinian state, including both Arabs and Jews, on all the territory of Palestine. This is to be achieved by the Palestinians returning to their homes under international guarantees. That they should return has been affirmed by several United Nations resolutions, not to mention the fact that even the Partition resolution of 1947, which was adopted by the United Nations in suspect circumstances, and

without many of the countries voting in favour of it knowing the facts of the problem, did not provide for the expulsion of the people of Palestine from their homeland.

The return of the people of Palestine to their homeland will, by its very nature, put an end to the Zionist structure of Israel, which is founded upon militaristic, imperialist and racist attitudes to the Arabs. It will halt Jewish immigration, the pressure of which on Arab territory could be the harbinger of a new war, and it will make Palestine an ordinary state. The establishment of this state will alter the Jewish problem on the international level and assist in finding a more humane solution for it. The Arabs are prepared to share in this solution but not prepared to liquidate the Palestine problem by giving up the national rights of the Palestinians.

The second condition — withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories — is a condemnation of constantly repeated Israeli aggression, a reaffirmation of belief in the principle that there must be no usurpation or annexation of territory by force, and a blow to the imperialist spirit which has animated Israel's policy for a quarter of a century.

For all the talk of international guarantees, the establishment of demilitarized zones and the stationing of foreign forces in them, even if they are international forces, the Zionist nature of Israel will not change and this nature will always be a threat to the Arab nation.

The only guarantee for the Arabs, in view of all that has been said above, is the unification of national life; the creation of unity and strength, and the modernization of the Arab nations. Therefore we must believe passionately in unity, think of it unceasingly and work for it indefatigably.