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## AGAINST EXPECTATIONS

The Yom Kippur War caught the Israeli government by surprise.<sup>1</sup> After August 1, 1970, the designated day for the beginning of a cease-fire in the Suez Canal, the IDF focused on the northern border, and only after the IAF had struck Syrian military targets did the northern front calm down. Because Israel imposed a cease-fire without surrendering its political positions, the leadership thought that it was undefeatable and that the failure of political efforts was primarily an Arab problem. In September 1970, a month after the cease-fire came into effect, Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser died, and his deputy, Anwar Sadat, was appointed president. The general perception that Sadat was a weaker leader than his predecessor increased the Israeli government's disregard for Egypt's military capabilities. Yet from the moment he came into power, Sadat did everything he could to express strength and determination, and among other things, he threatened not to renew the cease-fire agreement. He did not fulfill his threat but set 1971 as the deadline when he would decide whether to take his country toward a peace treaty or war. The India-Pakistan War, which broke out at the end of 1971, disrupted his plans.

Israel interpreted Sadat's threats as a sign of political and military weakness and estimated that Egypt would not go to war before it had prepared its air force to deal with the IDF. Regarding the northern border, Israel assumed Syria would not declare war on its own. In May 1973, Israeli intelligence learned that Egypt planned to declare war on Israel but estimated that chances were slim that war would actually break out. Being proved right strengthened the Israeli intelligence services' confidence in their assessments.