



Original Review

## WHY DO MOST SPECTACULAR SURPRISE SUCCESSES END UP IN DEFEAT?

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### ABSTRACT

This study analysed why most spectacular surprise successes end up in defeat. Surprise has consistently been a substantive characteristic of warfare. Surprise is an event that is initiated with the aim of taking the enemy unaware. The surprise initiator desires to attain victory against the enemy with minimal attrition to their equipment and forces. Some surprise offensives however, remarkably succeed at the initial point, only to become catastrophic in the end for the surprise attacker. The objective of the study was to probe the possible causes for an ultimate defeat of the surprise attackers by the victim of the surprise through an in-depth historical analysis of case studies of surprise wars. The study adopted the qualitative research approach and a descriptive discourse pattern, and data collection was mainly secondary. An in-depth analysis brings to light that surprise offensives mostly fail in a catastrophic way because the strategy of the adversary that took the initiative is miscalculated. Thus, surprise mobilizes the victim and their response is usually vicious and brutal resulting in the defeat of the surprise initiator. The study recommended that for a surprise to be successful and achieve an ultimate victory in a war it needs to be incorporated into a creative comprehensive war strategy.

**Keywords:** Attacks, Military, Offensive, Surprise, War.

**Citation of article:** Dii, CT and Eniye, CD (2022). Why do most spectacular surprise successes end up in defeat? *African Journal of Social Issues*, 5(1): 85-99

**Date Submitted:** 16/07/2022 **Date Accepted:** 04/08/2022 **Date Published:** December, 2022

## INTRODUCTION

Surprise as a war concept is intelligently fashionable in today's world. Surprise has consistently been a substantive or potential feature of warfare. Browning (2002) describes warfare as simply making war and that war is a physical conflict between two countries or two groups if it is a civil war. Thus warfare is the essential part of a war. Clausewitz (1940) expresses that war is simply a large scale duel and that innumerable duels resort to war; a situation where opposing parties using physical force attempt to compel one another to bend to each other's will. Surprise is an event that happens contrary to the expectations of the enemy, thereby faulting their assumptions. It happens without an adequate warning and takes the enemy unaware, and the unexpected incidence throws the enemy off balance for some time (Chorev, 1996). All through history, surprise played a notable role in the result of major military conflicts. It is the wish of all military commanders to attain victory against the enemy with minimal attrition to their equipment and forces. In an attempt to make such goals a reality, military intellectuals both in the past and in the present have acknowledged the essential role surprise can play in attaining the objective (Mallick, 2020).

Surprise offensive is as ancient as warfare. The Holy Bible describes how the Amalekites were surprised by David when he attacked at night during their feast (New King James Version, 1982, 1Samuel, 14-18). The Romans were ambushed at Lake Trasimene by the Carthaginians who clandestinely passed over the Alps through Spain into Italy. In 1776, George Washington on the eve of Christmas crossed the River of Delaware and took the Hessians at Trenton by surprise. Thucydides, Vegetius, Machiavelli, Sun Tzu and Clausewitz all construe surprise as an aspect of war (Livy & Radice, 1965). Surprise without doubt has also proven to be a very useful method employed in warfare. It has also been instrumental in the pattern of modern warfare: the 1917-1918 expedition force of Egypt in Palestine, the Second World War invasion of Normandy and the landing of MacArthur's Incheon during the war of Korea... (Niederhauser, 1994).

The possible implications of surprise however, are not at all obvious. Surprise causes war to turn into a hypothetical operation in which the possibility of some happenings can be ascertained with a level of certainty or an occurrence in which the result or effect cannot be only established ahead but figured out by one party in the conflict. Throughout history, surprise efforts against the adversary have been evident. However, to achieve and benefit from surprise requires political, military and technical context. Some surprise offensive remarkably succeeds at the initial point, only to become catastrophic in the end for the surprise attacker (Barnett, 2003). This raises questions as to why states will benefit from the initial stage of their surprise offensive only to become a victim of defeat in the end. It is in line with this view, that this study probes the possible causes for an ultimate defeat of the surprise attackers by the victim of the surprise.

This study is made up of several sections which include: conceptual and theoretical discourse, methodology, the logic of surprise, case studies of surprise attacks, lessons learnt, conclusion and recommendations.

## CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL DISCOURSE OF SURPRISE

Critchley (1978) sees surprise as a war doctrine based on psychology. It is aimed at exploiting the enemy's weakness. In a similar vein, Mallick (2020) opines that surprise psychologically dislocates the command structure of the enemy. It multiplies force in war (Mallick, 2020). For Gray (2005) surprise is often associated with asymmetry, of which both define an open content zone. It has no essential meaning except with reference to its coherent opposite. Surprise and its sibling ideas like friction, asymmetry and uncertainty unfortunately are not easily operationalized without proper strategic parameters. Mallick (2009) expresses that surprise involves invading the adversary at a place, time and manner in which he is not prepared, causing turbulence and paralysis in his command structure or destroying his capacity to fight. It can also be seen as a major determinant for attaining the initiative. Gradev (2015) argues that surprise compels the enemy to alter its plans and take actions in uncertain circumstances. It can categorically change the equilibrium of combat force. Surprise can be in the size of force, tempo, timing and direction of major effort.

Ephraim (1988) posits that surprise as a concept has three essential elements: the first is a military action that is not regular with the assumptions and expectations of the victim, thus the surprise strength is dependent on the nature and extent of such assumptions. Secondly, a surprise offensive indicates the failure of prior warning. Third, a surprise offensive implies the failure of the victim to appropriately counter the threats. This can be seen from the level of the victim's preparedness at the time of the attack. Surprise can be strategic, operational or tactical (Mallick, 2020). The factors that contribute to the accomplishment of surprise include: deception, efficient intelligence, secrecy and speed, charade of non-existent military might, limited discernibility, security, upper hand information and asymmetry (Gradev, 2015).

The surprise theory is largely derived from the writings of Michael Handel, in his logical thoughts on the nature of intelligence and surprise in 1984. The theory was built on the philosophical underpinnings of Clausewitz's discourse on strategy and war. It uses Clausewitz conception of war to analyse why surprise attacks is appealing to a particular party. However, it deviates from the viewpoint of Clausewitz who opined that surprise was an over rated strategy used in war. Handel posits that in a conflict, surprise is appealing to weaker opponent as it enables it to plan definite actions against the stronger opponent. Considering the fact that it takes a lot of risk to attain surprise and because it makes the actors to contemplate initiatives greater than their capacity, the surprise victim will usually dispel potential surprise schemes as stupid and suicidal (Handel, 1984). Handel suggests that the asymmetry in understanding the difference between prudent and reckless actions creates a paradox, which is the soul of the theory of surprise. Thus, Handel opines that there exists an explicit link between the impetus of the weaker opponent to use surprise and the inclination of stronger opponent to be really surprised. He believes that weakness is responsible for an opponent to speculate an entire operation on surprise. This is correct as stronger opponents are not motivated to lay everything on the table in

order to achieve surprise. However, such strong opponents expect to gain from surprise (Gray, 1998).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative method of research is adopted in this study. The case study analysis of historical surprise attacks was executed using a descriptive discourse approach. Data were collected for this study from secondary sources. The sources include journal articles, textbooks, reliable web sources, conference papers and policy papers.

### **The Logic of Surprise**

The logic behind surprise can be described as the idea that galvanizes states to carry out a surprise attack. The attainable benefits and advantages a group could get from launching a surprise offensive is the propelling factor towards carrying out surprise attacks. Several scholars have expressed their views on the logic of surprise. Tzu (1963) opines that surprise and deception are crucial to winning a war. He argues that deception is the basis of all warfare and that it is important to take the enemy unaware. Clausewitz explains that war is continuously bound up by chance, as war is the domain of prospects. This means that uncertainty is likely to rule; therefore such uncertainty explains why surprise is attractive to one side of the conflicting parties (Watts, 1996). According to Handel (1984), an unexpected attack that is successful will expedite the devastation of a substantial part of the adversary's forces at little expense to the assailant, by causing the stronger opponent to be psychologically thrown off balance, thus decreasing its resistance for a while. Then, the weak opponent is opportune to seize the initiative and integrate armed forces at a place and time of its preference, thus tremendously increasing its prospects of attaining a definite victory (Handel, 1984).

Freedman (2017) contends that countries launch surprise offensives as a way to attain victory without them going through the agony of lengthy conflicts. Countries most times believe that the advantage new technologies add to the offensive can be used to launch a blow that will knock out the enemy. Some examples of this logic include the railroad expedited movement in World War I and airpower during World War II. In contemporary times, cyber weapons are used as an advantage for offensive. Some examples include: the invasion of South Korea by North Korea, Operation Barbarossa, Kuwait's invasion by Iraq in 1990, Falklands invasion by Argentina. Therefore, such calculations and nuclear weapons constitute the push factor for surprise attacks.

## **CASE STUDIES OF SURPRISE ATTACKS**

Surprise has been recognized in history as a significant war principle. History however, has shown that the initiation of surprise does not guarantee a speedy victory. Some countries achieved success in the event of the surprise attack, but that success did not ensure ultimate victory for them (Cancian, 2018).

### **Bombing of US Pearl Harbour by Japan**

The use of surprise attacks can be seen in the Pearl Harbour attack by Japan. Several factors attributed to Japan bombing of the US Pearl Harbour. Firstly, the abstinence of US from joining the League of Nations after it spearheaded it made the leaders of Japan suspicious of the US. Secondly, the US financial lease to China during its war with Japan, which aided China to acquire war equipment, did not sit well with Japan. Also, the 1941 US embargo on oil stopped all licenses for export of oil to Japan, which caused it to lose almost all its oil supply and the freezing of Japanese assets by the US in 1941. Lastly Japan had imperialist and autarkic visions and aspirations (Cancian, 2018).

The strategy and decision of Japan to launch an attack in 1941 against the United States in the Pearl Harbour was to destroy the US fleets and then the Japanese would easily conquer its desired resource territories. It then would secure the boundary of its newly conquered empire and overcome the imminent counterattack of the US. When the US becomes weary, a negotiated agreement would then codify the conquests of Japanese (Betts, 1982). The plan proved abortive because, obsessed by their victories the Japanese drove their conquests too far, whereas the US turned out to be more determined and resilient than anticipated. The US retaliated by dropping nuclear atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As a result, the Japanese surprise attack turned out to be catastrophic for Japan (Cancian, 2018).

### **Operation Barbarossa**

Operation Barbarossa was the name Hitler gave to its attack on the Soviet Union in 1941. Hitler invaded Russia for two reasons: first, it needed plenteous raw materials from Russia and Ukraine for the German population and its army; secondly, Hitler hated communists and Russia was a communist state that was spreading communism abroad. Hitler underestimated the Russian Red Army because it did badly in its 1939-1940 war with Finland. Also Hitler thought because Germany had better equipment compared to the Soviet Union, Germany would defeat them in a few months. This was because out of 10,000 Soviet Union tanks, only 1,500 were capable of fighting German tanks. Thus on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1941, the Russians were completely taken by surprise by the invasion of Germany. The Russians retreated, trading territory and men for time. The Germans by the end of 1941 arrested three million Russian soldiers and captured Ukraine. Notwithstanding, the Russians in their retreat destroyed buildings and scorched the soil, ruining everything that could provide shelter and food for the Germans. This was a bane for the Germans when winter began (Jabara, 2011).

By using Russia's size as an advantage, Stalin was able to revoke the losses of materials and men. Russian troops were joined by courageous civilians who were determined to defend Russia and communism. Stalin also moved eighty percent of the industrial output of Russia (1,500 factories) away from the war zone, to the Far East, where they quickly began to manufacture essential war equipment. By November 1942, in the winter season, 300,000 German soldiers were captured in Stalingrad. With the refusal of Hitler to let the German soldiers

surrender, many soldiers died of starvation and exposure to cold as a result of their summer light uniforms. They were not adequately prepared for a winter war, almost all the buildings that would have served as shelter to them have been destroyed by the Russians and the soil was very hard for them to dig trenches. By January 1943, when they finally surrendered to Russia, only 90,000 German soldiers were remaining (Magnus Academy, 2021).

### **Battle of the Bulge**

This war is termed differently; the Germans named it “Operation Watch on the Rhine”, the “Battle of the Ardennes” was the name given to it by the French and, “Ardennes Counteroffensive” is what the Western Allies call it. However, the war is called “Battle of the Bulge” because of how the battle height was looked at through the Western Europe map (Zaloga, 2004). During the Second World War, the Germans launched an extensive heavy surprise attack against the Allied forces (primarily consisting of exhausted and inexperienced American soldiers) in the Ardennes forest in Luxembourg and Belgium on December 16, 1944. The Germans at the initial attack achieved some success. They achieved absolute surprise at one point, surrounded the Allied troops and pushed them towards the west through the American middle line, creating the ‘bulge’ that gave the war its name. However, this success was short lived. The allied forces received reinforcements and the Americans tenaciously defended crucial junctions at St. Vith and Bastogne which slowed the advancement of Germany. The Germans were also slowed down because of fuel shortages that delayed the men and material resources needed for their offensives. For the allied forces, the weather which had delayed the supply of their air support cleared up and they resumed air attacks on the Germans. The advance of Germany was brought to a halt by the end of December (DeLaForce, 2004).

The German air power on January 1, 1945, caused a serious damage to the air bases of the Allied forces in the north-west of Europe, but it incurred more losses that it could never recover from. The Allied executed a counterattack on Germany also in January and successfully pushed back the Germans and regained their earlier positions and territories before the German surprise attack. The allied resumed counterattacks in spring and crossed into Germany (Zolaga, 2004). The war ended with the surrender of Germany on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 1945. The back of the Nazi war machine was broken by this war. The US sustained 19,276 casualties and about 100,000 German soldiers were killed, captured or wounded (Hayes & Sugarman, 2006).

### **Yom Kippur War**

In 1967, Israel in a six day battle achieved a brilliant victory against Syria, Egypt and Jordan, defeated them and seized territories four times bigger than its previous size such as the Golan Heights from Syria, Egyptian Sinai desert and also what remained of historic Palestine. In 1973, six years later, Egypt and Syria in an attempt to recover the territories they lost to Israel in the 1967 war, co-ordinately launched a surprise attack against Israel on Yom Kippur, a Jewish religious holiday. On such an occasion where due to the religious observations, all



communication and transportation systems are shut down, hence totally taking the Defense Forces of Israel by surprise. The Egyptian and Syrian armies with support from the Soviet Union launched two offensives on the north and south. The losses of Israel were much as Syria within two hours captured 'Israel's Eye' a key vantage point 2,000m of Israel on Mount Hermon above sea level (Rabinovich, 2017).

Egypt and Syria achieved victory in Sinai and Golan. Egyptian armies on the south passed the Suez Canal and overran the military fortifications of Israel and forced the Israelis backwards. Also in the Golan, the Israelis lost their positions to the advancing armies of Syria. However, within a few days, Israel was fully mobilized and began to beat back the Arabs, stopping the advancement of Syria, thus causing them to retreat (Aker, 1985). As a result Jordan and Iraqi forces joined Syria in the war. With the help of the air lift military equipment provided by the US to Israel on October 10, Israel launched offensives and reclaimed most of its lost territories and even gained more grounds against both Syria and Egypt (Givens, 2002). Although Israel's victory came at a heavy cost to its equipment and Israeli soldiers, it didn't lose more soldiers compared to its counterparts. Israel lost 2,600 soldiers with 8,800 injured, while Egypt lost 7,700 men and Syria 3,500. The war was later settled with diplomatic talks and it ended in a diplomatic stalemate (Aker, 1985).

### **The Kargil War**

The Kargil war was fought between India and Pakistan in 1999. During the 1984 war between both countries, India took control of the "Siachen Glacier" which was a strategic territory to Pakistan, thus Pakistan in retaliation decided to do same in "Kargil" an Indian territory, by secretly sending in soldiers and paramilitary from 1998. Pakistan hoped to exploit the defence gaps in the sector both on Pakistan's and India's Line of Control (LoC) by carrying out intrusions into Kargil (Singh, 2021). This operation was kept secret by the Pakistan army because they aimed to use deception and surprise India. Kargil's landscape and the neighbouring areas of the LoC are not hospitable most times. The region is characterized by harsh temperatures and winds, craggy heights, it is dry and extremely cold at the same time and below the ridgelines are sloppy rocks which makes it very difficult to climb and hard for the troops. Also, snow in the Kargil Mountains melts fast when summer is approaching. There was a courteous agreement between Pakistan and India that from September 15<sup>th</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup> every year, both their armies will not stay in their posts because of the severe winter weather. This agreement since 1977 has been binding, but Pakistan pushed it aside in 1999 and took India by surprise, with the hope of getting leverage in Kashmir and to plunge India into a brief war and raise a nuclear war spectre (Anand, 2008).

Pakistan forces infiltrated the Kashmir section controlled by India and took over strategic areas such as the Kargil heights, which aided them in bringing Kargil and Dras within the range of its cannon fire. Pakistan occupied the India's station in the LoC because it wanted to take over the towns of Dras and Kargil and internationalize the Kashmir and Siachen Glacier issue. Pakistan

named its operation Al Badar. Pakistan intruders were detected by the patrols of Indian army upon the ridges of Kargil early in May 1999, thus Pakistan began artillery firing across borders in the Dras and Kargil regions. In the unfolding of events, the snows melted in an unseasonal manner and the swift and vigorous reaction demonstrated by India's army was not expected by Pakistan (Singh, 2021). India launched operation Vijay and carried out offensive attacks to get rid of the intruders of Pakistan. India also carried out air strikes on the positions occupied by Pakistan and succeeded in pushing the infiltrators from Dras to the Balatik area. Afraid that India will escalate the war into Pakistan borders, Pakistani Prime Minister sought the help of the US to de-escalate the conflict in order for Pakistan troops to be withdrawn to their part of the LoC. The US however refused to intervene and the United Jihad Council refused for the troops to be pulled back and insisted on fighting independently until they lost. By July 1999, India recaptured all the territories the Pakistan forces held and Pakistan had to withdraw its forces back across the LoC. Therefore, regardless of some gains at the initial stage of the war, Pakistan eventually suffered a mortifying defeat owing to the Indian army. The victory is tagged Kargil victory day and is celebrated on July 26<sup>th</sup> every year (Rikhye, 2001).

### **The Gulf War**

The Gulf war of 1990-1991 was characterized by the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and the intervention of the US and other world powers like France and the Soviet Union (Woodward, 1991). After the military success and victory claimed by Saddam Hussein the then President of Iraq in the war between Iran and Iraq that lasted for eight years 1980-1988, Iraq was plagued by severe economic hardships. The economic aid that was being provided by the Gulf States to Iraq during the war ended with the end of the war. Iraq was left with an immense burden of debt which was approximated at \$80 billion, half of which was owed to the Gulf States but would not be repaid, but would be on the records and the remaining half was owed to private institutions and other state governments (Freedman & Karsh, 1993). As the economic hardship grew, so did discontent for Saddam's government and soldiers who were honoured for their bravery in the Iran war were arraigned and executed on the account of attempting to overthrow the government. By 1989, Saddam became increasingly suspicious that his political and economic problems were being orchestrated by forces outside Iraq to destabilize his government and reduce the dominance of Iraq in the region. The US together with Saudi Arabia and Iran were suspected for trying to infiltrate Iraq and get intelligence and coerce the government. Also Iraq blamed its continuous economic issues on the lower prices of oil which in turn was blamed on the overproduction of the United Arab Emirate (UAE) and Kuwait as clients of the US. Saddam saw their policies in oil production as an act of war towards Iraq (Mylroie, 1993).

Further, the foreign policy stance of Iraq became aggressive and hostile towards the West and the Gulf States. Iraq felt threatened and in an attempt to break out of the cramping internal and external circumstances, Kuwait seemed like an easy and appealing target (Mylroie, 1993). Therefore the invasion of Kuwait was planned tactically with deception to attain the factor of



surprise. Iraq's media that for months had spoken harshly about Kuwait adopted a gentle tone. Also, Saddam made an impression that things were easing up. Thus, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and within some hours, Iraq had control over the whole country. The US and its coalition forces began a military build-up against Iraq and the United Nations Security Council voted against the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq. A deadline was given Iraq to evacuate its troops from Kuwait, but Saddam refused because he thought they would not be defeated (Heikal, 1993). By the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1991, which was the established deadline for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, Saddam had not made a move, therefore the US and its coalition forces began air strikes against Iraq on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January (Jentlson, 1994). The air attacks against Iraq brought negative consequences for it and its plans for a ground war proved abortive. As a result of such consequences, Iraq destroyed all the oil wells and installations of Kuwait, which was an indication that if it could not win or hold onto Kuwait, it should not lose. Iraq therefore lost the war as its forces and military equipment were no match to those of the US led coalition forces which were superior (Khadduri, 1997).

### **The 1966 Nigerian Coup**

At independence, Nigeria operated a parliamentary government which was characterized by poor leadership, regional and ethnic rivalry, and corruption. The political leaders were divided in terms of ethnic problems and political party rivalry and this affected nation building. There were challenges and allegations of corruption and funds misappropriation which resulted into a harsh economic downturn characterized by unemployment and high inflation. These raised contempt for the government by Nigerians and crisis erupted almost everywhere in the country (Omaka, Nwamuo, Alaku, & Nmaju, 2021). Chief among the crises are: the census saga 1962-1963, Western Region saga 1962, and the controversy over federal elections 1964/65. The failure of the Balewa administration to handle the innumerable crises that were spiraling left some young military officers with no choice but to step in to save the government and country for falling apart (Middleton, 1966).

Few weeks to the coup, Major Kaduna Nzeogwu carried out surveillance on the house of Ahmadu Bello, the northern Premier in Kaduna. He took his men on a pretense training exercise on several nights known as "EXERCISE DAMISA" which was actually a military coup practice run. EXERCISE DAMISA was put into a major coup on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 1966, when Nzeogwu led middle ranked military officers from the East, West, Mid-West and Northern regions of Nigeria and launched a surprise coup against the civilian government in the middle of the night (Omaka, Nwamuo, Alaku, & Nmaju, 2021). The coup was carried out in three major cities Kaduna, Ibadan and Lagos. In Kaduna, officers surrounded Bello's house, blew down the gates of the mansion, found Bello hiding with his wives and killed him. Maj. Timothy Onwuatiegwu, a co-conspirator with Nzeogwu, led some officers to the house of Brigadier Samuel Ademulegun who was in charge of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and killed him in his bedroom. Kasim Ibrahim, the northern region governor, was also kidnapped by Maj. Onwuatiegwu (Madiebo, 1980).

In Ibadan, the western region Premier, Chief S. Akintola was killed and his deputy, Chief F. Kayode was arrested. In Lagos, Maj. Emmanuel Ifeajuna together with other lieutenants kidnapped Balewa from his house in order not to raise an alarm and killed him later. Also Brig. Maimalari, Col. Kur Mohammed, Lt. Col. Largema and Lt. Col. Pam were all abducted and later killed in Lagos. However, the GOC of the army, Aguiyi Ironsi was alerted about the coup by Lt. Col. Pam before he was killed. Ironsi was able to quickly assemble troops and suppress the coup in Lagos which was the seat of power. Thus, Nzeogwu realizing that the coup had been countered surrendered the northern region to Hassan Katsina who had been spared in the coup and designated by Ironsi to take over the northern region. Nzeogwu and his cohorts with the exception of Ifeajuna who fled to Ghana were arrested and the remaining members of the civilian government that survived the coup handed over power to Ironsi who became the first Military Head of State in Nigeria (Madiebo, 1980). Therefore, the coup was successful in Kaduna and Ibadan but faced defeat at the hands of Ironsi in Lagos.

### **Entebbe Hostage Operation**

An Air France Flight 139 departed Tel Aviv airport for Paris, France on Sunday 27 June, 1976. The airplane made a technical stopover to refuel in Athens, Greece and boarded some new passengers enroute Paris. Among the newly boarded passengers were some individuals of German and Palestinian's terror groups who hijacked the aircraft forcing it to land in Benghazi, Libya for refueling. They ordered the plane to depart Benghazi to Entebbe, Uganda on 28 June, 1976 where they were joined by other terrorist members waiting at the airport. The terrorists and passengers touched down with 248 passengers onboard and were welcomed by President Idi Amin Dada and the Ugandan soldiers that were deployed to secure the airport. The terrorists separated the Jewish and Israeli hostages from the rest of the captives and released the non-Jewish passengers. However, the 12-member Air France crew opted to stay with the 105 Jewish and Israeli hostages. The hijackers demanded ransom of \$5m to release the airplane. They also demanded the release of 40 convicted terrorists in Israeli prisons and additional 13 prisoners in four other countries for the release of the hostages. They gave an ultimatum of 48-hours to the Israeli government after which they will execute all the hostages if their demands were unmet. Thus, the surprise operation was to that point successful.

The Israeli government debated whether to accept the demands of the hijackers or risk a rescue operation. Convinced by the Commander, Sayeret Matkal forces, Lt Col Yonatan Netanyahu that the operation would succeed, they launched OPERATION THUNDERBOLT on 3 July, 1976. They flew into Uganda two jeeps and a black Mercedes identical to Idi Amin's car with soldiers dressed in Uganda's military uniforms. Then, they drove calmly to the terminal building, took out the two sentries on the tower that attempted to halt their movement, went into the terminal building in commando style operation and within twenty minutes of their arrival, the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) soldiers began evacuating the hostages after killing the eight terrorists that were guarding them. The entire OPERATION THUNDERBOLT lasted for only

fifty eight minutes which is two minutes shy of the predicted planned time for the exercise. Unfortunately, Lt Col Yonatan Netanyahu was killed during the operation. Classically then, the initial surprise success achieved by the terrorists was not only reversed by the IDF soldiers, but also ended the lives of the hostage takers whilst the captives were flown back to Israel.

### **Gideon Orkar Coup**

On Sunday morning of 22 April, 1990, Major Gideon Gwaza Orkar announced the overthrow of the regime of Gen Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida who was the military president of Nigeria. According to Akinbode (2020), the reasons adduced for the toppling of the government in the speech were the persistent corruption in the country, maladministration of Nigeria's economy, the assassination of Dele Giwa, the execution of Major General Mamman Vatsa, and other officers on an attempted coup allegation and other violations of human rights. They premised the coup on attaining three primary objectives: to deter Babangida from installing himself as life president of Nigeria at all costs; stop the domination and internal colonization of Nigeria by some privileged few; and to lay a virile democratic foundation for the real Nigerian federalism. The coup achieved initial surprise success to the extent that the coupists disabled all the armored tanks in Dodan Barracks, took over the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) as well as the Ikeja Military Cantonment and made the coup announcement.

However, their failure to disable the military signal communication network, main telephone network and the inability to arrest or kill the principal targets enabled Gen Sani Abacha to rally loyal officers to suppress the coup. Most of the coupists were arrested, court martialled and executed but some others managed to escape. Thus, the initial success recorded by the coup plotters through surprise attack ended in failure through a counter attack.

### **Lessons Learnt: Why Surprise fails**

1. Surprise actually changes war completely from a strategic interplay into a logistics and accounting affair. Surprise although is regulated by the adversary because he possesses the initiative; nevertheless, the effects of surprise are controlled by the victim. This can be evidenced in Operation Babarossa when the Russians being pushed back in the war, destroyed buildings and damaged the soil to deny their enemy shelter and food, which played a major role in their victory. Also the relocation of their industries was a calculated move. Thus, surprise makes the victim to respond cleverly in some instances but in some cases, they respond uncoordinatedly and suffer defeat.
2. The effect of surprise is the challenge and not the surprise in itself. A surprise offensive has the ability to suspend the nature of the war as a duel by removing its dialectic. Ideally, the idea behind a surprise offensive is to make its enemy and victim helpless, not being able to recoup itself from the damage and loss it incurred as an initial consequence of the surprise. However, it is very rare for an antagonist to be totally eliminated due to the effects of surprise (Watts, 1996). A victim may be strategically and operationally

susceptible to surprise and yet be eminently tactically resilient (Niederhauser, 1994). The Battle of the Bulge, the Yom Kippur War and the Kargil war portrays this; completely taken off guard, lost territories but reinforced in a tactical and resilient manner and pursued the enemy into its territories.

3. When unwavering faith is put in the assumed effectiveness of surprise, the incomplete success or failure of that plan is probably to leave the attacker vulnerable without an appropriate plan B. Actually, it is the impracticability of a contrite plan B that most likely drives the decision for a plan A, aimed at paralysing the resistance power of the enemy, thereby registering immediate success (Gray, 1998). This was the issue with the 1966 Nigerian coup that was foiled because there was no plan B in the event of unforeseen circumstances, like the role played by Ironsi in foiling the coup.
4. Successful operational surprise hastens the defeat of the attacker by mobilizing the victim. The opponent that achieves this initial surprise victory might not achieve the eventual victory. This is because the surprise can cause the powerful victim to fully participate in the war, thereby eliciting an intensified response that may speed up the defeat of the surprise initiator (Niederhauser, 1994). This was the case of the Battle of the Bulge and US response to Japan due to the bombing of the US Pearl Harbour. Thus, surprise fails because it causes the weak opponent to desire goals that are actually above its reach and when the surprise effects clear out, the surprise victim vengefully retaliates in a way that is more vicious and brutal than the initial surprise.
5. Geographies play a strategic role in wars. This is seen in Operation Babarossa, where the German soldiers were unprepared for the extreme cold and hardness of the soil, giving Russians time to recoup and attack. Also, in the Kargil war when the snow in the Kargil Mountains melted fast and enabled India to respond to the surprise invasion by Pakistan.
6. Never underestimate the friend or allies of the enemy. Iraq invaded Kuwait because it seemed like an easy target of which it was, because in one day Iraq took over the country. However, Iraq underestimated the allies of Kuwait which led to it losing the war.
7. Sovereign nations should not play host and provide sanctuaries for terrorists like the Ugandan President Idi Amin Dada did because any defeat of the terrorists would also mean defeat to the country and it affects their diplomatic and foreign relations with the governments of the hostages. Afghanistan and Pakistan suffered similar fate with their harbouring of Osama Bin Laden. When the US killed him, they applied sanctions on both countries.
8. The surprise attack of junior middle cadre officers in coups that failed to arrest or eliminate the principal superior officers would not only be short-lived but would always end up in defeat.

History brings to bear the fact that surprise is not a remedy to war's imperceptibles. In fact, surprise attacks from records have seldom had effects that cause the perpetrators to attain a definite victory. The law of unforeseen consequences always strikes brutally and

mercilessly. If anything, the perpetrators of the surprise faith in deception to counterbalance actual weaknesses is wont to start a war that it cannot end (Handel, 1984). Moreover, the practicability and utility of surprise in war has been questioned by the Prussian war master. Clausewitz (1940) contends that although the desire to achieve surprise is common and actually crucial and although it is true that its effect will never be totally ineffective, it is as well true that the nature of surprise can seldom be remarkably successful. Therefore, to consider surprise as an essential feature of success in war would be an error and a blooper (Clausewitz, 1940).

## CONCLUSION

Surprise suspends the logic of warfare by temporarily taking out the enemy from the war front but surprise offensives mostly fail in a catastrophic way because the strategy of the adversary that takes the initiative may be miscalculated. The initiators of an attack usually fail to understand that the impact and effect of a strike can only be maximized by surprise but might not lead to eventual victory. In today's world, the danger of surprise is a situation of national and international security. The peril is real specifically for a hegemonic superpower with military might, which plays the police of global order role. The enemies of America are bound to suspend the logic of war. This is because the only way feeble enemies can aspire to be victorious is by paralyzing and disarming the ability of the US to effectively act. The consequence of a surprise attack on a superpower like the US with a world security remit will be felt not only by the victim. It is most likely to demonstrate ultimately self-destruction than to be the direct route to a definite victory.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with this view, the paper recommended that:

- For a surprise to be successful and achieve an ultimate victory in a war it needs to be incorporated into a creative comprehensive war strategy combined with innovation, adequate explosive power, appropriate military planning, audacity and maybe some luck. This is because, without the incorporation of surprise into a comprehensive strategy that will knockout the enemy in a battle, it can contribute to the defeat of the surprise initiator in the battle. In addition, the surprise attacker should have a Plan B against counterattacks else, they capitulate very fast in a counter after initial surprise success.
- Sovereign nations should not provide sanctuaries to terrorists like Idi Amin Dada of Uganda did because when the terrorists are defeated eventually, that nation would incur the displeasure and broken foreign relations with the governments of the hostages.
- Junior middle cadre officers should never contemplate a coup against a constituted authority except with the firm plan to eliminate the key superiors in charge on first strike.

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