

The Foreign Policy of Anwar Sadat: Continuity and Change, 1970-1981

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of DPhil in International Relations in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford.

98 761 words.

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This thesis aims to examine both continuity and change in Egyptian foreign policy between 1970 and 1981. The overarching question of this work is: Why and how did President Sadat affect changes in foreign policy? More specifically, the thesis examines the evolution of Egyptian foreign policy in three concentric circles: the Superpowers, the Arab world, and Israel. The broader aim of the thesis is to provide a detailed study of Egyptian foreign policy in this period, which witnessed a multitude of watershed events. The topic is important because Egypt is a leading state in the Arab world, a core actor in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and a strategic ally of the superpowers during the Cold War.

The thesis offers a detailed chronological account of Egyptian foreign policy during the 1970s. It advances a revisionist interpretation of the early Sadat years, arguing that there was much greater continuity with the foreign policy of Gamal Abdel-Nasser than is commonly believed. The account ends in 1981, with the assassination of Anwar Sadat and the succession of Hosni Mubarak. It is argued that Sadat not only managed to reverse Nasser's radical path in foreign policy, but that he also succeeded in institutionalising his most significant policy changes: peace with Israel and the removal of Egypt from the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The methodology of the thesis is principally empirical and qualitative in nature. The thesis is based on extensive archival research, recently declassified official documents, memoirs of policymakers in English and Arabic, and oral histories in the form of interviews and transcripts of discussions with former Egyptian policymakers.

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Introduction

Egyptian foreign policy changed fundamentally following the death of Gamal Abdel-Nasser on 28 September 1970. During the tenure of Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, foreign policy underwent a wholesale reorientation from East to West, rejectionism to status quo accommodation, and radicalism to moderation. This thesis will account for both continuity and change in Egyptian foreign policy between 1970 and 1981. It sets out to assay how and why Egyptian foreign policy changed in the decade after Nasser's death.

The overarching question of this work is: Why and how did Sadat affect changes in foreign policy? Why did he preserve certain aspects of Nasser's foreign policy whilst abandoning others? The argument advanced here is that while Sadat continued to emphasise Egypt's main foreign policy objective since 1967, *videlicet*, the recovery of her eastern provinces in Sinai, he supplemented this aim with the goal of switching superpower alliances from East to West. The broader aim of the thesis is to provide a detailed study of Egyptian foreign policy in this period, which witnessed a multitude of watershed events, both diplomatic and military.

The thesis will cover the period from Sadat's rise to power in September 1970 to his assassination on 6 October 1981. The main focus will be on Egypt under Sadat. All the events described in this thesis will be approached from the Egyptian perspective. The emphasis throughout will be on Egyptian perceptions, Egyptian interests, Egyptian strategies, and Egyptian policies.

Continuity and Change in Egyptian Foreign Policy

The subject of the thesis is of significance for several reasons. Firstly, the study of continuity and change in Egyptian foreign policy under Nasser and Sadat offers crucial insights into the foreign policy of a state central to Middle East politics. Egypt is a leading state in the Arab world with a visible international profile, and a core actor in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Egypt has traditionally set the agenda for inter-Arab politics since those states' independence. She was the strongest military power in the Arab coalition confronting Israel and a participant in all the Arab-Israeli wars from 1948 to 1973. Egypt was also an important strategic ally of one or the other superpower throughout the Cold War. She has been an active participant in many of the diplomatic crises in the Near East, and when she did not play a leading role, she has usually been a noteworthy secondary actor. Hence any insights gleaned from Egyptian foreign policy may shed new light on Middle Eastern politics and diplomacy in general. Furthermore, Sadat's public departures from Nasserite principles in foreign policy, as well as his maintenance of several aspects of his predecessor's legacy, have had important secular effects. Understanding both the motivations behind foreign policy continuity and change as well as the methods through which change was brought about would thus be instructive.

More specifically, the thesis aims to examine the evolution of the Egyptian foreign policy from 1970-1981 in three concentric circles: the Superpowers, the Arab world, and Israel. Foremost in prominence – and arguably importance – amongst the Egyptian bilateral relationships in this period was the alliance with the United States. The reasons for this are manifold: the United States in the second half of the twentieth

century was not only the leading superpower, it was the pre-eminent external power in the Middle East subsystem, playing a pivotal role in regional politics, diplomacy and war. The United States' importance to Egypt was further magnified by its role as the principal external patron of Israel, Cairo's regional foe, and the only power capable of securing the return of Egyptian territory lost in 1967.

The other superpower, the Soviet Union, also played a hugely prominent role in Egypt's external relations. As the country's main benefactor from the mid 1950s through the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Soviet Union not only provided Egypt with diplomatic support and economic succour, it heavily armed her military and made possible Egypt's repeated military confrontations with Israel in 1967, 1969-70, and 1973. The development and decline of Cairo's relationship with Moscow is thus of critical importance in the analysis of Egypt's foreign policy.

Relations with the superpowers, however, cannot be examined without reference to the wider Middle East; the state of the bilateral relationship with either superpower has traditionally depended heavily on Egypt's regional stance, not only towards Israel, but also towards fellow Arab states. The Arab Cold War, pitting the monarchies and Lebanon against 'progressive' republics, reflected the global divide. Egypt's abandonment of the radical Arab front during Sadat's presidency, and subsequent bandwagoning with the moderates, significantly strengthened the latter, both politically and strategically.

Finally, Israel has been a principal consideration in Egypt's foreign policy, and central to understanding her relations with other Arab states and the superpowers. Egyptian

antagonism towards Israel not only played a significant role in her leadership of the radical Arab states, it was the keystone of her relationship with the Soviets and her hostility to the West. Sadat's new policies towards Jerusalem were also the reason for the fraying of Egypt's ties to the Arab world, and her switching of superpower alliances from Moscow to Washington.

Timescale

The thesis begins with the succession of Sadat to the Egyptian presidency following the death of Nasser in September 1970. The thesis then chronologically examines Egyptian foreign policy throughout the decade. The thesis offers a revisionist interpretation of the early Sadat years, arguing that they may be interpreted as initially much closer in substance to Nasser than is commonly thought, despite the ostensibly new policies espoused in Sadat's public pursuit of a peaceful settlement with Israel prior to the war of 1973.

The thesis concludes in 1981, with the assassination of Sadat and the passing of the mantle to his successor, Hosni Mubarak. While Sadat's death marked the end of a period of overt pro-Americanism and foreign policy activism in Cairo, the main pillars of Sadat's foreign policy would prove lasting. The thesis will conclude that not only did Sadat eventually manage to reverse Nasser's radical path in foreign policy, he also succeeded in institutionalising his most significant policy: peace with Israel and the removal of Egypt from the vicious cycle of Arab-Israeli conflict.

Sources

The methodology of the thesis is principally empirical and qualitative in nature. As the thirty-year quarantine had recently expired for most of the period under study, a wealth of official documents was available for examination. More than 10 000 folios of original documents in the UK National Archives as well as the Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan presidential library archives were examined. Written sources were supplemented with oral histories in the form of interviews and transcripts of discussions with former Egyptian policymakers.

Additionally, an array of important primary sources providing different perspectives on Egyptian foreign policy was consulted. These sources were of particular importance as Egyptian state documents have yet to be declassified, and many Egyptian officials' memoirs include a number of key official documents. Further, Sadat's foreign policy was often formulated in a personal capacity or in informal discussion with officials in the Presidency, and as such the evolution of major policies will often not be reflected in the official documents of the foreign ministry, lending further importance to the examination of memoirs in order to accurately recreate the chain of events. The memoirs consulted include those of Anwar Sadat, Kamal Hassan Ali, Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Ismail Fahmy, Hafiz Ismail, and Mahmoud Riyad, all of which articulate different Egyptian perspectives on foreign policy in the 1970s.¹ The memoirs of Saadedine Al-Shathly and Mohamed Al-

¹ Kamal Hassan Ali, *Muhariboon wa Mufawidoon* (Cairo: Al-Ahram, 1986); Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Egypt's Road to Jerusalem: A Diplomat's Story of the Struggle for Peace in the Middle East* (New York: Random House, 1997); Ismail Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace in the Middle East* (London: Croom Helm, 1983); Mohamed Hafiz Ismail, *Ann Misr Al-Qawmi: Fi Asr Al-Tahadiyyat* (Cairo: Al-Ahram, 1987); Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel, *The Camp David Accords: A Testimony* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986); Mahmud Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad 1948-1978: Al-Bahth an Al-Salam wa Al-Sira' Fi Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* (Beirut: Al-Muassasah Al-Arabiyah Lil-Dirasat wa-Al-Nashr,

Gamasy were invaluable sources on the Egyptian military and its role in foreign policy.²

The Nixon, Carter, Ford, and Reagan autobiographies were examined in order to reconstruct the US views of Egypt during each man's presidency.³ The memoirs of these presidents' senior officials were also referenced extensively. The Kissinger trilogy provided much insight into American policy-making during the first half of the 1970s.⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Cyrus Vance, and William Quandt picked up the thread and detailed the Camp David summit and all related diplomacy.⁵ The memoirs of Golda Meir, Abba Eban, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Moshe Dayan, and Ezer Weizman all chronicled Israel's perspective on Sadat's foreign policy.⁶

Primary sources were supplemented with works evaluating Egyptian foreign policy in the period under consideration. The secondary literature on this topic is vast, but several pioneering books merit special attention. Important Egyptian-authored works

1981); Anwar Sadat, *Al-Baith an Al-That: Qissat Hayati* (Cairo: Al-Maktab Al-Misry Al-Hadeeth, 1978).

² Saadedine Al-Shathly, *Harb October: Muthakkarat Al-Fareeq Al-Shathly*, 3rd ed. (Algiers: Al-Muassassa Al-Watania Lilkitab, 1983); Mohamed Abdelghany Al-Gamasy, *Muthakkarat Al-Gamasy: Harb October 1973* (Cairo: Al-Hay'aa Al-Misriyya Lilkitab, 2001).

³ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam, 1982); Gerald Ford, *A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford* (London: W.H. Allen, 1979); Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978); Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1990).

⁴ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979); Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 1st ed. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982); Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999).

⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983); Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983); William Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institution, 1986); William Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*, 3rd ed. (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2005).

⁶ Moshe Dayan, *Story of My Life* (New York: William Morrow, 1976); Moshe Dayan, *Breakthrough: A Personal Account of the Egypt-Israel Peace Negotiations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981); Abba Eban, *Abba Eban: An Autobiography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978); Golda Meir, *My Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975); Shimon Peres, *Battling for Peace: Memoirs* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1995); Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996); Ezer Weizman, *The Battle for Peace* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981).

included those by Mohamed Heikal and Ali Dessouki.⁷ Other significant studies included those by Avi Shlaim, Malcolm Kerr, Alexei Vassiliev, Bahgat Korany, Adeed Dawisha, Karen Dawisha, Galia Golan, Shibley Telhami, Patrick Seale, Robert Freedman, and Yair Evron.⁸

Several studies offer commentaries on Egyptian foreign policy under both Nasser and Sadat, or examine Sadat's foreign policy during either the Carter or the Nixon and Ford presidencies. This thesis offers a full-scale study of Sadat's foreign policy that is substantially based on new sources – namely several thousand recently declassified official US and UK documents on Egyptian foreign policy in the 1970s. No previous academic study has made use of these original documents, ranging across four US presidencies and four British premierships. These documents, accompanied by the

⁷ Shaheen Ayubi, *Nasser and Sadat: Decision Making and Foreign Policy (1970-1972)* (London: University Press of America, 1994); Ali Hillal Dessouki, "The Primacy of Economics: The Foreign Policy of Egypt," in *The Foreign Policies of Arab States*, ed. Bahgat Korany and Ali Hillal Dessouki (Boulder: Westview, 1984); Mohamed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan* (London: Collins, 1975); Mohamed Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World* (London: Collins, 1978); Mohamed Heikal, *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat* (London: Deutsch, 1983); Mohamed Heikal, *Khareef Al-Ghadab: Qissat Bidayat wa Nihayat Asr Anwar Al-Sadat* (Cairo: Al-Ahram, 1988); Mohamed Heikal, *Secret Channels: The Inside Story of Arab-Israeli Peace Negotiations* (London: HarperCollins, 1996); Mohamed Heikal, *October 73: Al-Silah wa Al-Siyasah* (Cairo: Dar Al-Shorouq, 2004).

⁸ Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha, eds., *The Soviet Union in the Middle East: Policies and Perspectives* (London: Heinemann for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1982); Adeed Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World: The Elements of Foreign Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1976); Karen Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy Towards Egypt* (London: Macmillan, 1979); Yair Evron, *The Middle East: Nations, Superpowers and Wars* (London: Elek, 1973); Robert Freedman, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970* (New York: Praeger, 1975); Galia Golan, *The Soviet Union and the Arab-Israel War of October 1973* (Jerusalem: Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 1974); Galia Golan, *Yom Kippur and After: The Soviet Union and the Middle East Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East: From World War Two to Gorbachev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal Abd Al-Nasir and his Rivals, 1958-1970*, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1971); Bahgat Korany and Ali Hillal Dessouki, eds., *The Foreign Policies of Arab States* (Boulder: Westview, 1984); Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988); Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab world* (London: Penguin, 2000); Avi Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace* (London: Allen Lane, 2007); Avi Shlaim and Raymond Tanter, "Decision Process, Choice, and Consequences: Israel's Deep-Penetration Bombing in Egypt, 1970," *World Politics* 30, no. 4 (1978); Shibley Telhami, *Power and Leadership in International Bargaining: The Path to the Camp David Accords* (New York: Columbia University, 1990); Alexei Vassiliev, *Russian Policy in the Middle East: From Messianism to Pragmatism* (Reading: Ithaca, 1993).

close examination of other primary and secondary sources in both Arabic and English, help illuminate previously obscured facets of Sadat's foreign policy, and allow this thesis to fill a lacuna in the existing literature. No other English-language study of Sadat's foreign policy in its entirety has been produced to date.

Process of Policy Formation

As foreign policy cannot be properly understood without examining the process of policy formation, an important question that needs to be examined at the outset is how is Egyptian foreign policy formulated? In Egypt, policy has traditionally been formulated and implemented by the executive in an insulated environment. The role of public opinion was limited, and the Egyptian parliament did not enjoy a prominent role in vetting government policies.⁹ Parliament never formally disapproved or disavowed any foreign policy enunciated by the president since its establishment in its republican guise.¹⁰ The cabinet too was similarly disenfranchised from foreign policy formation.¹¹ In fact, actors influential in policy formation belonged to three broad camps: the presidency, the foreign ministry, and the national security establishment.

The Egyptian president is the ultimate arbiter of policy, with no constitutional checks on his authority. The Egyptian constitutions introduced by Nasser in 1956, 1958, and 1964 granted the president overwhelming privileges,¹² and Sadat's own 1971 constitution maintained the precedent of presidential omnipotence.¹³ The president as head of state enjoyed absolute authority both domestically and in foreign affairs. He

⁹ Ayubi, *Nasser and Sadat*, 15.

¹⁰ Egyptian Parliament Archives, Cairo.

¹¹ Willie Morris, *Who Rules Egypt?*, 16 July 1977, FCO 93/1041, National Archives, Kew.

¹² Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World*, 105.

¹³ Ayubi, *Nasser and Sadat*, 16.

appointed and dismissed vice-presidents, prime ministers, and cabinets at will; all served at his pleasure.¹⁴ He was also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and resolutely in control of the ruling political party and of parliament.¹⁵

Thus the president was the principal formulator of Egyptian foreign and security policy, often formulating policy singlehandedly *ex cathedra* and leaving implementation to his officials. As one British ambassador to Cairo testified, 'despite the vastness of the bureaucracy and the military machine, all major decision are taken by the President himself and that he has regard to very few advisers'.¹⁶ His successor corroborated this account, explaining how Sadat 'listens, and then decides without much, if any, consultation or discussion'.¹⁷ Accordingly the role of the foreign ministry and the security organs was strictly limited, resulting in policies that lacked 'the vigorous participation of the various institutions and agencies in the decision-making process, either in the pre-decisional or in the post-decisional stages'.¹⁸ During the Yom Kippur war, for example, Sadat entirely sidelined the National Security Council apparatus, preferring to monopolise both control of information from the war-front and the political decision-making.¹⁹

Moreover, if so inclined, the president was capable of single-handedly driving policy over all objections, as Sadat demonstrated in the first year of his presidency when he announced the Confederation of Arab Republics despite the hostile protests of his vice

¹⁴ Ibid., 13.

¹⁵ Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World*, 192.

¹⁶ P.G.D. Adams, Egypt: Annual Review for 1973, 23 January 1974, FCO 93/378, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁷ Willie Morris, Recent Political Developments in Egypt, 26 June 1978, FCO 93/1435, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁸ Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World*, 122.

¹⁹ Ismail, *Ann Mir Al-Qawmi*, 360.

president, minister of defence, minister of interior, and minister for presidential affairs. Sadat also later pursued and concluded his peace initiative, culminating in the peace treaty with Israel, despite the successive resignation of two foreign ministers, his minister of state for foreign affairs, and several senior ambassadors. However, that is not to say that the president operated under no political constraints; indeed, the relationship between foreign and domestic policies is 'intricate', with internal politics at times playing a key role in determining foreign policy preferences.²⁰

Traditionally the second most important actor in foreign affairs was the foreign ministry, which exercised extensive bureaucratic influence from its headquarters on the bank of the Nile. The ministry was tasked with day-to-day management of diplomacy. The foreign minister was personally selected by the president rather than the prime minister, and as such was an empowered actor in the quest to set policy.

However, the degree of influence enjoyed by the foreign ministry ebbed and flowed depending on both domestic and international politics, as well as the personal relationship between the foreign minister and the president. For example, the prerogatives of Mustapha Khalil, Sadat's prime minister and foreign minister in the late 1970s, were notably greater than his predecessors' because of his personal rapport with the president and Sadat's confidence in his person. At the 1979 Camp David talks, for example, Sadat granted Khalil full negotiating authority, which Moshe Dayan, Khalil's opposite number, did not enjoy.

²⁰ Bahgat Korany and Ali Hillal Dessouki, "Foreign Policy Process in the Arab World: A Comparative Perspective," in *The Foreign Policies of Arab States* (Boulder: Westview, 1984), 326.

On the other hand, at times the foreign ministry was entirely marginalised by the presidency. Nasser's request that UN forces leave Sinai – the *casus belli* for the Six-Day war – was made without consulting the foreign ministry.²¹ At different times throughout his presidency, as this thesis will chronicle, Sadat relied on presidential aides to circumvent the foreign ministry and its bureaucracy in the conduct of foreign policy. Hafiz Ismail, his National Security Adviser, dealt with Henry Kissinger through intelligence channels. Ashraf Marwan, who as the President's Secretary for External Contacts acted as Sadat's personal envoy and a second foreign minister, conducted his president's diplomacy in the Arab world.²² Hassan Tuhami, the deputy Prime Minister, met secretly with Moshe Dayan in Morocco before Sadat's Jerusalem visit. Evidently, in Sadat's Egypt the foreign ministry participated in foreign policy only at the president's discretion.

Moreover, the foreign minister would usually be excluded from presidential meetings with visiting dignitaries, as was often the case with Henry Kissinger's visits to Egypt during the disengagement shuttles. Indeed, even at Camp David Sadat did not involve his delegation in his talks with the American or Israeli delegations. Egyptian officials participated as supernumeraries in a 'photo opportunity', and were invariably excluded from Sadat's substantive discussions.²³ Afterwards, the foreign ministry would be tasked with the implementation of presidential decisions, which was when the ministry could 'reinforce (its) bargaining position', 'oppose' or 'stop certain concessions' agreed by Sadat.²⁴ This, in turn, reinforced the president's frequent hostility towards his diplomats' attitudes, which he perceived as too rigid, and

²¹ Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 19.

²² Willie Morris, *Who Rules Egypt?*, 16 July 1977, FCO 93/1041, National Archives, Kew.

²³ Boutros-Ghali, *Egypt's Road to Jerusalem*, 37.

²⁴ Interview with Boutros-Ghali, 1 April 1997, *BBC: The Fifty Years' War: Israel and the Arabs*, GB 165-0346, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford.

prompted him to sometimes not even inform them of the substance of his discussions!²⁵ Instead, he used his doctrinaire officials for bargaining power, as human manifestations of domestic and Arab resistance to his policies, in order to persuade his American or Israeli interlocutors to offer more concessions.²⁶ At times, however, this would involve an element of ‘deliberate gamesmanship’, with one British envoy observing that ‘the president’s benevolent image is safeguarded by fielding Fahmy to say the disagreeable things’.²⁷

The actor whose influence concomitantly increased in tandem with the reduction of the foreign ministry’s sway – and vice versa – is the security establishment, which may be broadly understood to encompass the armed forces, internal security organs, and the intelligence services. The importance of the armed forces in determining Egyptian policy is a reflection of several salient Egyptian political legacies. The Egyptian regime was conceived and founded by military officers, and every Egyptian president had been drawn from their ranks. Indeed, Nasser went so far as to proclaim that ‘my parliament is the army’.²⁸ The army’s importance to the regime was reflected in the high share of national income devoted to military expenditures.²⁹ The military was also the ultimate guarantor of the regime. As an autocracy, the Egyptian state relied on the implicit threat of violence – rather than public support through genuine free and fair elections – to retain power, as demonstrated by the broad influence of the Ministry of Interior in the public life of the country. Furthermore, if the implicit threat

²⁵ Boutros-Ghali, *Egypt's Road to Jerusalem*, 37.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 47, 136.

²⁷ Willie Morris, The Foreign Policy of Sadat’s Egypt, 3 July 1976, FCO 93/851, National Archives, Kew.

²⁸ Quoted in Malcolm Yapp, *The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1996), 212.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

of the security forces proved insufficient, the army could always be called upon to occupy the streets of Cairo and restore order, as did indeed occur in January 1977.

The security establishment at times played a significant role in Egyptian diplomacy. Intelligence channels were used to conduct clandestine direct talks with the White House in 1972 and 1973, as was the case at other critical points in the Sadat presidency. At other times, the perceived attitudes of the military were taken into consideration when formulating policy. Sadat's decision to expel the Russian military contingent in Egypt, for example, was in many ways an attempt to placate his officers, who were chafing under the wearisome presence of Soviet advisers. Likewise, Sadat's frequent visits to Moscow in his early years of office were partly to demonstrate to his armed forces that he was doing his utmost to persuade Moscow to be more generous in providing arms for the Egyptian forces.

However, the relative influence of the military on Egyptian foreign policy declined significantly in the wake of its disastrous performance in the Six-Day War.³⁰ Nasser purged the military of many of its top officers after an attempted coup, and a new emphasis was placed on professionalism and de-politicising the officer corps.³¹ This continued under Sadat's rule, with the retrenchment in the political influence of the military paralleled by a reduction in the number of officers serving in government and the ruling party.³² Sadat also interfered in the military's affairs much more frequently than Nasser, appointing new ministers of war in 1971, 1972, 1974, 1978, 1980, and 1981, thereby preventing any of them building up a substantial following in the

³⁰ Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World*, 117.

³¹ Ayubi, *Nasser and Sadat*, 142.

³² Willie Morris, *Armed Forces of Egypt*, 12 April 1976, FCO 93/858, National Archives, Kew.

officer corps. Whenever any Minister of War opposed a policy – for example, Fawzy’s objection to Sadat’s overtures to the US in 1971, Gamasy’s protest at the restrictions on Egyptian forces in the Canal Zone in 1974, and Gamasy’s opposition to the demilitarisation of much of Sinai and his request for the inclusion of an officer in Egypt’s Camp David delegation in 1978 – the president overruled them without hesitation.³³ At other times Sadat used divide-and-rule tactics to maintain close control of the armed forces. For example he concurrently appointed Saadedine Al-Shathly as Chief of Staff and Ahmed Ismail as Minister of War despite – or perhaps because of – their mutual loathing.³⁴ The president used similar devices to maintain control over the intelligence agencies, with Egypt’s three different spy agencies reporting to different bodies in order to ensure that the president secured ultimate control of the intelligence services.³⁵ Such an arrangement helped prevent coups, as was successfully demonstrated in the early years of Sadat’s rule.³⁶ Nonetheless, Sadat’s appointment of General Hosni Mubarak as vice-president illustrated the military’s continuing role as the backbone of Egypt’s republican regime.³⁷

The Nasserist Legacy in Foreign Policy

Gamal Abdel-Nasser, the young Free Officer behind the coup that overthrew the Egyptian monarchy in 1952, played a decisive role in the republic’s foreign policy until his death in 1970. He was the guiding hand behind the removal of British forces

³³ Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 41; Al-Gamasy, *Harb October*, 481-482, 542.

³⁴ Al-Shathly, *Harb October*, 167.

³⁵ These include Military Intelligence, overseen by the Ministry of Defence, State Security, part of the Ministry of Interior, and General Intelligence, which reported directly to the presidency. See *Ibid.*, 155.

³⁶ In November 1972, for example, General Intelligence uncovered a plot by military intelligence officers to capture the President, Minister of Defence, and Chief of Staff at an engagement party. See *Ibid.*, 206.

³⁷ Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World*, 192.

from the Canal Zone, the icon of the non-aligned movement, the lodestar of Arab nationalism, and ultimately the embodiment of a broken ideology.

Nasser's philosophy placed Egypt within three 'spheres': the Arab, African, and Islamic. A fundamental aspect of his foreign policy was hostility towards 'imperialism', which was invariably 'Western', and was used to demonise even anti-imperial Western powers, such as the United States. Thus, Nasser implacably opposed alliances linking the Middle East to the West, such as the Baghdad Pact, viewing them as a cause for regional dislocation. A similar view was taken of the presence of British forces in Arab locales such as Jordan, Aden, and the Trucial States, as well as of the French presence in the Maghreb.

Nasserist Egypt enjoyed an influence out of proportion with its limited military power or constrained economic resources. Revolutionary Arabist discourse tinged with socialist imagery made Cairo a feared antagonist in other Arab capitals, as well as in Jerusalem. It also made Egypt both a desired ally and a potentially disagreeable spoiler for both superpowers. This led Nasser to emphasise non-alignment as a tool to extract resources to ameliorate Egypt's penury. By alternately playing off one superpower against the other, Nasser managed to obtain funds from both Moscow and Washington to the benefit of his citizenry. Any such policy, however, could only succeed in the short term. In the medium and long term, superpowers demanded alliance in return for aid. By 1956 Nasser's constant flirting with the Soviets led the US and UK to withdraw their offer to finance the proposed Aswan High Dam, consequently prompting Nasser to nationalise the Canal and thereby provoking the Suez Conflict.

Henceforth, despite the patina of non-alignment, Cairo began to increasingly look East and act against the West's interests – a trend started when Egypt struck an arms deal with Czechoslovakia in 1955 to circumvent the Western arms embargo – while its Arabist homilies acquired increasingly anti-American subtexts. After the disaster of the Six-Day war Nasser abandoned all pretension of non-alignment: he ended diplomatic relations with the United States, granted the Soviet Union extensive military privileges, and turned Egypt into a cornerstone of Soviet policy in the region.

This, however, was far from inevitable, and may be considered a consequence of the jejune foreign policy of the new regime. Arabism's principal mottos and inclinations, namely anti-imperialism and self-reliance, substantially overlapped with post-war US foreign policy of the time. America was very keen to disassociate herself from the colonial powers and actively pushed for self-determination in the Middle East and throughout the world. To American eyes 'Arab nationalism was not seen as a potential impediment at all. Rather, it seemed merely an international condition to which US policy could adjust'.³⁸

More importantly, while Egypt and the other Arab republics were sympathetic to socialism, they were virulently anti-communist. Indeed, repression of local Arab communists was a long-standing source of tension in the relationship with the Soviet Union. When one considers that communist containment was the foremost US foreign policy goal during the 1950s and 1960s, the question of why the American-Egyptian alliance of the late 1970s did not develop three decades earlier arises.

³⁸ Steven Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1985), 51.

The most pertinent answer is Israel. Egypt's hostility to her eastern neighbour was rooted in both pan-Arabism and hostility to colonialism – which is how many viewed the large-scale migration of European Jewry to Palestine. The very existence of a Jewish state in the heart of the Arab world was thus deemed unnatural and unacceptable, and Egypt desired the restoration of the *status quo ante*. Moreover, Egypt's republican leadership was largely composed of army officers who had served in the 1948 Israeli war of independence, when Egypt's expeditionary army was roundly defeated by Jewish forces, and remained personally embittered and humiliated by the experience.

American support for Israel, in contrast, was initially justified in both moral and political terms. The outrages perpetrated on European Jews over the course of the Second World War generated a huge outpouring of sympathy for the plight and flight of Jewish refugees. The presence of a sizable and politically influential Jewish American community also helped push US government policy towards an overt pro-Israeli stance, which it finally arrived at by the 1960s. Israel's overt democratic political system in a region dominated by antediluvian autocracy provided an additional justification for American friendship.

Moreover, as Nasser began to look East for aid and arms, American support for Israel came to be defined in Cold War terms. Egypt and Israel were now viewed as regional proxies for Moscow and Washington, respectively. Moreover, post-1967 Israel was considered a regional asset that could demonstrably restrict and crush Soviet influence

in the Arab world.³⁹ Israel's role in preserving the Hashemite crown in Jordan during Black September seemed further evidence of her value as a strategic ally. Nonetheless, until the late 1960s the American commitment to Israel was far from unqualified, again raising the question of why American-Egyptian antipathy was quite so insidious. Indeed, the conduct of the Eisenhower administration during the Suez crisis could have obviated former disagreements and laid the basis for a potential alliance.

The Suez crisis is of crucial analytical importance for several reasons. Firstly and most importantly, it established that America's backing of Israel was not a given. Indeed, the US rebuked not only Israel, but Britain and France as well. Secondly, it illustrates Nasser's failure to exploit the turn of events to construct a new positive relationship with the pre-eminent superpower, a failure that Sadat would rectify in the Yom Kippur war under far less favourable circumstances. Instead, Nasser publicly played up the secondary role of the Soviet Union in the crisis, and ultimately continued his hostile policies towards American interests in the region. Following Suez Nasser helped inspire the overthrow of two conservative Arab regimes – Hashemite Iraq and Mutawakilite Yemen – and the severe destabilisation of a third: Lebanon, a country that was only temporarily pacified after the despatch of US marines in 1958.

A decade later, when moribund Egyptian forces were again routed and expelled from Sinai, Nasser could not call upon the US to reprise its role of 1956 and force an Israeli withdrawal, and for its part America was far from inclined to help its principal

³⁹ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 76.

regional antagonist. Cutting Egypt down to size was now perceived to serve American as well as Israeli interests.

Nasser Post-1967: Khartoum and Beyond

Following the obloquy of 1967 Nasserism was severely compromised, both in Egypt and the wider Arab world. Nasser's espousal of the Arabist cause, including his powerful advocacy on behalf of the Palestinians, had to be practically abandoned. This ultimately proved a relief, as Nasser's Arabism had extracted a net cost on Egypt, in terms of Egyptian lives, financial resources, and diplomatic room for manoeuvre. Moreover, Egypt's military involvement in other Arab nations, most notably in the Yemen, proved not only ruinously expensive but also militarily inconclusive.

Most disastrously, it was Egypt's position as the leading Arab state, and the associated responsibilities of the role, that led to her being dragged into conflict with Israel in the run up to the Six-Day War. Nasserism required Egypt to 'defend Syria' against Israel. Despite the bombast, the impotence of both Arabist ideology and arms was demonstrably revealed in the conflict, with Egypt losing Gaza and the Sinai, Syria the Golan Heights, and Jordan the West Bank. Egypt, with its military destroyed and its economy deprived of Canal dues and Sinai oil revenues, was now more reliant than ever on Saudi and Kuwaiti aid and goodwill. The Egyptian armed forces were promptly recalled from Yemen. Henceforth, the sole focus of the regime would be the recovery of lost Arab territory, through any means possible.

The Khartoum Arab summit of 1967, known as the ‘three no’s’ conference – referring to ‘no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it, and insistence on the rights of the Palestinian people in their own country’⁴⁰ – and commonly understood to demonstrate Nasser’s obduracy, in fact signalled Nasser’s moderate policy shift and bandwagoning with the conservative Arab regimes, thus ending the ‘Arab Cold War’.⁴¹ In the run up to the summit the writing was on the wall for Arab radicals to see, and the two most uncompromisingly militant leaders – Syria’s Al-Atassi and Algeria’s Houari Boumedienne – duly boycotted Khartoum in anticipation of its results. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation’s Ahmed Shuqayri did attend, but walked out in fury at Nasser’s collusion with the moderates.

The summit opened on 29 August, when Nasser immediately formed a common front with Hussein of Jordan, Faisal of Saudi Arabia, and other Arab moderates. At Khartoum Nasser dismissed Palestinian and Iraqi appeals to emphasise a resumption of hostilities with Israel, stressing that he did not think it possible to regain the lost territories through military means, and that as ‘military struggle requires a unified Arab leadership, we say that there is no way but to walk in the path of political struggle’.⁴² To that end, Nasser successfully pressed the summit to empower Hussein – rather than the PLO as Shuqayri desired – to negotiate the return of the West Bank. This was a notable victory for the moderates – and one which Sadat would reverse seven years later – as by empowering Jordan Nasser signalled Arab readiness to deal with America and seriousness in pursuit of diplomacy.

⁴⁰ CFR Council on Foreign Relations, "Khartoum Resolution," http://www.cfr.org/publication/14841/khartoum_resolution.html?breadcrumb=/publication/publication_list%3Ftype%3Dessential_document%26page%3D92.

⁴¹ Moshe Shemesh, "The Origins of Sadat’s Strategic Volte-face: (Marking 30 Years Since Sadat’s Historic Visit to Israel, November 1977)," *Israel Studies* 13, no. 2 (2008): 32.

⁴² Nasser quoted in Ahmed Al-Shuqayri, *Al-Hazimah Al-Kubra: Ma' Al-Mulouk wa Al-Ruasa; Min Bayt Abd Al-Nasser ila Ghurfat Al-Amaliyat, Al-Juz' Al-Thanee* (Beirut: Dar Al-Awdah, 1973), 225.

The militant Arabs also found no satisfaction in their quest to pressure the Arab monarchies to embargo their oil exports and withdraw their financial deposits from the West.⁴³ Nasser colluded with Faisal to ensure that this did not come to pass, and in return Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya used some of the oil income to instead fund Egypt and Jordan – but not the absent Syria – in compensation for their war losses.⁴⁴

What then of the ‘three no’s’? The final sentence of article three in the final communiqué – where the ‘three no’s’ are expounded – should not be considered in isolation of the text that preceded it, which stated that ‘the Arab Heads of State have agreed to unite their *political efforts* at the international and diplomatic level to *eliminate the effects of the aggression* and to ensure the withdrawal of the aggressive Israeli forces from the Arab lands which have been occupied since the aggression of June 5’.⁴⁵ It is noteworthy that no mention was made of ‘military struggle’ to balance the conspicuous weight given to ‘political efforts’. The stated emphasis on the ‘elimination of the effects of the aggression’ was also a notably more modest aim than the ‘solution to the Palestinian question’ that the PLO proposed.⁴⁶ Thus when read as a constituent part of article three, the three no’s are far less bilious than portrayed. They stipulated ‘no formal peace *treaty*, but not a rejection of a state of peace; no *direct* negotiations, but not a refusal to talk through third parties; and no *de jure* recognition of Israel, but acceptance of its existence as a state’.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid., 191.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 206.

⁴⁵ Council on Foreign Relations, "Khartoum Resolution."

⁴⁶ Yoram Meital, "The Khartoum Conference and Egyptian Policy After the 1967 War: A Reexamination," *Middle East Journal* 54, no. 1 (2000): 77.

⁴⁷ Shlaim, *Iron Wall*, 258.

This was clearly therefore a moderate victory masterminded by Nasser. Shuqayri had earlier presented a PLO memorandum at the summit containing ‘four no’s’.⁴⁸ In view of their substantive policy victories at Khartoum, Nasser and his new moderate allies saw fit to throw a bone – ‘the three no’s’ – to the radical Arabs at the fag end of article three. The ‘three no’s’ also served Nasser’s purposes by acting as a curb on Hussein directly negotiating and concluding a separate peace treaty with the Israelis, a step Nasser opposed.

Nasser, encouraged by both moderate Arabs as well as the Soviet Union – which was worried by the potential for superpower confrontation – was now openly willing to attempt a political solution to the conflict.⁴⁹ Unlike Syria, Egypt accepted Security Council resolution 242 outlining the principles of ‘land for peace’, and thus implicitly agreed to the possibility of recognising Israel – heretofore referred to in Egypt as the ‘Zionist entity’ – as well as granting it freedom of navigation through international waterways, the *casus belli* of the 1967 war.⁵⁰ Egypt now called for ‘removing the traces of aggression’ rather than ‘rectifying the problem of 1948’, a crucial distinction which affirmed that Israel’s return to the pre-1967 borders was now Egypt’s publicly stated goal.⁵¹ Likewise, she now called for the ‘restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people according to the UN resolutions’ rather than the liberation of all the land between the river and the sea.⁵² Nasser would also agree to the Rogers plan in 1970, which ended the War of Attrition despite cries of protest from the radical Arabs, as will be recounted in the first chapter. Thus, Nasser’s final years essentially paved

⁴⁸ The fourth emphasised ‘no unilateral solution to the Palestinian issue’. Al-Shuqayri, *Al-Hazimah Al-Kubra*, 222.

⁴⁹ Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, 69.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 70, 71.

⁵¹ Yoram Meital, *Egypt's Struggle for Peace: Continuity and Change, 1967-1977* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 26.

⁵² *Ibid.*

the way for Sadat's moderation. However, this period may still be considered a phase of forced moderation for Nasser, which resulted in him paralysing 'Egypt by ambivalence'.⁵³ He did not persist in his previous policies because of inability, rather than choice, a fundamental difference between the *dénouement* of the Nasser years and the Sadat presidency.

Mapping the Evolution of Egyptian Foreign Policy

A mainly chronological analysis informs the structure and argument of this thesis. The general direction of Egyptian foreign policy under Sadat is examined in depth, with a parallel thematic breakdown of the major events in his presidency and an emphasis on continuity and change in Egyptian foreign policy.

The first chapter deals with foreign policy at the start of Sadat's presidency in 1970 and 1971. It analyses Egypt's main objectives at the start of Sadat's tenure, as well as how Sadat's initial moves impacted both adversaries and allies. The critical choices Sadat faced during these two years, including whether to restart the War of Attrition, are scrutinised, as well as how his policies differed from his predecessor's in both substance and style.

The build-up to the Yom Kippur War in 1972 and 1973 is covered in detail in the second chapter. Sadat's various efforts to strike a deal with Israel through the UN and the US are evaluated, as are his preparations for an Arab war coalition. The chapter

⁵³ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 199.

argues that Sadat's alleged diplomatic flexibility in the run up to war is, in fact, markedly exaggerated.

The third chapter, covering the years 1973 to 1975, focuses on Egyptian foreign policy during and after the war. The negotiation of the first disengagement agreement with Israel by Henry Kissinger is investigated, as is the development of Sadat's policies towards the superpowers and the Arab world. The chapter recounts how in the midst of war Sadat first began to signal his intent to drastically reorient Egypt's alliances.

The fourth chapter covers the negotiation of the Sinai II agreement in 1975, and its aftermath in 1976. This was a sensitive period in Egyptian policy, with Sadat steaming further ahead of the Arab consensus whilst driving a hard bargain in his dealings with Israel. It was also a time of confrontation with Moscow, and strengthening ties with Washington.

The fifth chapter examines the years 1977 and 1978, and analyses Sadat's historic trip to Jerusalem as well as the events leading to Camp David. Sadat's peace initiative presaged many other changes in his foreign policy and regional politics, as will be examined in the chapter.

The period 1978-1981 is the subject of the final chapter. The chapter examines the Camp David summit as well as the negotiation of Egypt's peace treaty with Israel. It also chronicles Egypt's steady marginalisation within the Arab world and Sadat's growing isolation, which culminated in her complete ostracism following the

conclusion of the peace treaty with Israel and his assassination. The thesis concludes by reemphasising that the evolution of Egyptian foreign policy under Sadat may be understood as a period of both continuity and change, mostly to Egypt's advantage.

Chapter One: Opening Gambits

Anwar Sadat faced a formidable array of challenges upon accession to office on 28 September 1970. Most importantly, the Sinai peninsula was still under Israeli occupation. The escalation of the War of Attrition, which had started in March 1969, had drawn in Soviet forces to bolster Egypt's air defences. Paradoxically, however, their presence led to greater restrictions on the Egyptian military, as Moscow became increasingly wary of being drawn into direct confrontation with Israel's patron, the United States.¹ This manifested itself in the Soviet disinclination to supply advanced offensive arms in sufficient quantities to make possible a full scale crossing of the Suez Canal by Egyptian armed forces.

The loss of Sinai led to manifold problems in Cairo. The loss of the revenues of the Canal and the Sinai oil fields aggravated the already dire economic straits Egypt found herself in. The situation of no-war and no-peace that had held since 1967, and the greatly increased military spending it necessitated, was becoming increasingly untenable. Cairo found itself reliant on handouts from former Arab foes in order to stay afloat.

Furthermore, the regime inherited by Sadat had lost much of its domestic legitimacy. It had not only lost Sinai in the Six-Day War with Israel, but also undid many of its most significant foreign policy accomplishments of the 1950s. Great store had been set by the exit of foreign troops in the aftermath of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1954, which mandated the evacuation of British military forces from the Canal Zone, as

¹ Shlaim and Tanter, "Decision Process," 483.

well as by national control of the Canal in the aftermath of the Suez War two years later. Yet the Canal now lay unused with the Israeli army entrenched along its eastern bank, and the same year had seen the re-entry of foreign troops – albeit Soviet rather than British – in the Egyptian heartland in order to counter Israel’s deep penetration bombing raids. The Egyptian state was once again reliant on an external power for its most fundamental need: security.

Moreover, the death of the regime’s strongman and talisman, Nasser, led to further loss of popular support. Thus Sadat found himself attempting to reverse Nasser’s strategic mistakes, despite being unable to presume full domestic support for his own policies, whether in matters of war or peace. The new president was considered, at best, *primus inter pares* by the leading figures of the regime, the international community, as well as the public at large.

The Making of a President

This was partly due to Sadat’s career during Nasser’s presidency. Sadat had largely been a political outsider since the establishment of the republic, as reflected in the secondary roles he was accorded. Mohamed Anwar el-Sadat was born to a poor family in December 1918 in Mit Abul Kom, a hardscrabble village in the Nile Delta. His father was a clerk in the army medical corps stationed in Sudan, where the future president’s mother hailed from. The young Anwar was amongst the first cadets of humble origin admitted to the Egyptian Military Academy, and after passing out in 1938 he became an anti-British political agitator, active throughout the Second World War and the twilight years of the monarchy. In 1942 he was interned by the British

and discharged from the officer corps after being charged with espionage on behalf of the Nazis, before being released at the end of the war. Sadat was again gaoled in 1946 for his involvement in the assassination of Ameen Othman, a prominent pro-British Egyptian politician, but was controversially acquitted in 1948.² Sadat was eventually reinstated as an army officer after appealing to palace courtiers, and famously sought the King's favour and pardon by publicly kissing hands at Friday prayers in Cairo.³

By the time of Sadat's reinstatement, Nasser had already formed the nucleus of the Free Officers movement, and enlisted Sadat to benefit from his links to both the palace and the Muslim Brethren, a group the Free Officers made common cause with against the regime.⁴ After the success of the officers' coup in 1952, Sadat held relatively minor posts including editor *Al Jumhuriya* – the regime mouthpiece, director of army public relations, secretary-general of the Islamic Congress, and finally speaker of parliament from 1960-69.⁵ During this period Sadat bent with the wind and was famously lavish in his praise of his master, offering Nasser encomiums and complete backing as can be seen in the hagiographies he authored.⁶ In them Sadat declared support for Nasserite policies such as friendship with the Soviets and enmity with the US and Saudi Arabia, in contrast to the policies he would later espouse as president.⁷ Indeed, Nasser bestowed him with the derisive soubriquet of *Bikbashi Sah*

² Muhammad Anwar el Sadat, 1977, FCO 93/1049, National Archives, Kew

³ Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵ Muhammad Anwar el Sadat, 1977, FCO 93/1049, National Archives, Kew

⁶ See Anwar Sadat, *Asrar Al-Thawrah Al-Misriyah: Bawa'ithiha Al-Khaffiyah wa Asbabihha Al-Psycholojiyah* (Cairo: Al-Dar Al-Qawmiyya, 1965); Anwar Sadat, *Ya Walady Hatha Ammuk Jamal: Muthakkarat Anwar Al-Sadat* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbouly, 2005).

⁷ Sadat, *Ya Waladi*, 227, 233, 241.

Sah ('Major Yes Yes') in reference to Sadat's genuflections and inevitable agreement with Nasser's professed opinions.⁸

Yet such obsequious fawning served one well in a dictatorial regime that verged on a police state. As Nasser disposed of his rivals Sadat stayed on the right side of his master, and eventually emerged as vice-president in December 1969 and heir apparent, despite disastrous policy decisions he participated in such as the determination to get involved militarily in Yemen's civil war, which he famously predicted would be a 'picnic on the Red Sea'.⁹ Sadat handled the political relationship with the Yemeni revolutionaries, and had personally signed the mutual defence pact with Yemen in November 1962.¹⁰

Thus it came to pass that after Nasser's death other leading candidates were dissuaded from seeking the presidency by Sadat's station as Egypt's sole vice-president, bestowed ten months earlier, which conferred personal constitutional legitimacy.¹¹ The most plausible alternative to Sadat, former prime minister and future vice-president Ali Sabri, had recently been publicly demoted for his leftist leanings at a time when Nasser was attempting to manoeuvre away from the USSR.¹² The case for Zakaria Mohiuddin, a Free Officer and another pretender to the presidency, was similarly underwhelming, as he had not held high office for the previous thirty

⁸ David Hirst and Irene Beeson, *Sadat* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 81.

⁹ Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 32; Hirst and Beeson, *Sadat*, 92.

¹⁰ Hirst and Beeson, *Sadat*, 92.

¹¹ Nasser appointed Sadat vice president immediately before the former left for the Rabat Arab summit in December 1969. See Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 33, 34.

¹² Eliezer Be'eri, *Army Officers in Arab Politics and Society* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), 123.

months.¹³ Sadat successfully argued that those whom Nasser had cast aside should remain in the cold.

However, while no one challenged Sadat's constitutional *bona fides*, Sadat's limited public support, and the perception that he was a stopgap choice for the vice-presidency, undermined his position.¹⁴ Indeed, part of the reason that Sadat's nomination was not opposed by others before his confirmation in a plebiscite on 15 October – when he 'won' 90.04 per cent of the vote – was because he was considered a lightweight, a president *ad interim* who could be easily manipulated, and failing that out-manoeuvred.¹⁵ The Sabri faction was content to allow Sadat nominal leadership, with vice-president Sabri the *eminence grise*. In effect, Sabri wanted to make of Sadat a second Mohamed Naguib, reserving the role of Nasser for himself.¹⁶

Sadat would show his political nous and ultimately disappoint and dismiss his rivals, his attitude being *j'y suis, j'y reste*. However, to begin with he justified his foreign policy manoeuvring by claiming Nasser's mantle. Appearing in Parliament after his confirmation President Sadat affirmed that his 'programme is Nasser's' and proceeded to bow before a bust of Nasser in the chamber.¹⁷ Fortunately, Nasser bequeathed Sadat an invaluable versatile legacy that could be used to justify both militant postures and peaceful overtures, as would be demonstrated in the years to follow.

¹³ R.A. Beaumont, United Arab Republic: Annual Review for 1970, 25 January 1971, FCO 39/961, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁴ Heikal, a confidant of Nasser, alleges that Nasser's elevation of Sadat was a temporary measure that Nasser simply never got round to undoing as a result of the crush of crises he faced at the end of his life. See Heikal, *Khareef Al-Ghadab*, 91.

¹⁵ Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 37.

¹⁶ Mohamed Naguib was the Free Officers' figurehead and Egypt's first president. He was forced out in 1954 to make way for Nasser, the Officers' true leader.

¹⁷ Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 36.

Nasser's Bequests: The War of Attrition, the Rogers Plan, and a Soviet Army

The triple strategy that Nasser followed after the Six-Day War allowed Sadat wide latitude in policy without explicitly disavowing Nasserism. Nasser had reacted to Egypt's humiliating defeat by pursuing three different policies. The first was militaristic; Nasser refused to concede defeat and considered the 1967 *débâcle* a lost battle rather than a lost cause. The rallying call was a typical Nasserite aphorism: 'what was taken by force can only be returned by force'.¹⁸ In practice this involved the gradual rebuilding of Egyptian military capabilities in order to eventually be able to confront the Israelis and cross the Canal. In the meantime the War of Attrition was launched in order to prevent the Canal becoming Egypt's new *de facto* political frontier with Israel, as well as impose a military, political, and human costs on Israel's occupation of Sinai, a goal that was to be accomplished with 727 Israelis killed and more than 2 700 wounded in the war, losses that surpassed Israel's casualties in the Six-Day War.¹⁹

The second policy involved international escalation. Nasser realised the difficulty of Egypt emerging victorious in a full-scale war with Israel. To counter Israel's qualitative advantage in arms and personnel, as well as her overwhelming strategic gains in the wake of the Arab territorial losses of 1967, Nasser sought to escalate the conflict from the regional to the systemic level by embroiling Moscow in the military battle on his behalf, thus binding Egypt's fate, both military and political, closer to the

¹⁸ Abdel Majid Farid, *Nasser: The Final Years* (Reading: Ithaca, 1994), 66.

¹⁹ Shlaim and Tanter, "Decision Process," 484; Nadav Safran, *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (London: Belknap Press of Harvard, 1978), 266.

USSR. Nasser described his strategy as ‘to broaden our dealings with the Soviets so that their bond with us can become like America’s bond with Israel’.²⁰ To this end, Nasser authorised the Soviets to negotiate with the US in Egypt’s stead as he thought they would have more bargaining power, and would also be more likely to supply Egypt with needed arms if talks made little progress.²¹ The advantage in such an approach was that the disparity in power between Egypt and Israel would be less glaring once both superpowers had sufficiently committed to their respective clients.²²

Nasser had repeatedly requested that the Soviets involve themselves directly in the defence of Egypt by despatching Soviet units.²³ In a meeting with Nikolai Podgorny in Cairo on 21 June 1967 Nasser unsuccessfully offered the Soviets naval facilities in return for a military ‘agreement’ with Moscow and jointly manned air defences.²⁴ A month later Iraq’s Aaref and Algeria’s Boumedienne visited Moscow to request that the USSR send pilots to Egypt.²⁵ The Soviets proved reluctant, but finally acquiesced in January 1970 following a clandestine visit by Nasser, who was distressed by Israel’s ‘deep penetration’ bombing of Egypt.²⁶ Israel was growing frustrated by the static warfare along the Canal and the steady stream of casualties that the War of Attrition was claiming. She initiated her airstrike campaign in the Nile Delta in order to deter Nasser from full-scale war and force him to halt the War of Attrition – in effect ‘an attempt to escalate for the purpose of de-escalation’ – as well as ideally bring about the downfall of the regime.²⁷ However, by ‘by pushing her strategic

²⁰ Quoted in Farid, *Nasser*, 178.

²¹ Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 170.

²² Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 34.

²³ Farid, *Nasser*, 7.

²⁴ Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 84.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

²⁶ Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, 73.

²⁷ Shlaim and Tanter, "Decision Process," 485.

advantage too far', Israel helped Nasser achieve his goal of escalating the conflict to the superpower level and defeated her own objective of closing 'the Middle East subsystem as far as possible to superpower intervention'.²⁸

In Moscow Nasser had threatened to resign and allow a pro-American successor if greater Soviet involvement was not forthcoming. With 'most of the Soviet eggs ... deposited in the Egyptian basket', the USSR simply could not afford to stand still.²⁹ As a result the USSR deployed 8 000 troops to set up advanced SAM air-defence sites in the Egyptian interior, fighter plane squadrons to protect Egyptian airspace, and thousands of Soviet advisors to individual Egyptian army units, marking the first time Moscow risked its combat forces and advanced air defence systems for a non-Communist state.³⁰ In return, the Soviets were granted access to seven air bases and two naval ports.³¹

The gamble paid off militarily as Israel was forced to halt her bombing of the Egyptian interior for fear of coming to military blows with the Soviet Union, and the new air-defence system was steadily extended to the Canal Zone itself, a tremendous fillip for the Egyptians who finally nullified Israel's hitherto uncontested dominance in the air. However, greater Soviet military involvement meant correspondingly reduced Egyptian freedom of action. Egypt could not plan or launch a large-scale attack on Israel without Soviet knowledge and consent. A further corollary of

²⁸ Ibid.: 510. Ayubi, *Nasser and Sadat*, 116.

²⁹ Memo, George C. Denney, Jr., UAR-USSR: The Soviet-Egyptian Relationship: A Sweet and Sour Sauce, 30 September 1969, NSC files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 635, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

³⁰ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Mid East Issues – NSC Meeting Wednesday, June 10, 10 June 1970, NSC Institutional 'H' Files, Box H-176, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland; Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, 73.

³¹ Golan, *Yom Kippur and After*, 6.

increased Soviet involvement was a comparably greater American commitment to Israel to help it contain the Soviets, resulting in the Canal Zone turning into a ‘Cold War frontier’.³² Moscow, for its part, was unwilling to be dragged into a direct offensive confrontation with Israel and the US, and made a fair distinction between defending the Egyptian heartland against Israeli air raids and attacking the Israelis in Sinai.

The third policy was diplomatic. In the aftermath of 1967 Nasser not only abandoned the Arab Cold war, bandwagoned with the moderates at Khartoum, and accepted resolution 242, he also became involved in diplomatic overtures with the US. The fruit of these exchanges was a ninety-day Egyptian-Israeli ceasefire declared on 7 August 1970 through the US Secretary of State William Rogers’ initiative, which marked ‘the beginning of a go-it-alone Egyptian peace-seeking diplomacy’ that Sadat would continue.³³ Significantly, the ceasefire that terminated the hostilities meant that the War of Attrition ended in a draw, the first time an Arab-Israeli campaign did not end in a resounding Israeli victory.

In a way, Nasser’s hand had been forced towards a ceasefire not by America, but by the Soviets’ refusal to further increase military aid to Egypt and their clear preference for a political rather than military solution.³⁴ Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, stressed that Egypt should not initiate another conflict unless they were ‘two hundred percent’ certain of the outcome.³⁵ The Soviets were concerned that Egypt would lose another precipitated war, forcing them to intervene militarily and thereby provoking a

³² Ayubi, *Nasser and Sadat*, 221.

³³ Hirst and Beeson, *Sadat*, 45; Farid, *Nasser*, 176.

³⁴ Safran, *Israel*, 445.

³⁵ Riyadh, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyadh*, 315.

confrontation with the United States.³⁶ The concern was mirrored in Washington, where Israel was similarly pressured, an early demonstration of superpower collusion to preserve budding *détente*.³⁷ In any case the ceasefire proved militarily useful to Egypt, as it allowed her new air defences to be illicitly extended to the front line.³⁸

Nasser led up to this momentous decision by declaring at the Arab summit in Rabat the previous December that Arab states ought to respect Egypt's decisions on how best to return her lost lands.³⁹ Nonetheless, this volte-face was so surprising that Nasser was forced to place his future successor under house arrest as a result. Sadat, who like many others did not anticipate Nasser's decision, had hastened to attack the Rogers initiative in Nasser's absence before catching drift of the new political winds.⁴⁰

Moreover, Nasser also notably empowered King Hussein to attempt to retrieve the West Bank through America's good offices.⁴¹ For Egypt's part, however, Nasser explicitly ruled out a separate settlement and would only accept a total Israeli withdrawal from *all* occupied territories: Sinai, Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights.⁴² Israel, however, refused to return to the pre-war 'suicide

³⁶ Ayubi, *Nasser and Sadat*, 70.

³⁷ Shlaim and Tanter, "Decision Process," 508.

³⁸ As part of the conditions of the ceasefire, neither side was allowed to alter the military status quo within a 50-kilometre radius of the Canal, including bringing in new weapons or building new defence installations. See Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 267.

³⁹ Kerr, *The Arab Cold War*, 146.

⁴⁰ Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 34.

⁴¹ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 265.

⁴² Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Sisco's Talk with Nasser, 22 April 1970, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 635, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

borders’, and demanded direct negotiations and formal peace treaties with her Arab neighbours in return for any withdrawal.⁴³

Nasser, though, repudiated the principle of direct negotiations with Israel – which he considered ‘tantamount to surrender’ – and the idea of full peace treaties, his preferred *quid pro quo* being ending belligerency, the formulation employed in resolution 242.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Nasser preferred that negotiations be conducted through Moscow rather than Washington. Nasser’s only concessions involved acquiescing in minor border adjustments in the Green Line demarcating the West Bank and Israel, agreeing to Israeli freedom of passage through the Straits of Tiran, and allowing Israel use of the Canal once the Palestinian refugee problem was settled.⁴⁵ Nasser still refused to explicitly recognise Israel but did agree ‘to make the affirmation required in the Security Council Resolution’ 242.⁴⁶ Indeed, Egypt and the Arab states had rejected a Latin American resolution in the United Nations General Assembly calling for a full Israeli withdrawal in return for unfettered Israeli navigation rights and recognition of Israel.⁴⁷

Nasser did, however, signal his intentions to strike a deal if his conditions were satisfied, and indicated to the US that he ‘would not allow Syria to have a veto’ on

⁴³ Ayubi, *Nasser and Sadat*, 81.

⁴⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, Nasser, Hassan Sabry al-Kholy, William R. Polk, 24 January 1969, White House Central Files, Subject Files, Box 79, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Nasser, Hassan Sabry al-Kholy, William R. Polk, 24 January 1969, White House Central Files, Subject Files, Box 79, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland, Riyadh, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 127.

⁴⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, Mahmoud Fawzi, Ashraf Ghorbal, Mohammed Riad, Henry A. Kissinger, Harold H. Saunders, 10 April 1969, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 634, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁷ Riyadh, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 98.

Egyptian policy.⁴⁸ Henry Kissinger, the National Security Adviser to President Richard Nixon, described Nasser's intricate stance as follows:

He wants us to help, but he is reluctant to resume relations. He wants a settlement, but he is reluctant to come right out and say he wants peace. He seems to feel he can make concessions as long as he can do it by staying within the wording of the UN resolution. But he still seems to feel that he can wait a bit longer to see whether he can persuade us to bail him out.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, despite this ambivalent, ambitious, and obdurate position, Nasser's policy proved to be a blessing to Sadat. Although the terms were harsh and unrealistic, by even proposing them Nasser legitimised the policy of seeking the return of occupied territory by means other than war. Accordingly Sadat, despite his unconsolidated domestic base, enjoyed a fair scope for manoeuvre as whatever the policy enacted, he could claim he was only following in Nasser's path.

Sadat's First Steps

The most pressing foreign policy question that Sadat faced upon accession to power was what strategy to pursue vis-à-vis Israel in the Canal Zone. A ceasefire still held, but it was due to expire on 5 November. Three alternatives were available to Sadat: officially renew the ceasefire, allow the ceasefire to lapse without resuming hostilities, or re-start the War of Attrition.

Each option presented advantages and drawbacks. Renewing the ceasefire would portend Sadat's willingness to continue talks where Nasser left off. Paradoxically, because of his stature Nasser had been considered the sole Arab leader who could

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Fawzi and a US Strategy toward the UAR, 11 April 1969, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 634, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

conclude a peace treaty and ‘make it stick’. Attempting a political solution would allow Sadat to set out his *bona fides* as a putative peacemaker. Domestically, however, Sadat was being pressured by Ali Sabri and his allies to resume the conflict. And during these early days of presidency, Sadat could not simply dismiss these officials’ views out of hand.

The second option was ostensibly more palatable but ultimately unappealing as it, in effect, offered Israel all the fruits of a ceasefire without Egypt being officially credited for her forbearance. The third option, the preferred choice of Sabri *et al*, would provide Sadat with a quick shot of legitimacy and popularity, but which would ultimately prove fleeting in view of the perpetuation of the military stalemate and the increase in casualties and cost. Sadat would also neither endear himself to the Americans, on whom he pinned his hopes of a negotiated settlement with the Israelis, nor the Soviets, on whom he relied for military supplies and who were loath to increase tensions at a time of *détente*.

Israel, for her part, hoped to renew the ceasefire. Calm along the Canal suited her perfectly well, especially as she had managed to extricate herself from the ceasefire’s accompanying talks after she charged Egypt with violating the ceasefire by extending SAM defences to the Canal Zone. Indeed, Israel decreed, with US support, that it would not return to talks until the *status quo ante* was restored. Evidently, military quiet and diplomatic standstill made for a comfortable concatenation of circumstances.

In the event, after a meeting with his war cabinet on 30 September Sadat opted for a three month extension of the ceasefire until early March,⁵⁰ thereby sending a two-fold message that he wanted to give diplomacy a chance through the resumption of talks under the aegis of the UN as well as through America's Rogers Initiative, yet he would not acquiesce in an indefinite ceasefire in the absence of diplomatic progress, announcing on 30 November that the ceasefire would only be renewed again 'if there is a definite timetable for Israeli withdrawal'.⁵¹

This decision proved useful to Sadat at home as well as abroad. Restarting the conflict would make Egypt ever more reliant on Soviet military aid. The greater the reliance on the Soviets, the stronger the position of Sadat's domestic rivals who, led by Sabri, enthusiastically saluted the Soviet banner. Thus Egypt's overtures to the US attained a new significance: they were manifestations of an ongoing domestic power struggle, with both sides justifying their stances and demands by claiming Nasser's legacy.

Accordingly, Sadat's first foreign policy decision in extending the ceasefire mirrored Nasser's last. He followed Nasser's footsteps in other avenues of foreign policy, due to political expediency as well as personal advantage that certain policies could accrue. Thus Sadat actively supported the Arab League mission despatched to Jordan to promote Hashemite-PLO reconciliation in the aftermath of Black September, and later hosted King Hussein on 2 December to further clear the air between the two sides.⁵²

⁵⁰ Riyadh, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 303.

⁵¹ Quoted in Hirst and Beeson, *Sadat*, 107.

⁵² Riyadh, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 311.

More significantly, Sadat continued to pursue the Tripoli charter Nasser signed in June 1970 with Sudan and Libya, which aimed to establish a tri-partite Arab confederation. At a November meeting in Cairo the three states declared that they were actively considering confederating, a declaration that would set the stage for a domestic confrontation between Sadat and his rivals the following spring.⁵³

The ‘Year of Decision’

In the wake of his renewal of the ceasefire Sadat wasted no time making diplomatic moves in the hope that any progress achieved would relieve some of the political pressure that he faced at home. Sadat had two feathers in his diplomatic cap. On 4 February 1971 Sadat unveiled before his parliament a new plan for an interim settlement, which involved re-opening the Canal in return for a partial Israeli pullback in Sinai. Sadat envisioned that Egyptian soldiers would cross the Canal after the Israeli withdrawal and therewith work would commence to clear and reopen the Canal. Sadat, while refusing to again renew the ceasefire with Israel, would nonetheless commit to withhold fire for 30 days as part of the new proposal.⁵⁴ Mahmoud Riyad, the hard-line Foreign Minister Sadat inherited, only found out about the plan moments before it was announced. He insipidly argued against it on the grounds that Arab states might consider it a partial settlement, but Sadat ignored his objections.⁵⁵ The plan also upset the Sabri clique, which still hoped to resume the War of Attrition.⁵⁶

⁵³ R.A. Beaumont, United Arab Republic: Annual Review for 1970, 25 January 1971, FCO 39/961, National Archives, Kew.

⁵⁴ Egypt Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper on the Peace Initiatives Undertaken by President Anwar al-Sadat, 1971-1977* (Cairo: State Information Service, 1978), 13, 14.

⁵⁵ Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 328.

⁵⁶ Heikal, *October 73*, 201.

Sadat was initially vague on two crucial questions: whether his plan would be linked to a comprehensive peace settlement and whether Israeli ships would be allowed use of the Canal. He declared the withdrawal ‘the first stage of a timetable which will be prepared *later* to implement the other provision of the Security Council resolution’ once the Canal was opened for ‘*international* navigation’, a category which could potentially include Israel.⁵⁷ Notably, Sadat neither insisted on an Israeli pledge to withdraw completely from Sinai nor implied that he would ‘understand’ any withdrawal to be the first stage of a comprehensive settlement.

In any case, despite its perceived novelty the plan was not entirely new. Following the Six-Day War proposals were made to open the Canal without a peace agreement, but they floundered over the question of operational control. Israel felt that as she controlled the east bank she had a right to participate in the Canal’s management, an argument Egypt predictably rejected. Some Israelis later on unofficially floated the ‘Dayan Plan’, which called for the ‘thinning out’ of both sides’ forces on the front in order to reopen the waterway.⁵⁸ The plan was attractive to some Israelis because it would be separate from an overall settlement, and would palliate international pressures on Israel to implement resolution 242. It would also reduce the ability of Egyptian forces massed alongside the Canal - where more than 80 000 troops and 800 artillery guns were stationed opposite some 25 000 Israelis and 300 tanks – to ‘blood’ the Israelis or surprise them, thus reducing Egypt’s ability to rekindle the War of Attrition at will. In any case, Israel’s main defences were already set up in the Sinai

⁵⁷ Memo, Saunders and Hoskinson to Kissinger, Partial Withdrawal and Reopening the Suez Canal, 12 February 1971, NSC Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 647, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

passes forty kilometres east of the Canal – which served as Israel’s new portcullis. Israel’s main offensive military option, namely air attacks, would also be unaffected by a partial withdrawal, unlike Egypt’s.

The idea whetted Egypt’s interest. But she rejected the principle of a mutual withdrawal, which would involve her pulling her military forces back from her own sovereign territory. Instead Egypt quixotically proposed an Israeli withdrawal beyond the passes in return for a ‘thinning out’ of Egyptian ground forces forty kilometres from the Canal while maintaining the crucial SAM sites. The Egyptians also proposed to forego future diplomatic action in the Security Council and to allow the Jarring talks to continue indefinitely, which was hardly a tempting offer.⁵⁹

The Jarring Questionnaire

Sadat’s second feather involved Dr Gunnar Jarring, the United Nations Security Council’s special envoy to the region. Jarring was a Swedish diplomat tasked with negotiating the implementation of resolution 242, a mission which he had been pursuing since November 1967. Israel had sent him a document on 8 January 1971 proposing renewed talks under his auspices. The Israeli text emphasised the ‘essentials of peace’ that would govern the relationship between Israel and Egypt in the aftermath of an agreement between the two, including an end of the state of belligerency. And while Israel indicated that she sought changes to the 1967 borders, she proposed leaving major issues such as borders and refugees for future

⁵⁹ Ibid.

negotiations.⁶⁰ The Egyptian response on 15 January emphasised the need for a clear-cut Israeli commitment to return to the pre-war borders and a more forthcoming stance on refugees' right of return before negotiations could commence.⁶¹

This prompted Jarring to provide a questionnaire on 8 February to both sides to gauge their readiness to negotiate a formal peace agreement in exchange for complete Israeli withdrawal from territory conquered in 1967, the establishment of demilitarised zones, security arrangements in Sharm al-Sheikh to guarantee free Israeli passage through the Straits of Tiran, and freedom of navigation through the Canal.⁶² On 14 February, Egypt replied positively to the Jarring questionnaire, agreeing to recognise Israel, consider a bilateral peace agreement, guarantee freedom of navigation in the straits, and acquiescing in most of Israel's other essential demands.⁶³ Egypt, however, did make additional demands of Israel, namely a full implementation of resolution 242, including the return of Gaza and a fair settlement for refugees.⁶⁴ Harold Saunders, an official in the US National Security Council, described this development in a memorandum to Kissinger as follows:

the Egyptians have taken an important step toward full engagement in the negotiating process. Until now they have been largely manoeuvring to buy time to bring international pressure to bear on the US and Israel. Now, however, they have made the commitment to peace that the Israelis have demanded as a prerequisite to further progress and have gone on to stake out clear positions on the remaining key issues of a settlement. Having done this, they have clearly passed responsibility back to Israel.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1278.

⁶¹ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Jarring Talks – UAR Response to Israeli Document, 21 January 1971, NSC Files, Country Files-Mid East, Box 637, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁶² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper*, 61, 62.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁶⁵ Memo, Saunders to Kissinger, UAR response to Jarring Memo, 17 February 1971, NSC Files, Country Files-Mid East, Box 637, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Israel, for her part, proved unforthcoming in her response to Jarring on 26 February, flatly ruling out a withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 borders. With regards to Sadat's proposed partial withdrawal scheme, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir insisted on an end to belligerency in return for a limited pull-back, stating on 9 February that 'it seems strange to propose the withdrawal of our forces from the Canal outside a framework of agreed arrangements for the absolute termination of the war'.⁶⁶ Sadat reacted by refusing to renew the expiring ceasefire on 5 March, against Soviet counsel.⁶⁷ In desperation he secretly visited the USSR on 1 March, partly in order to fend off dissatisfaction within the regime by demonstrating 'that he was leaving no stone unturned' in a quest for a resolution to the stalemate in the Canal Zone.⁶⁸ In Moscow Sadat fervently, but unsuccessfully, lobbied for MiG-23s with which to challenge Israel's air force.⁶⁹ Moscow did offer advanced bombers on the condition that they not be used except with explicit Soviet permission, a stipulation that Sadat vehemently refused.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the Soviets did promise further arms for Egypt.

Sadat's frustration with the diplomatic stalemate was evident in a letter to Nixon on 5 March where he wondered 'what was the result of (his) positive stand' and called for more American pressure on Jerusalem to show flexibility.⁷¹ Sadat informed the US of his hitherto secret trip to Moscow, implied Soviet support for his moves, and offered a further carrot: he would renew the cease-fire for six months if a partial withdrawal

⁶⁶ Quoted in Evolution of Positions on Interim Settlement, 26 October 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁶⁷ Riyadh, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 322.

⁶⁸ Memo, Rogers to Nixon, Letter to You from UAR President Sadat, 6 March 1971, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 129, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁶⁹ Sadat, quoted in Heikal, *October 73.*, 231.

⁷⁰ Sadat, *Al-Bahth*, 301.

⁷¹ Correspondence, Letter from President Sadat to President Nixon, 5 March 1971, NSC Files, Presidential Correspondence, Box 763, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

was implemented.⁷² Sadat had hoped the expiring ceasefire would heap pressure on Israel and the US. His gambit failed, though, as the US correctly assessed that ‘the end of the ceasefire does not mean the resumption of hostilities’ and that allowing it to lapse ‘even has the advantage of avoiding a “deadline”’.⁷³

In any case domestic and Arab pressure on Sadat led him to backpedal and announce on 1 April that any withdrawal from the Canal was ‘not a separate solution or a partial solution’ but must be linked to a full implementation of resolution 242 and an eventual withdrawal from ‘all Arab territories’.⁷⁴ Sadat also further announced that demilitarising the Sinai was out of the question and that Egyptian troops would cross the Canal in the aftermath of any Israeli withdrawal. Golda Meir replied on 4 April that Sadat’s proposition ‘clearly cannot constitute a basis for agreement with Israel’.⁷⁵ The Israelis were thinking along the lines of a very limited (10 kilometre) withdrawal, with the explicit understanding that any withdrawal ‘shall not in any way affect the agreement of the parties to pursue negotiations under Jarring’ and ‘would imply no Israeli commitment to future Israeli withdrawal to the international frontier’.⁷⁶ On 22 April, however, Sadat reiterated that Egyptian forces must be allowed to cross the Canal and rejected an American suggestion of an Israeli withdrawal of 40 kilometres that would leave the Sinai passes in Israeli hands, instead proposing a 30-50 kilometre no-man’s land between the belligerent forces, which would leave the Israelis in El

⁷² Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Message from President Sadat, 6 March 1971, NSC Files, Presidential Correspondence, Box 763, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Memo, Saunders to Kissinger, Partial Withdrawal and Reopening the Suez Canal, 12 April 1971, NSC Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 656, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Memo, Evolution of Positions on Interim Settlement, 26 October 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Arish in Eastern Sinai, another non-starter as far as Jerusalem was concerned.⁷⁷ Thus the partial withdrawal option proved stillborn.

Sadat's active diplomacy had certainly succeeded in sending a message to both superpowers and Israel that he was willing to be creative, flexible, and compromise in order to reach an agreement, even an interim one. Unfortunately, such zeal betrayed a certain degree of naïveté. Sadat's expectations regarding the speed with which diplomacy would bear fruit were unrealistic; he seemed to believe that Nixon could produce an instant Israeli pullback *a la* 1956. Moreover, Sadat neither realised the inefficacy of concurrently negotiating two different initiatives – his interim settlement as well as the Jarring talks – nor that concessions in one would undercut his position in the other. Abba Eban, Israel's erudite Cantabrigian foreign minister, thought it 'absurd to address Israel simultaneously with plans for a partial agreement and a plan for a comprehensive settlement', and that 'in proposing one agreement and supporting another, (America) was effectively working against them both'.⁷⁸

Furthermore, Sadat's proposals betrayed a diplomatic clumsiness that alleviated rather than heaped pressure on Jerusalem. Had he not pursued his interim settlement and instead merely provided his positive response to Jarring, Israel would have found herself under pressure in Washington and the UN as the obstinate party.⁷⁹ Israel's Jarring strategy had been to 'keep his mission alive and prevent the matter from going

⁷⁷ Memo, Harold H. Saunders, Evolution of US Position on Suez Canal Settlement, 12 June 1971, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 657, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷⁸ Abba Eban, *Personal Witness: Israel Through My Eyes* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1993), 500.

⁷⁹ R.A. Beaumont, Sir Richard Beaumont's Valedictory Despatch, 18 January 1973, FCO 93/74, National Archives, Kew.

back to the UN, where Israel would be blamed for the failure'.⁸⁰ By offering a new proposal just as Israel was being forced to publicly declare her position, Sadat relieved the Israeli cabinet of the political consequences of its rigidity. A fresh interim proposal in hand, Israel could now prevaricate anew, an exercise at which she excelled.

Moreover, Sadat did not grasp that the allure of an interim settlement was that it would allow both sides to postpone the resolution of the most intractable issues through deliberate vagueness. Instead he gradually transformed his proposal for a fairly small pullback into 'a half-step to complete Israeli withdrawal'.⁸¹ This was paralleled by Sadat's unrealistic assessment of both the relative strength of his diplomatic hand as well as the degree of pressure the US would realistically put on Israel. Expecting Israel to withdraw beyond the passes for a six-month ceasefire as well as the *possibility* of Israeli use of a reopened Canal was far-fetched, especially when one bears in mind that Israel already enjoyed access to both the Mediterranean and the Red Sea and would consequently derive only marginal benefit from using the Canal. Were war to break out at the end of the proposed ceasefire the Israelis would simply have to fight that much closer to their borders, a perceived disadvantage. Israel's security conception decreed her current deployment preferable, as the more land she controlled the more security she would enjoy, a view that would be challenged in the Yom Kippur War but for the nonce reigned supreme.

⁸⁰ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 274.

⁸¹ Memo, Henry A. Kissinger, Current State of Play in the Mid-East, 26 June 1971, NSC Meetings, Box H-031, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Finally, were such an interim withdrawal to take place and the Canal to reopen, Egypt would find it much more challenging to launch a successful surprise attack comparable to offensive she would launch on Yom Kippur in 1973. The reasons for this are manifold. One of the few advantages of the total defeat of 1967 was that it left Israeli and Egyptian forces in near proximity, permitting not only artillery duels in the War of Attrition, but also allowing the Egyptian military to display its relative strength in static and limited mobility fighting. The Egyptian offensive of Yom Kippur would have been almost impossible were there an extended no-man's land between Egyptian and Israeli forces as would have been dictated by an interim withdrawal. Such a buffer zone would play to Israeli strengths in mobile warfare and deprive the Egyptians of their SAM air defence shield that neutralised Israel's aerial superiority in the front and which Egypt would have been barred from extending into Sinai.

Indeed, Sadat's National Security Adviser Hafiz Ismail argued that an interim agreement would be militarily counterproductive as Egypt would not have sufficient forces on the east bank to repel an Israeli attack, and with the Canal in use it would be difficult for Egyptian infantry to cross in sufficient numbers in good time to repulse the Israel army.⁸² A reopened Canal and the reconstruction of the Canal towns would also 'present a hostage to fortune' to Israel and necessitate the dismantling of the present front line defence network, resulting in an inadequate military presence on both banks of the Canal.⁸³ Egypt would also have to shut down the Canal and disrupt trade routes in the case of renewed conflict, meaning that Egypt would be under

⁸² A.B. Urwick, Egyptian Attitude to an Interim Agreement, 12 December 1972, FCO 17/1647, National Archives, Kew.

⁸³ Ibid.

international pressure not to resort to force. In hindsight, it seems that Israel's diplomatic intransigence helped prevent Sadat from shooting himself in the foot. As Kissinger would later recount in Israel, 'in retrospect...the line up along the Suez Canal was a sitting duck for them. It was the one military operation they could conduct. The one substantial offensive military operation Egypt could conduct'.⁸⁴

The View From Across the Atlantic

The Nixon White House noted Sadat's desperation for progress in Sinai, yet was reluctant to involve itself in serious negotiations, partly because of the wide gap between Jerusalem and Cairo on most substantive issues. Sadat was insistent on the eventual recovery of all of Sinai, while Israel, at the very least, wanted a security presence in Sharm al-Sheikh and a strip of land connecting it to Eilat.⁸⁵ Israel was loath to accept a full withdrawal in Sinai as it feared the precedent it would set.⁸⁶ While William Rogers' State Department was engaged in the Jarring diplomacy and interim talks, the president himself and Henry Kissinger remained aloof from Middle East policy. This was partly because of the domestic controversy the Middle East inevitably aroused, but also because the standoff was exceedingly difficult to resolve and the White House would not risk the president's prestige in an uncertain endeavour.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Kissinger, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Dinitz, Gur, Eran, Kissinger, Sisco, US Delegation, 22 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 - Sinai Disengagement Agreement - Vol.1 (1), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸⁵ Memo, Saunders to Kissinger, Strategy for Next Steps in Mid-East - Leading Questions for a Meeting, 9 March 1971, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files - Mid East, NODIS/CEDAR/PLUS, Box 129, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 196.

The State Department was increasingly of the view that pressure ought to be applied to Israel in view of her intransigence, and such pressure could best obtain results by curtailing the supply of American aircraft to the Israel. The Pentagon took a similarly unsympathetic view of Israel, arguing that weapon deliveries ought to be restricted as Israel was already ‘vastly superior’ to her Arab foes and that it was unrealistic to attempt to arm Israel to balance the Soviet combat forces in Egypt.⁸⁸ The Secretary of Defence, Melvin Laird, thought that the current policy had partly provoked the Soviet presence in Egypt and undermined US peace initiatives as it committed America ‘to underwrite continued Israeli occupation rather than encouraging withdrawal’.⁸⁹

But Henry Kissinger took a different view. Kissinger was a Harvard academic with a predilection for *realpolitik* thinking and hard-nosed pragmatism, penchants that were undoubtedly intensified by his personal background. Kissinger was a German Jew who fled to the US with his family in 1938 in response to the growing Nazi anti-Semitism. He was appointed National Security Adviser in the Nixon administration, where he was charged with helping the president formulate and implement foreign policy from the White House. Kissinger believed that as America could not persuade Israel to withdraw swiftly, it ought not to waste political capital attempting to do so. Israeli and Arab thinking were too far apart for the gap to be presently bridged. Further, there remained the possibility that ‘an Egypt free of its Sinai obsession could

⁸⁸ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Secretary Laird’s Views on Mid East Arms Policy, 14 July 1971, NSC Meetings, Box H-031, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

then focus on moderate Arab regimes', as it did before the Six-Day War.⁹⁰ Hence Kissinger preferred to 'draw-out' negotiations in order to both contain the situation and allow 'both Arab and Israeli attitudes to evolve in relation to each other'.⁹¹ In the meantime the US focus would be on reducing the Soviet presence in Egypt and then on a partial withdrawal, during the negotiation of which the Americans 'would have to acknowledge frankly to Israel that we are prepared to work with them in stringing out the negotiating process provided they were prepared to put enough into it to give the Egyptians an excuse for keeping it alive'.⁹² Kissinger thought such collusion warranted so long as the Soviets were ensconced in Egypt. As for the president himself, Nixon believed 'American national interest required a demonstration of Soviet and radical inability to achieve Arab objectives and that no progress could be made until at least moderate Arabs were willing to make a peace of genuine compromise'.⁹³ *Realpolitik* evidently trumped even-handedness in the West Wing.

Consolidating Power

Events were simultaneously proceeding apace with the proposed tri-partite Arab federation, with Syria replacing a reluctant Sudan. On 17 April, upon his return from a meeting with the Libyan and Syrian leaders in Benghazi, Sadat announced the formation of the Confederation of Arab Republics. While *prima facie* a foreign policy move, this development held the potential for severe domestic ramifications that both

⁹⁰ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, The Middle East, 16 June 1970, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 645, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁹¹ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Implications of a Confrontation with Israel, 10 March 1971, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 129, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 201.

Sadat and his rivals were well aware of. A new confederation would involve the creation of new ruling institutions and the concurrent marginalisation of members of the current elite from the corridors of power. This elite had outvoted Sadat in a National Security Council meeting on 26 March, where the president was among a minority that wished to renew the ceasefire with Israel, while his rivals continued to prefer a premature war that could perhaps fatally discredit their new president.⁹⁴ Indeed, Sadat's temerity in announcing the confederation without his colleagues' approval was a challenge in and of itself.⁹⁵ Thus the confederation set the wheels in motion for a moment of reckoning in the latent power struggle between Sadat and his challengers.

Ali Sabri, the ringleader of Sadat's rivals, began to marshal opposition to the confederation at a meeting on 21 April of the Arab Socialist Union, Sabri's main powerbase, where only three out of four hundred members publicly supported Sadat.⁹⁶ Sadat eventually circumvented the party committees where Sabri had prevented a vote, and forced the confederation's draft constitution through both the Union's central committee and Parliament on 29 April.⁹⁷ During a May Day speech to workers in an industrial town near Cairo Sadat then announced his plans to eliminate all 'centres of power' within the state.⁹⁸ The morrow Sadat dismissed Sabri from his official posts, ending the latter's hopes of a duumvirate. Sabri responded by plotting with his *confreres* the removal of Sadat from the presidency. Mohamed Fawzy, a fellow conspirator and the Minister of War, ordered the Chief of Staff to prepare the

⁹⁴ Heikal, *October 73*, 210.

⁹⁵ R.A. Beaumont, Arab Republic of Egypt: Annual Review for 1971, 7 January 1972, FCO 39/1200, National Archives, Kew.

⁹⁶ Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 39.

⁹⁷ Sadat, *Al-Bahth*, 299.

⁹⁸ Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy Towards Egypt*, 60.

seizure of strategic locations within Cairo in preparation for a coup.⁹⁹ The minister also publicly signalled his opposition to the president's policies. While being briefed by Sadat on the visit of Secretary Rogers to Egypt on 4 May Fawzy importunately termed both Rogers' and Sadat's proposals 'unacceptable' to the army.¹⁰⁰ Crucially, Sadeq, the Chief of Staff, refused to allow the army to perform the role of janissaries and get dragged into politics. He was also pleased to learn that Sadat – unlike the Sabri group – did not want to break the ceasefire, as Sadeq believed his army still unready for war.¹⁰¹ Accordingly, he disregarded the war minister's orders to secure Cairo for the plotters and stood by while the presidential guard arrested Fawzy.¹⁰² Sadat duly appointed him the new Minister of War as a reward for his loyalty. Sadat moved decisively on 14 May against Sabri's remaining allies in government, detaining six ministers including the Minister of the Interior – who had had tapped the president's phones and attempted to physically prevent Sadat from broadcasting his decision to hold new elections for the ruling party¹⁰³ – and the Minister of Presidential Affairs, as well as the heads of two of the intelligence services, more than a hundred members of the ASU Central Committee, and other government officials and military officers.¹⁰⁴ Ironically, nothing more was to come of the proposed Arab confederation, the ostensible reason for the *décalage* within the Egyptian leadership. After having defenestrated his Praetorian rivals, Sadat's ardour for Arab unity noticeably cooled,

⁹⁹ Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 40.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰¹ Heikal, *October 73*, 213.

¹⁰² Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 41.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 39., Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Cabinet Change in the UAR, 20 May 1971, NSC Files, Country Files-Mid East, Box 637, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁰⁴ R.A. Beaumont, Arab Republic of Egypt: Annual Review for 1971, 7 January 1972, FCO 39/1200, National Archives, Kew, Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World*, 190.

and he delayed the proposed merger until 1 September 1973, much to the chagrin of the young Libyan pan-Arabist leader, Colonel Muammar Qadhafi.¹⁰⁵

Moscow, for its part, viewed the domestic realignment in Egypt with dismay and alarm. Its chief *protégés* had all lost out in the power struggle, an unwelcome tocsin. Moreover, in what was surely more than a case of fortuitous timing, Sabri was dismissed only two days before William Rogers visited for high-level talks with Sadat on peace negotiations. During those talks Rogers again pushed for more flexibility on disentangling a partial agreement from final-status issues, warning that ‘if the Egyptians tried in the interim agreement to solve the final difference on territory with the Israelis, there would never be an interim agreement’.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, he insisted that an interim agreement would make an overall settlement easier to negotiate in the future. He also asked Sadat to undertake symbolic moves such as swapping prisoners of war as a goodwill gesture.¹⁰⁷ On the question of the ceasefire, the Americans passed on a suggestion by Moshe Dayan, Israel’s defence minister, that a longer or unlimited ceasefire could lead to a greater Israeli withdrawal, but Egypt would not budge beyond her offer of a six month ceasefire and a first stage Israeli withdrawal to El Arish, followed by a second stage withdrawal to the border.¹⁰⁸

The US tried to split the difference over the zone of withdrawal by having the Israelis initially withdraw 10 kilometres while the Canal was being cleared, and then possibly retreat beyond the passes once the Canal was in operation, an idea that appealed to

¹⁰⁵ Anwar Sadat, "Where Egypt Stands," *Foreign Affairs* 51, no. 1 (1972): 117.

¹⁰⁶ Evolution of Positions on Interim Settlement, 26 October 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁰⁷ Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 352.

¹⁰⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper*, 23.

neither side. As for final borders, the Americans claimed that if Sadat cooperated he would eventually find that ‘differences between the US and Egypt on territory are minor compared with differences between the US and Israel on this point’.¹⁰⁹ As for the link between a partial agreement and an overall settlement, Israel still explicitly rejected it, Egypt resolutely insisted on it, and America retained the stance that the two were not to be formally related, but that Israel should ultimately withdraw to the pre-June borders.¹¹⁰ With both Egyptian and Israeli positions unchanged, Rogers and his team returned home empty handed.

The Egyptian-Soviet Treaty of Friendship

Despite the failure of Rogers’ mission, the Soviets worried that their influence in Egypt would dissipate and Sadat would tilt to the US. And while Moscow was also pushing for a political solution, it was thoroughly disinterested in an American one that would reduce Soviet sway in Egypt. The Soviet Union had simply invested too much in the regime to see it all go up in smoke. It therefore moved quickly to consolidate the bilateral relationship, quickly despatching senior officials to salvage the Soviet position in Egypt.¹¹¹ Sami Sharaf, the deposed Minister of Presidential Affairs, had earlier been sent to Moscow to discuss a formal treaty with Egypt, and it had been agreed to continue talks in Cairo.¹¹² On 27 May the USSR presented and

¹⁰⁹ Evolution of Positions on Interim Settlement, 26 October 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹¹⁰ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, State of Play in Mid-East Diplomacy, 15 November 1971, NSC Files, Country Files – Mid East, NODIS/CEDAR/PLUS, Volume IV, Box 658, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹¹¹ The Soviet delegation included Nikolai Podgorny [the chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet], Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, and Politburo secretary Boris Ponomarev.

¹¹² Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy Towards Egypt*, 60, 61.

signed a treaty of friendship with Egypt, an unprecedented distinction never granted to Nasser despite his repeated requests.¹¹³

The accord, officially a fifteen-year ‘treaty of friendship and cooperation’, called for strengthening cooperation in ‘political, economic, scientific, technological, cultural and other fields’.¹¹⁴ It stressed both countries’ determination to proceed with ‘efforts toward achieving and ensuring a lasting and fair peace in the Middle East in accordance with the aims and principles of the UN Charter’.¹¹⁵ Egypt and the USSR also committed to ‘regularly consult ... on all important questions’ and to ‘contact each other without delay in order to concert their positions’ if there arises ‘a danger to peace or violations of peace’, assuring both diplomatic and military harmonisation.¹¹⁶ Crucially, Moscow committed itself again to strengthen Egypt’s defences, pledging to ‘continue to develop cooperation in the military field on the basis of appropriate agreements’, ‘with a view to strengthening capacity to eliminate the consequences of aggression as well as increasing its ability to stand up to aggression in general’.¹¹⁷ Finally, in a victory for Sadat, the treaty called for ‘non-interference in the internal affairs of the other’. Ironically, Sadat’s moves against Soviet allies in Cairo resulted in the ‘doubling down’ of the Soviet position on Egypt. The Soviet Union would henceforth try to bind Sadat much closer to it, following the adage that one should keep one’s friends close, and enemies closer.

¹¹³ Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, 77.

¹¹⁴ Memo, Henry A. Kissinger, Preliminary Analysis of UAR-USSR Treaty, 31 May 1971, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 657, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

The friendship treaty granted Sadat the Soviet Union's official imprimatur and assurances of military support, critical not only to any future military campaign but also to ensure his armed forces' continued acquiescence in his leadership. The Soviets promised to deliver Sadat some of the advanced offensive weaponry he had long been seeking, including MIG-23s fighter planes and SCUD missiles.¹¹⁸ However, while Sadat emphasised the necessity of solving the Sinai problem in 1971 through a military solution, Nikolai Podgorny, chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet, counselled patience, insisting that political tools had yet to be exhausted.¹¹⁹

With respect to relations with the US the treaty had contradictory effects. On the one hand it empowered elements within the American administration that viewed the Arab-Israel struggle as a manifestation of the global Cold War. For example, the Soviet treaty confirmed Kissinger's initial suspicions that Sadat 'was still playing Nasser's game', and led the National Security Adviser to push for more military aid for Israel and less emphasis on negotiations.¹²⁰ The treaty also weakened the position of those US officials, such as the Secretaries of State and Defence, who advocated an even-handed approach to the dispute.¹²¹

On the other hand, the treaty led other American officials to push harder to secure a deal for Egypt in order to reverse Soviet gains in Cairo. Officials in the State Department mooted resurrecting the interim Canal withdrawal as a means of placating

¹¹⁸ Alexander George, "Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1967-1972: Unalterable Antagonism or Collaborative Competition?," in *Managing U.S.-Soviet Rivalry: Problems of Crisis Prevention*, ed. Alexander George (Boulder: Westview, 1983), 90.

¹¹⁹ Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 360.

¹²⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1285.

¹²¹ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Secretary Laird's Views on Mid East Arms Policy, 14 July 1971, NSC Meetings, Box H-031, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Sadat and reducing Soviet influence. In conversations with two State Department officials Sadat affirmed that he was still open to an interim settlement. If an agreement were struck Sadat confirmed he would implement it regardless of Moscow's views, he would ask operational Soviet military units to leave, and would also restore official diplomatic ties with America.¹²² Thus an interim settlement once again became the subject of much thought in Washington, Cairo, and Jerusalem.

In order for such a scheme to work both the Israelis and Egyptians would have to scale back their previous demands. Israel would have to accept a withdrawal beyond the Sinai passes, allow some Egyptian troops to cross into Sinai, and abandon hopes for an unlimited cease-fire.¹²³ Egypt would have to accept that any interim settlement would neither be linked to the Jarring talks nor a final settlement, allow Israeli ships to traverse the Canal once it reopened, accept limitations on Egyptian armed forces in Sinai, and propose a longer cease-fire than the previous offer of six months.¹²⁴

This entailed much diplomatic work for the Americans. But Sadat's actions over the summer of 1971 gave hope in some US quarters that Egypt was far from a Soviet satellite and that Moscow's leverage in Cairo was not yet overwhelming. On 19 July a communist coup in neighbouring Sudan initially successfully overthrew Jaafar Numeiri's regime. By 23 July, however, Sadat, in cooperation with Qadhafi, had squashed the coup by airlifting to Khartoum a Sudanese brigade loyal to Numeiri

¹²² Memo, Haig to Nixon, New Suez Canal Initiative, 2 July 1971, NSC Files, Country Files – Mid East, NODIS/CEDAR/PLUS, Volume III, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

stationed in the Canal Zone, and in Russian-manufactured aircraft to boot.¹²⁵ The Politburo Secretary Boris Ponomarev, who happened to be present in Egypt at the time, pleaded unsuccessfully with Sadat to support the Sudanese communists, and later to intervene to stop the execution of their ringleaders, all to no avail.¹²⁶ Sadat evidently still enjoyed near-total freedom of action, the provisions of the Soviet friendship treaty notwithstanding.

Predictably, this led to a cooling of the relationship with Moscow, and a concomitant slowing in arms deliveries to Egypt, thereby exacerbating an existing problem. Mahmoud Riyad, at a Moscow meeting with the Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko on 29 June, was explicitly told that this was to ensure that ‘another 1967 did not occur’.¹²⁷ This proved very awkward for Sadat, who on the anniversary of the Six-Day War branded 1971 the ‘Year of Decision’ with respect to war or peace with Israel. On 23 July, the anniversary of the Free Officers’ overthrow of the monarchy, he announced that he ‘shall not allow 1971 to pass without deciding the issue, whether through peace or war – even if it means sacrificing one million lives’.¹²⁸ Yet the year was winding to a close and Egypt was not appreciably closer to either alternative. Sadat was caught between Scylla and Charybdis: he needed a close relationship with the USSR in order to obtain the arms that would make an Egyptian military option viable, yet he needed to keep the Soviets at arm’s length for the Americans to be helpful in negotiations with the Israelis in order to secure any return of territory.

¹²⁵ R.A. Beaumont, Arab Republic of Egypt: Annual Review for 1971, 7 January 1972, FCO 39/1200, National Archives, Kew.

¹²⁶ Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy Towards Egypt*, 62.

¹²⁷ Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 365.

¹²⁸ Hirst and Beeson, *Sadat*, 122.

To square this circle Sadat resorted to the confusing policy of alternately distancing Egypt from one of the superpowers and making overtures towards the other. On 4 October the third Rogers plan proposed by the US, which advised both sides that neither could 'expect to achieve in an interim settlement the terms and conditions of an overall settlement', was quickly rejected by Israel.¹²⁹ This led Sadat and Riyad to travel to Moscow the following week to try to repair the relationship with Egypt's military patron. Unlike his previous trip in March, Sadat was now the undisputed master of his own house, and accordingly in a better bargaining position.

Incongruously, Sadat demanded more military aid to combat American efforts to restrict Soviet influence in the region through a peace agreement negotiated by Washington.¹³⁰ Fortunately, both sides were willing to paper over the cracks in the 'friendship', with the Soviets again promising to deliver advanced offensive weaponry.¹³¹ Brezhnev indicated that while he would not get involved in Egypt's internal affairs, he was concerned about Sadat's relationship with the anti-Soviet Qadhafi.¹³² The joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of the visit noted the 'two sides strongly condemn anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism' and Egypt registered support for a wide range of Soviet policies *a propos* Europe, Vietnam, and disarmament.¹³³ In return the Soviets offered a weak endorsement of Sadat's planned

¹²⁹ Evolution of Positions on Interim Settlement, 26 October 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹³⁰ Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 379.

¹³¹ George, "Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1967-1972: Unalterable Antagonism or Collaborative Competition?," 90, 384. Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*.

¹³² Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 381.

¹³³ Eliot to Kissinger, Sadat Visit to Moscow, 16 October 1971, NSC Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 637, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Arab federation and reaffirmed support for a political settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict and continued military aid to Egypt.¹³⁴

As for the military balance between Egypt and Israel, by the end of 1971 a tenuous equilibrium had been achieved which proved difficult for either superpower to overturn. The Soviet Union's introduction of the SAM 3 air defence system in Egypt, and its installation in the Canal Zone, rendered almost impossible either a pre-emptive air strike such as the Israeli raid that decimated Egypt's defences in 1967 or a resumption of deep penetration raids that would parallel those of 1970.¹³⁵ Nonetheless, Israel was still adjudged to have maintained its advantage in offensive capacity as well as its capacity to repulse an Egyptian crossing into Sinai.¹³⁶ Until she obtained the offensive capability to storm the Canal, Egypt would have to persevere in her diplomacy.

Behind Closed Doors: Superpower Negotiations

At the same time as negotiations were being conducted by the State Department with Egypt and Israel, Kissinger started a dialogue on the Arab-Israel issue with Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador to the US. His aim was to agree with Moscow the substance of an interim settlement, rather than the contours of a comprehensive agreement.¹³⁷ The USSR, however, was resolute that any interim deal remain linked to

¹³⁴ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Sadat Visit to Moscow, 16 October 1971, NSC Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 637, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹³⁵ Shlaim and Tanter, "Decision Process."

¹³⁶ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Military Balance in Middle East, 27 November 1971, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 647, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹³⁷ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1288.

a comprehensive withdrawal from all captured Arab territories within one year of an interim settlement.¹³⁸ In return Moscow would withdraw its forces from the region, cease arms supplies to the Arabs, and guarantee the settlement provided the US also accepted similar commitments. In an early round of talks on 15 October the two men disagreed over the possibility of Israeli troops remaining in Sharm al-Sheikh following a political settlement.¹³⁹ At a meeting on 4 November they disagreed on demilitarised zones, with Dobrynin pushing for any zone to include at least some territory in Israel as well as in Sinai.¹⁴⁰ Kissinger then spelled out his vision for a separate Egyptian-Israeli settlement on 18 November: rather than emphasise land for peace as the basis of agreement, he proposed separating sovereignty and security, thereby improving the odds of a deal being struck, and allowing Israel to maintain a security presence in southern Sinai under *de jure* Egyptian sovereignty.¹⁴¹ Dobrynin thought 'it would be difficult but not impossible to negotiate on this basis'.¹⁴²

At a later meeting on 15 February 1972, Kissinger conveyed that the furthest Israel seemed prepared to withdraw in an interim deal was the western edge of the passes in return for a two-year ceasefire.¹⁴³ With respect to a final deal, Israel desired changes in her borders with Egypt and a security presence in some areas under Egyptian sovereignty. Dobrynin refused border modifications as a matter of principle, but was more amenable to an Israeli security presence. Nonetheless, at a meeting on 17 March Kissinger reiterated the 'irreducible Israeli position' was to annex Sharm al-Sheikh

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Memo, Henry A. Kissinger, Security Zones Exchanges with Soviets, 6 March 1972, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 98.

¹⁴² Memo, Henry A. Kissinger, Security Zones Exchanges with Soviets, 6 March 1972, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

and a land corridor to it, and the demilitarisation of Sinai east of the passes.¹⁴⁴ On 28 May Dobrynin restated Soviet opposition to any annexation of Arab territory and a separate Egyptian-Israeli accord, and backtracked on separating security from sovereignty, describing the concept as ‘difficult and impossible’.¹⁴⁵ Kissinger insisted that what he offered was the best hope for regaining any Egyptian territory, as he saw ‘no possibility now of Egypt, even with (Soviet) equipment, driving Israel back. Should we not therefore try to promote a gradual withdrawal across Sinai?’¹⁴⁶ The fundamental assumption upon which Kissinger’s reasoning was based – namely absolute Egyptian military impotence – would eventually turn out to be flawed. However, for the time being he still persisted in his beliefs that Egypt’s only option was what he was offering. Kissinger would present a similar line of argument in his meetings with Hafiz Ismail, Sadat’s emissary, over the course of 1972.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Chapter Two: The Road to War

By the close of 1971, Sadat's self-declared 'Year of Decision', the president of Egypt found himself neither appreciably closer to war nor peace. His active diplomacy had not secured any movement on the Arab-Israeli front, and his restive military still lacked the weapons to go to war. Sadat had yet to resolve his dilemma: in order to obtain the necessary arms he needed to maintain a strong relationship with Moscow, yet he had to make overtures to Washington in order to prompt American political engagement of sufficient vigour to compel Israel to accept a limited withdrawal. Still, the year did witness a telling achievement: Sadat managed to consolidate his rule, allowing him more diplomatic leeway and fewer political constraints in 1972 than in the first year of his presidency.

Sadat welcomed the New Year by installing a new cabinet. Aziz Sidqi, the new prime minister, was tasked with preparing the home front for 'confrontation', thereby buying more time for Sadat to try his hand at a political settlement.¹ Sadat also replaced Mahmoud Riyad as foreign minister with Murad Ghaleb, Egypt's longstanding Russophone ambassador to the USSR, in the hope that Ghaleb's Soviet connections could help obtain the desired arms for Cairo. Ghaleb had served in the Egyptian Embassy in Moscow from 1953-1958, and then returned to Moscow as Ambassador in 1961 where he remained until he was appointed Foreign Minister.

¹ Memo, Eliot to Kissinger, New Cabinet in Egypt, 19 January 1972, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 638, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Sadat himself visited Moscow on 1 February, after waiting six weeks for an appointment with Brezhnev. Sadat again pressed the Soviets for arms and was again promised advanced MIG-21s fighter planes, encouraging Sadat about the prospects for war.² On 6 April he cut diplomatic relations with the pro-Western King Hussein as a sop to both the Soviets and the Palestinians, who were about to hold their National Congress in Cairo. His professed justification was Hussein's proposed United Arab Kingdom scheme that incorporated the Palestinian territories under the Hashemite crown, which Sadat alleged was 'designed to liquidate the Palestinian cause'.³ In reality the move allowed Sadat to play up Egypt's support for the Palestinian movement and deflect radical Arab attacks on his peace initiatives onto an altogether more amenable target: Hussein.

It was also another manifestation of Sadat's inherent antagonism towards Jordan, an inclination evident throughout his presidency. The previous year, for example, Sadat provocatively released the Palestinian assassins of the Jordanian Prime Minister Wasfi Tall from their Egyptian gaol.⁴ Sadat had kept Hussein at arms length after hearing of his covert dealings with Israel, and thus sought to disassociate Egypt from Jordan.⁵ Sadat suspected that Hussein was manoeuvring for a separate deal with Israel to return the West Bank, while Hussein in turn had misgivings about Sadat's commitment to a comprehensive peace. With the Palestinian radicals under his wing, Sadat could play the role of spoiler if Hussein managed to negotiate an agreement with Israel.

² Ismail, *Ann Mir Al-Qawmi*, 203.

³ R.A. Beaumont, *Egypt/Jordan*, 7 April 1972, FCO 17/1691, National Archives, Kew.

⁴ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 345.

⁵ *Ibid.*

The break could also be interpreted as the latest manifestation of Sadat's steady abandonment of his moderate posture of the previous year, along with his patching up of his differences with Arab hardliners in preparation for the possibility of war. Whereas in 1971 Sadat was still optimistic about striking a political deal, as the chances of agreement receded Sadat began to bend with the radical wind.⁶ On 27 April Sadat again visited the Kremlin and stressed his refusal of the status quo and Egypt's need for diplomatic support and military aid.⁷ The following month the Soviet Defence Minister Andrei Gretchko arrived in Cairo with contracts for weapons deliveries requested by the Egyptians, including T-62 tanks and SU-17 planes, with half to be delivered in 1972, and the other half in 1973.⁸

Meanwhile the White House was still deliberating possibilities for a separate Egyptian-Israeli final settlement. Four central issues had to be resolved. The first concerned Israeli safe passage through the straits of Tiran. Jerusalem hoped to achieve this through a land corridor to Sharm al-Sheikh. Cairo, for its part, was willing to instead accept an international force at the southern tip of Sinai. This led the US to consider that 'the central element in any proposal (was) finding a way to raise an international umbrella over any Israeli presence while preserving Egyptian sovereignty'.⁹

⁶ Memo, Eliot to Kissinger, Egypt's Break in Diplomatic Relations with Jordan, 6 April 1972, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 638, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷ Riyadh, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyadh*, 400; Ismail, *Amn Mir Al-Qawmi*, 210.

⁸ Al-Shathly, *Harb October*, 171.

⁹ Memo, Saunders to Kissinger, Options for an Egypt-Israel Settlement in the Sinai, 6 March 1972, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

The second issue concerned Gaza. Though Egypt had no aspirations to regain it, she did insist that its inhabitants be given the right to self-determination and that its Arab character be preserved. In practice this meant Israel refrain from building settlements in the strip. The third area of disagreement was over the demilitarisation of Sinai, with Israel adamant any land returned remain demilitarised and Cairo insisting on the demilitarisation of only a small area in the east of the peninsula that would incorporate both Egyptian and Israeli territory. Finally and most importantly, Egypt insisted on a complete Israeli withdrawal and a return to the international border, while the Israelis remained deliberately vague about the extent of their withdrawal while intimating their intentions to annex areas of Sinai.

In order to overcome these differences Kissinger proposed to Nixon in the run-up to the American-Soviet summit that the US attempt to work out with Moscow ‘ways in which an Egyptian-Israeli exchange could be set up outside the glare of publicity in which all possible solutions could be aired’.¹⁰ Kissinger emphasised the need for new thinking, including on the American side:

We would not want to create an impression for the Egyptians that we had renounced the UN resolution of November 1967, the Jarring talks or the Rogers Plan. At the same time, we ought to try to find ways with the Soviets of exploring new approaches that can break free of the old positions which are at an impasse.¹¹

The Expulsion of the Soviets from Egypt

¹⁰ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, A Preliminary Look at the Mid-East in the Moscow Talks, 13 May 1972, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 129, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹¹ Ibid.

In the event the 22-26 May superpower summit in Moscow turned out to be a setback for the Soviets and their position in the Middle East. The meeting saw the signing of an Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, but scant attention was devoted to Egypt's position in the Arab-Israeli conflict in the joint communiqué. In it the Soviets instead agreed to working principles weaker than those in Resolution 242 that allowed more substantial changes in borders.¹² The Soviets evidently prioritised their own interests at the summit, such as accessing American grain supplies, and feared that a confrontation over the Middle East over and above the one in South East Asia would irrevocably strain *détente*.¹³ Soviet officials thus 'sought to avoid any expressions of differences on the Middle East', and the resulting 'vague anodyne formulation (was) interpreted by Sadat as a Soviet sell-out of Arab interests'.¹⁴ A furious Sadat perceived that the superpowers had colluded to put the Arab-Israeli issue on ice. The slowdown in Soviet arms deliveries to Egypt in June and July, despite Sadat's despatch of his Minister of War to Moscow on 8 June and repeated requests to the Soviet embassy in Cairo, seemed to confirm Sadat's suspicions.¹⁵

This led to an audacious move as Sadat shocked the Soviets, the Americans, the Israelis, and indeed most of the Egyptian government and public by abruptly announcing on 18 July that he had 'terminate(d) the mission of the Soviet military advisers and experts who came at (his) request' and that henceforth Egyptian forces would operate all military

¹² George, "Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1967-1972: Unalterable Antagonism or Collaborative Competition?," 94.

¹³ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 204.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 295.

¹⁵ Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 403; Quandt, *Peace Process*, 95.

installations and equipment previously manned by the Soviets in Egypt.¹⁶ Moscow, informed through its ambassador on 8 July of Sadat's decision, promptly complied with Sadat's first request, repatriating 7 752 military personnel by 17 July,¹⁷ yet refused to acquiesce in Sadat's second request, electing to repatriate its advanced weaponry, including MiG-25s, Su-11s, SAM batteries, as well as an entire radar station in the Western Desert.¹⁸ Moreover, after expelling the Soviets Sadat recalled the Egyptian ambassador in Moscow on 8 August as part of an 'objective pause' in relations, further heaping pressure on the USSR to be forthcoming on arms supplies.¹⁹

Egyptian frustration had evidently boiled over. While in 1971 Sadat felt that America's lack of cooperation doomed Egyptian peace efforts, in 1972 he believed Soviet reticence regarding military aid was dooming his war preparations, which also reduced Egypt's leverage in diplomatic negotiations. As a result of Soviet promises made in 1971 the gap between Soviet commitments and actual arms deliveries to Egypt had grown wider than ever, with Moscow offering the excuse that weapon shipments to India and Bangladesh had to be prioritised because of the war in South Asia in December 1971.²⁰

The Soviets clearly were hoping to have their cake and eat it by promising Sadat weaponry and preserving *détente* through postponement of arms deliveries. America, though, was not shying away from arming Israel. In the fall of 1970 the US actually

¹⁶ Sadat quoted in Memo, Rogers to Nixon, Expulsion of Soviet Advisers from Egypt, 20 July 1972, NSC Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 638, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁷ Al-Shathly, *Harb October*, 235.

¹⁸ Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy Towards Egypt*, 63, 64; Golan, *Yom Kippur and After*, 25.

¹⁹ Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, 82; Ayubi, *Nasser and Sadat*, 191.

²⁰ Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy Towards Egypt*, 62.

accelerated its shipments to Israel of A-4 and F-4 jets. In December of 1971 the US delivered F-4 jets previously withheld at the request of William Rogers.²¹ Three months later the US promised Israel the delivery of 42 F-4s and 82 A-4s, further extending the military gap with Egypt.²²

The expulsion of the Soviets also helped Sadat domestically. He again proved that he was now Egypt's indisputable powerbroker – expelling the Soviets unilaterally and against his officials' advice²³ – and endeared himself to the military. Sadeq, the Minister of War, was only informed by Sadat of the decision on 7 July, the day before the Soviets were told, and was initially apprehensive about Sadat's gamble. He feared the humiliating manner of the Soviets' exit would lead to an embargo on arms to Egypt.²⁴ The rank and file, however, resented the Soviet presence in Egypt because of the privileged position of Soviet advisers and their perceived arrogance. Furthermore, their presence meant that the Egyptian military was not master of its own domain as it relied on the Soviets for air defence as well as strategic advice. Indeed, by 1972 the burdensome Soviet presence had led some to spitefully question 'whether the cure for the conflict was not more dangerous than the malady'.²⁵ No large operations could be attempted without Soviet knowledge, if not approval, hindering not only Egypt's current military activities but also any future attempt to cross the Canal. Thus by expelling the Russians in 1972, Sadat cleared the decks for war in 1973.

²¹ George, "Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1967-1972: Unalterable Antagonism or Collaborative Competition?," 92.

²² Ibid.

²³ Including that of his National Security Advisor Hafiz Ismail, who thought the move would be counterproductive. Ismail, *Ann Mir Al-Qawmi*, 219.

²⁴ Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 46.

²⁵ R.A. Beaumont, Arab Republic of Egypt: Annual Review for 1971, 7 January 1972, FCO 39/1200, National Archives, Kew.

That the move proved popular amongst the Egyptian public was not surprising.²⁶ National independence was the original rallying cry of the regime, and Nasser's legendary status was first attained when he thumbed his nose at the British and Americans. Sadat followed suit in his own way by expelling the Russians, earning popular acclaim and legitimacy for his own person as well as the regime as a whole. Sadat's decision to kick out the Soviets was also one of the first instances of substantive change from Nasser's foreign policy bequeathed to Sadat.

Sadat also benefited from his decision in the Arab world, as it acceded to the demands of two of his principal paymasters: Libya and Saudi Arabia.²⁷ Qadhafi was at the time overtly hostile to the Soviet Union, and promised to help Sadat with financing arms purchases only if he distanced himself from Moscow.²⁸ The Saudi intelligence chief Kamal Adham, King Faisal's brother-in-law and Sadat's longstanding friend, had been whispering in the president's ear about the benefits of breaking with Moscow, implying that 'America would deliver' were Sadat to separate from the Soviets.²⁹ Such advice reflected how Saudi thinking had changed since the late 1960s. While Riyadh initially believed Egypt's obsession with the Sinai could serve Saudi interests by keeping her too preoccupied to meddle in the kingdom's affairs, the mushrooming Soviet presence

²⁶ Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World*, 182.

²⁷ R.A. Beaumont, Sir Richard Beaumont's Valedictory Despatch, 18 January 1973, FCO 93/74, National Archives, Kew.

²⁸ R.A. Beaumont, Arab Republic of Egypt: Annual Review for 1972, 1 January 1973, FCO 93/41, National Archives, Kew.

²⁹ Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar*, 240.

prompted a change of opinion.³⁰ Faisal visited Egypt immediately after the Soviet treaty of friendship was signed to advocate a change of course.³¹ The Saudis maintained this advice over the following year, with both Adham and Prince Sultan ben Abdelaziz, the Saudi Minister of Defence, visiting Cairo in June to push for a split with the Soviets.³²

Yet one of the most surprising aspects of Sadat's expulsion of the Russians was that he did not demand a *quid pro quo* from America – the *tertius gaudens* – in return. The Soviet deployment in Egypt was a major US concern, and its removal a top American priority. In 1971 Sadat had intimated to the US, via Kamal Adham, that he would send home the Soviet advisers once the Israelis completed the first phase of a proposed withdrawal from Sinai.³³ In 1972, however, Sadat eliminated the Soviet presence *gratis*.

So why was Sadat so generous to the baffled Americans? After being told by Rogers that the Soviet presence was a 'complicating factor', why not take a page out of the Israeli playbook, let the US catch wind of his thinking, and bargain ruthlessly over every Russian soldier in Egypt?³⁴ Despite initially believing that Sadat had 'acted impetuously and forfeited an important negotiating asset, for no return',³⁵ Kissinger later revised his analysis:

Sadat was right. If the Soviet advisers were to depart, it had to be done all at once. Negotiating about it might have left him in the paradoxical position of having to maintain a Soviet presence if we could not offer satisfactory terms. Sadat wanted to be rid of the Soviets to remove an encumbrance both to the war and to his projected

³⁰ Kerr, *The Arab Cold War*, 139.

³¹ Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 361.

³² Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 46.

³³ *Ibid.*, 43.

³⁴ Quoted in Riyad, *Muthakkirat Mahmud Riyad*, 350.

³⁵ Kissinger, *White House Years.*, 1296.

move toward the United States. Acts of historic magnitude must not be mortgaged by petty manoeuvres that risk their ultimate purpose for marginal and temporary benefits.³⁶

Sadat was ultimately successful in his gamble, partially because he was careful not to burn all his bridges with the Soviets, notably never renouncing the friendship treaty. Yet he still made his point. After suffering through the summer, bilateral relations began to recover by the fall, and both countries' ambassadors returned to their posts in October.³⁷ After Prime Minister Sidqi visited Moscow in October, the Soviets agreed to deliver on all their previous promises, as well as advanced MiG-23 and Su-20 fighters not previously supplied to Cairo, by the third quarter of 1973.³⁸

Accordingly, the ice began to thaw. Sadat displayed a new flexibility in public, calling for an appreciation of 'the circumstances and limits of every friend'.³⁹ He also extended Soviet access to Egyptian ports, privileges that were due to be renegotiated in December and expire in March.⁴⁰ In turn, the USSR agreed 'to the largest arms package ever negotiated for the Middle East' in March 1973.⁴¹ A chastened Moscow had evidently realised that its niggardly policy on arms supplies had not only failed to dissuade Sadat from contemplating war, it had seriously harmed Moscow's position in Egypt and the Arab world as a whole. Its new policy reflected its new thinking:

Let the Arabs have sufficient arms to enable them to risk a battle, the argument continued. Should this happen, and should the Arabs win, their victory will have been achieved thanks to Soviet arms. Should they be defeated, or the fighting reach

³⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 482.

³⁷ Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy Towards Egypt*, 64.

³⁸ Heikal, *October 73*, 367; Ismail, *Ann Mir Al-Qawmi*, 223.

³⁹ Quoted in Golan, *Yom Kippur and After*, 36.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 209.

a stalemate, it is still to the Soviet Union that they will have to look for rescue in the aftermath of the battle.⁴²

The pendulum of political leverage had now swung towards Cairo. At the June 1973 superpower summit Gromyko would insist on an acknowledgement of differences on the Middle East in the joint communiqué, demonstrating that the Soviets, once bitten, were certainly twice shy.⁴³ Brezhnev even attempted to persuade Nixon to agree an imposed solution on the Middle East, according to which Israel would withdraw completely to the 1967 borders in return for non-belligerency and superpower guarantees.⁴⁴ Unsurprisingly, Nixon demurred.

After finally having his way with the Soviets, and his military at last receiving its long-coveted arms, Sadat began to seriously eye the military option and prepare his armed forces for a possible crossing of the Canal in late 1972.⁴⁵ Serious pressures were building on Sadat, with cases of military indiscipline and conspiratorial plotting occurring in October and November 1972.⁴⁶ The British ambassador reported at the time that ‘the decomposition of Sadat’s regime is probably now irreversible’ and he thought Sadat ‘has not the intelligence or statesmanship to recover the political ground he has lost’.⁴⁷ Sadat had previously begged off his ‘year of decision’ because war in Bangladesh had

⁴² Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar*, 253.

⁴³ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 295.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁴⁵ Sadat, *Al-Bahth*, 317.

⁴⁶ R.A. Beaumont, Arab Republic of Egypt: Annual Review for 1972, 1 January 1973, FCO 93/41, National Archives, Kew.

⁴⁷ R.A. Beaumont, Egypt in the Doldrums, 28 November 1972, FCO 39/1207, National Archives, Kew.

distracted the superpowers.⁴⁸ He then ascribed the continued quiet on the front to the Soviet refusal to supply needed arms. Sadat simply could not pass the buck a third time.

Sadat made the decision to attack Israel in concert with Syria in the summer of 1972.⁴⁹ In meetings of the National Security Council in June and in September Sadat considered three main military options: another War of Attrition, an all out offensive to the Sinai passes with the ultimate objective of liberating all of Sinai (Granite II), or a limited cross-Canal offensive to establish bridgeheads in western Sinai (Granite I).⁵⁰ The first option was discounted because it had already been tried without notable success. The second option, despite being supported by Sadeq, was considered unrealistic by both Sadat and Shathly as it was beyond the present means of the Egyptian armed forces. Sadat decided the third alternative had the best chance of rupturing the existing political impasse and instructed Sadeq to prepare the armed forces for a limited war in November.

Sadat was convinced that capturing just ten centimetres of Sinai would transform the international political situation facing Egypt.⁵¹ Sadeq, however, opposed a limited war and preferred to wait until he obtained the necessary arms to attempt a more widespread offensive.⁵² In a meeting of the National Security Council on 24 October Sadat discovered that Sadeq had yet to implement the necessary war preparations and continued to oppose Granite I, prompting Sadat to replace him as war minister with intelligence

⁴⁸ Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 46.

⁴⁹ Golan, *Yom Kippur and After*, 37.

⁵⁰ Shemesh, "Origins of Sadat's," 45.

⁵¹ Sadat, *Al-Bahth*, 329.

⁵² Al-Jazeera Shahed Ala Al-Asr, "Harb October Kama Yaraha Saadedine Al-Shathly, Halaqa 7, 20 March 1999," <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/90056DEE-62FB-40ED-93C0-55BFE3980D56>.

chief Ahmed Ismail.⁵³ Ahmed Ismail had previously been appointed Chief of Staff in March 1969, but was sacked by Nasser six months later after a brazen Israeli raid on the Egyptian mainland. In May 1971 he was rehabilitated by Sadat after the removal of the Sabri clique and appointed Head of General Intelligence.⁵⁴ While in charge of General Intelligence Ahmed Ismail had opposed a limited war.⁵⁵ He nonetheless offered the president absolute personal loyalty because, unlike Sadeq who had helped Sadat remain in the presidency in May of the previous year, Ismail's rehabilitation as a military officer was an indulgence of Sadat. In any case the new Chief of Staff, Saadedine Al-Shathly, was given instructions to prepare for a limited cross-Canal offensive – a strategy Shathly favoured – using available equipment as well as what could be obtained before war broke out.⁵⁶ Shathly, a shrewd professional soldier with a background in the Special Forces, would have to make bricks without straw. Sadat initially hoped to go to war in December, and sent Ahmed Ismail to Damascus on 10 November to agree with the Syrian president Hafiz Al-Assad a coordinated assault on Israel at the end of December, a date Assad thought precipitate.⁵⁷ Instead, he agreed to go to war in the spring or autumn of the following year.⁵⁸ However, before committing irrevocably to war Sadat opted to give American diplomacy one last chance, and duly replaced his Russophile left-leaning foreign minister Ghaleb with the moderate Mohamed Hassan Al-Zayyat to signal his intentions.⁵⁹

⁵³ Musa Sabri, *Wathaiq Harb October* (Cairo: Al-Maktab Al-Misry Al-Hadeeth, 1974), 17.

⁵⁴ Leading Personalities in Arab Republic of Egypt, 1972, FCO 39/1205, National Archives, Kew

⁵⁵ Shahed Ala Al-Asr, "Harb October Halaqa 7."; Al-Jazeera Shahed Ala Al-Asr, "Harb October Kama Yaraha Saadedine Al-Shathly, Halaqa 8, 27 March 1999,"

<http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/5BFD830B-E11A-49D9-8D0D-DC963226EDC5>.

⁵⁶ Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*, 198.

⁵⁷ Heikal, *October 73*, 382.

⁵⁸ Sabri, *Wathaiq Harb October*, 24.

⁵⁹ Leading Personalities in Arab Republic of Egypt, 1972, FCO 39/1205, National Archives, Kew

In Camera Colloquies with Kissinger

In a change from previous years, however, Sadat chose to engage America not through the customary means – namely the Egyptian foreign ministry and the US Department of State – but rather by a direct presidential approach through his National Security Adviser, Hafiz Ismail, to Richard Nixon's, Henry Kissinger. There were several reasons for this. Sadat's previous experiences with the State Department had all ended badly. Repeated disappointments led Sadat to surmise that the key to American foreign policy lay not in Foggy Bottom but the West Wing.⁶⁰ All of the Nixon administration's major foreign policy achievements – SALT, the Vietnam negotiations, *entente* with Peking – had been realised through the White House. Indeed, the US set-up was similar to Egypt's, where the real foreign policy power broker was the president and his inner circle.

Accordingly, in April Egyptian intelligence approached Eugene Trone, the CIA station officer in Cairo, to set up a secret 'White House channel' through the intelligence services, thereby bypassing the foreign ministries. The Americans agreed, and on 13 July 1972 – during the Soviet evacuation of Egypt – Cairo used the channel to offer to send a senior official to Washington provided the US 'had something new to propose'.⁶¹ Kissinger issued an invite, premised on there being no prior conditions and an emphasis

⁶⁰ Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, 83.

⁶¹ Memo, Henry A. Kissinger, White House Meeting with Hafiz Ismail, 22 February 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 131, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1295.

placed on practical steps that could be taken to spur movement.⁶² However more urgent matters, such as Vietnam and the upcoming re-elections, took priority. By early 1973 both sides were ready to proceed, and Sadat sent Hafiz Ismail to see Kissinger for several rounds of talks in February while Egypt's preparations for war were intensifying, unbeknownst to the outside world.

Ismail himself was a former Major General in the Egyptian Army who had transferred to the foreign ministry. He served as Egypt's ambassador to Britain, Italy, and then France. In April 1970 he was appointed head of General Intelligence and finally created National Security Adviser in September 1971 in a deliberate effort by Sadat to create an opposite number to Kissinger.⁶³ Ismail arrived in Washington after visiting both Moscow and London as part of Sadat's 'diplomatic offensive' of early 1973 that preceded his planned military offensive.⁶⁴ On 23 February Ismail publicly met with Nixon in the White House, the highest-level contact with the US since the Six-Day War and the subsequent cutting of diplomatic relations with Washington. There Ismail emphasised that Egypt sought to balance her relationship with both superpowers and that Egypt did not consider itself a 'satellite' of any country, as demonstrated by his president's actions over the previous two years.⁶⁵ Nixon, for his part, sought to dampen expectations that Egypt could achieve

⁶² Ismail, *Ann Mir Al-Qawmi*, 227.

⁶³ Memo, Rogers to Nixon, Visit to Washington by Egyptian National Security Adviser Hafiz Ismail, 20 February 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁶⁴ Sadat, *Al-Bahth*, 322.

⁶⁵ Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, The President's Meeting with Hafiz Ismail, President Sadat's Adviser for National Security Affairs, 23 February 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 131, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

its maximum demands, and underscored that the White House channel was Egypt's best hope for achieving any return of territory, and hence she ought to negotiate flexibly.⁶⁶

Ismail set forth Egypt's case that the continuation of the current standoff – despite 30 months of ceasefire – was intolerable. He emphasised that the diplomatic stalemate was not Egypt's fault, and that Egypt – unlike Israel - had accepted both American and UN initiatives and even proposed her own. He protested that American policy perpetuated Israel's occupation of Egyptian territory, an unfair situation even more inequitable now that Soviet combat forces had returned home.⁶⁷

Ismail also restated Egypt's opposition to step-by-step diplomacy, and preference for a catholic settlement. He articulated his fears that a gradual approach could get 'bogged down' and that an interim settlement might, after a while, be all Egypt would ever achieve. Nixon assured Ismail that America would seek a permanent settlement, but that due to the 'gulf between the parties', it would be difficult to pursue it immediately. If any progress were to be achieved, it would be through a series of interim steps secretly negotiated through Kissinger, while public negotiations would still be conducted as window-dressing through the State Department.⁶⁸

Another point of dispute was Ismail's insistence that Egypt would not negotiate directly with Israel unless Israel in turn sat down with the Palestinians to 'resolve' the refugee question. Further, Egypt would require 'an international commitment to a date of Israeli

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

withdrawal' *before* she would negotiate with Israel.⁶⁹ Thus Ismail continued Nasser's unreasonable policy that committed Israel to the outcome of negotiations before they even commenced.

In any case, the *pro forma* meeting with Nixon was largely for stating opening positions and for public consumption. The real negotiations took place *in camera* with Kissinger on 25 and 26 February in a private residence in Westchester County, New York. There Ismail opened discussions in the first session by complaining that Egyptian demonstrations of good will, such as the expulsion of Soviet troops, went unrecognised by the US. Kissinger denied the charge, arguing that the difficulty the US faced was how to 'reflect' changes in Egypt in American policy.⁷⁰

Ismail again stressed that Egypt 'cannot think in terms of a separate Egyptian settlement unless it is in the context of the very general framework of a Middle East settlement' that would include Jordan and Syria.⁷¹ In return Egypt would 'bring about a state of peace and an end to the state of war', but not 'full peace', a curious formulation not dissimilar to that put forward by Nasser in 1970.⁷² Sinai and the Golan would have to be returned to Egypt and Syria, and Egypt would not stand in the way of any agreement that Jordan struck with respect to the West Bank and Gaza, which again echoed Nasserist formulations.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Hafiz Ismail and Henry Kissinger in Armonk, New York, 25 February 1973, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 131, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

When Kissinger pointed out that such a deal would only recreate the *status quo ante* that held from 1948-1967 under the armistice agreements, and questioned why Israel would accept what Egypt was offering, Ismail responded that Egypt would allow Israeli ships passage through the Suez Canal and would end her boycott of third party goods connected to Israel, a not particularly substantive offer.⁷³ He also threw in the bargain ending radio propaganda broadcast into Israel. As for recognising Israel, Egypt would not offer a clear-cut recognition of the Jewish state, but would content herself with indirect recognition accorded by accepting resolution 242, again as proposed by Nasser three years earlier.⁷⁴ Normalisation – implying diplomatic, trade, and cultural relations – was out of the question. With those paltry terms on offer it did not seem possible for Egypt to obtain satisfaction through diplomatic means. Indeed, to an impartial observer it seems that the Egyptians failed to grasp that they were negotiating from a position of weakness, and that abstract Egyptian notions of the immorality of usurped land were of no consequence in Jerusalem or Washington. As Kissinger would articulate to the Soviets, ‘it is hard to convince Israel why they should give up the territory in exchange for something they already have [a cease-fire], in order to avoid a war they can win’.⁷⁵

The talks between the two officials nonetheless continued the following day, with Ismail inviting Kissinger to visit Sadat in Egypt and stressing his hopes that the American could ‘work out something that will satisfy Egyptian desires on sovereignty at the same time

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴Memorandum of Conversation, Hafiz Ismail and Henry Kissinger in Armonk, New York, 25 February 1973, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 131, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷⁵ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 219.

taking into account the desires of Israel for security’, provided that it did not involve the annexation of land or stationing of Israeli troops in Sinai.⁷⁶ Ismail further spelled out Egypt’s vision: she would expect that by the time she achieved a final settlement with Israel, Israel would have struck a deal with both Jordan and Syria on the ‘heads of agreement’, including recognition of Arab sovereignty, plans for Israeli withdrawal, and security measures.⁷⁷ The bilateral ‘end of the state of war’ between Egypt and Israel would come with the final Israeli withdrawal from Sinai.⁷⁸ It would involve Egyptian acknowledgment of her ‘respect for the sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of Israel and the right to live in peace’ as spelled out in resolution 242.⁷⁹ Explicit recognition of Israel would follow settlements with Jordan and Syria. Furthermore, Ismail stated that he wanted the preliminary phase of an agreement concluded by the start of September, and all this *without* negotiating directly with Israel.⁸⁰ Kissinger was distinctly unimpressed, stating he ‘frankly (does) not believe the time is right to go into discussions with the Israelis until we know what is new in the Egyptian position ... presented to us. What is different from what has already been said?’⁸¹ Ismail could only reply that ‘the difference is that it is spelled out in a more clear way’!⁸²

As a matter of fact, there was not much new in the Egyptian offer, not only when juxtaposed to Sadat’s initiatives over the previous thirty months, but also compared to

⁷⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, Hafiz Ismail and Henry Kissinger in Armonk, New York, 26 February 1973, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 131, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

Nasser's diplomacy in 1969-1970. The only substantive difference was that Ismail abandoned Nasser's demand for an immediate Israeli withdrawal from *all* captured Arab lands. The other Egyptian positions were eerily familiar. Ismail was gently regurgitating Egyptian diplomatic praxis, stripped of its former bombast and bluster. As Kissinger later reported to Golda Meir, 'there is no flexibility in their position, but there is in their attitude'.⁸³

During discussion of security guarantees for Israel, Kissinger underscored that Sharm al-Sheikh, demilitarised zones, and other tangible security arrangements such as international observers were key issues for Israel. The approach he envisioned was to 'separate where is the Egyptian frontier from the question of who is where at every point in time' in order to make it easier to reconcile Egyptian sovereignty demands with Israeli security needs.⁸⁴ For his part, Ismail proposed an international presence in certain areas of Sinai for a period of variable duration, accompanied by superpower and Security Council guarantees of any settlement Egypt and Israel agreed. Ismail could not further specify Egypt's red lines with respect to security guarantees, except to reject out of hand an indefinite and total demilitarisation of the Sinai.⁸⁵ In any case Ismail demanded that the most intrusive security arrangements end with the ending of belligerency. On that note the talks ended with both parties agreeing to meet again in the spring after reviewing their positions. Ismail promised to look into whether Egypt could distinguish between a *de*

⁸³ Memoranda of Conversation, Nixon, Meir, Rabin, Dinitz, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 1 March 1973, March 1, 1973 – Nixon, Kissinger, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, Box 1, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, Hafiz Ismail and Henry Kissinger in Armonk, New York, 26 February 1973, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 131, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

facto state of peace to be enacted once an agreement is signed, and a *de jure* peace to be declared after the completion of an Israeli withdrawal.⁸⁶

King Hussein and Golda Meir visited Washington in quick succession after Ismail's departure. After meeting Hussein the distrust between Jordan and Egypt was clear to Kissinger, who could see that Egypt was 'using the Palestinians to gain a veto over Jordanian actions, while Hussein invoked (US) fear of Soviet intransigence to slow down a separate peace by Egypt'.⁸⁷ Meir, on the other hand, emphasised that she could not fathom agreeing to final borders at the outset of peace talks.⁸⁸ Meir, not unjustly, thought Sadat's demands unrealistic, identifying the malady as follows: 'the trouble with Egypt is that they want the end before they begin'.⁸⁹ Meanwhile the Israelis had 'never had it so good'; the military balance was perceived to be increasingly tipping in their favour, diplomacy was deadlocked, and Egypt forced to cool her heels.⁹⁰

America shared Israel's assessment that Sadat did not have many policy options besides accommodating Israeli demands, *volens volens*. Indeed, Nixon had told Meir that it was because Israel was 'so strong that Egypt is coming to us'.⁹¹ Sadat's expulsion of Soviet forces the previous year was perceived to have seriously undermined Egypt's military option, as the British envoy to Egypt reported:

⁸⁶ Memo, Saunders to Kissinger, Second Meeting with Ismail, 10 May 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁸⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 221.

⁸⁸ Memoranda of Conversation, Nixon, Meir, Rabin, Dinitz, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 1 March 1973, March 1, 1973 – Nixon, Kissinger, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, Box 1, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸⁹ Meir, quoted in *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Meir, quoted in *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

It seems clear that the Soviet military withdrawal has gravely weakened both Egypt's ability to defend herself and any limited capability the Egyptians may once have had to mount an attack against the Israelis across the Suez Canal. The Egyptian air defence system would appear to have suffered particularly seriously as a result of the withdrawal of Soviet equipment and of the Soviet autonomous units and also from the loss of key Soviet advisers and maintenance personnel. My Defence Attaché believes the Egyptian Armed Forces are no longer capable of conducting a major military operation across the Canal, except as a suicidal gesture designed to provoke intervention by the big Powers and the imposition of a Middle East settlement.⁹²

The erroneousness of such analysis and its policy implications would be palpably revealed within a few months.

The Final Throw of the Diplomatic Dice

Meanwhile, Sadat appointed himself Prime Minister on 26 March in order to prepare the way for war.⁹³ The military preparations underway were noted by outside parties; nonetheless, they continued to discount the chances of war breaking out in the near future. The Arab-Israeli issue was on the Security Council agenda for early June and it was expected that any military action would await the results of those deliberations. Sadat was also – wrongly – expected to await the results of both the US-Soviet summit as well as the Israeli elections of late 1973 before resorting to military action.⁹⁴

⁹² P.G.D. Adams, The Egyptian Armed Forces in 1972, 12 March 1973, FCO 93/65, National Archives, Kew.

⁹³ Memo, Eliot to Kissinger, Sadat's Speech of March 26, 28 March 1973, White House Central Files, Subject Files, Box 79, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁹⁴ Memo, Eliot to Kissinger, Egyptian Role in Recent UN Security Council Debate, 26 April 1973, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 538, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

In the run-up to the superpower summit Sadat maintained public pressure on the Soviet Union not to stray from his position. He notably disagreed with the Soviets that the only solution to the impasse was a peaceful one, and insisted that the continuation of the ceasefire would only allow Israel to create more ‘facts on the ground’.⁹⁵ Sadat urged the Soviets to discuss the Middle East at the San Clemente summit, as talk of peace was no more than ‘a deception and a mirage’.⁹⁶ Sadat also railed at America for announcing new aircraft deliveries to Israel after Ismail visited Washington, describing US policy as a form of ‘psychological warfare’.⁹⁷ Sadat accused the US of expecting Egypt to make concessions ‘just to reactivate the issue (of negotiations), not to solve it’.⁹⁸ As for Kissinger’s proposal to separate sovereignty from security, Sadat rejected such casuistry and refused to be ‘lured by the title of superficial sovereignty while tricks are being played underneath’.⁹⁹ Sadat again ruled out an Israeli presence in Sharm al-Sheikh under any circumstances.

This was the context in which Kissinger met with Ismail on 20 May for another round of secret discussions. The discussions were held in France a week before the Security Council was to deliberate on the Middle East and consider a Jarring report that blamed Israel for the lack of diplomatic progress. Egypt had resorted to the UN as a means of pressuring the US – as the other members’ positions were closer to Egypt’s than Israel’s

⁹⁵ Quoted in Memo, Saunders and Quandt to Kissinger, President Sadat’s Remarks on the US and USSR, 3 May 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Memo, Saunders to Kissinger, Second Meeting with Ismail, 10 May 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

– and to demonstrate her commitment to seeking a diplomatic solution. Once again, however, Sadat was making the novice mistake of moving along too many tracks at once: the UN, the Soviets, the State Department, and the White House channel. The president’s approach resembled that of a punter placing bets on several horses in the same race in the hopes of maximising chances of a return. Yet diplomacy does not operate in such a manner. There is limited institutional capacity, political capital, and time and effort top policymakers will devote to a given problem. Heuristically placing multiple wagers in effect congests the system rather than increases the chances of success. Whether Sadat was driven to this by desperation, naïveté, or a combination of both, is extraneous. His jejune approach contributed to the failure of all his efforts.

In France Ismail began the discussions by strongly criticising America for guaranteeing aircraft deliveries to Israel through 1975, describing it as ‘very revealing’ and ‘very dangerous’.¹⁰⁰ He also criticised the US for agreeing to finance the settlement of Jewish immigrants from the USSR, questioning how the administration could then play the role of honest broker.¹⁰¹ Ismail went so far as to imply the possibility of ongoing nuclear cooperation between the US and Israel.

Kissinger, for his part, focused discussions on possible solutions to the impasse. He stressed that despite its disadvantages, an interim approach would allow Egypt to avoid

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Hafiz Ismail and Henry Kissinger in Moulin St. Fargeau, Rochefort, France, 20 May 1973, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁰¹ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Meeting with Hafiz Ismail on May 20, 29 May 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

the day when the status quo ‘simply become(s) part of the international landscape to which people have become accustomed’ and that any movement, no matter how seemingly nugatory, had the advantage ‘of avoiding the perpetuation of the status quo’.¹⁰² America’s policy, Kissinger continued, was not to facilitate Israel’s occupation of Sinai *sine die* but ‘to get a process started by which the withdrawal begins and possibility exists for using influence on a continuation of the withdrawal’.¹⁰³ Kissinger also emphasised that Egypt exaggerated America’s influence on Israel and the degree to which the two countries coordinated their policies.¹⁰⁴ Egyptian sensitivity to Israeli intransigence encouraged certain Israelis to play the role of spoiler by making inflammatory declarations, which were often directed as much towards Washington as Cairo. In fact, once negotiations were underway Kissinger expected that Egypt would find that ‘American support for frontier changes would be very minimal and that American practical support for Egypt’s conceptions would be very considerable’.¹⁰⁵

Kissinger also alluded to the problems created by Egypt’s approach to the UN, warning that it meant things were ‘getting extremely confused’ with too many talks ‘all going on more or less simultaneously and without any overriding design’.¹⁰⁶ In any case, the

¹⁰² Memorandum of Conversation, Hafiz Ismail and Henry Kissinger in Moulin St. Fargeau, Rochefort, France, 20 May 1973, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, Conversation Between Mohamed Hafez Ismail and Dr. Henry Kissinger on May 20, 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, Hafiz Ismail and Henry Kissinger in Moulin St. Fargeau, Rochefort, France, 20 May 1973, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Americans would veto any UN resolution that deviated from 242.¹⁰⁷ Kissinger also endeavoured to impress upon the Egyptians the weakness of their military option, stressing that the US:

honestly believe(s) that a military action will make that situation worse because our assessment is that this will not bring about a change of physical control, so at the end of that military action, which will be short, we will be back to where we are now, even under more adverse circumstances.¹⁰⁸

Unlike in Vietnam, where a military offensive empowered the Communists in their negotiations, America and Israel estimated the nature of warfare in the region did not lend itself to a similar strategy. Moshe Dayan predicted that another war for Egypt would be 'suicide', while Ezer Weizmann discounted the Egyptian threat to Israel's Bar-Lev fortifications along the Canal, describing them as 'the best line of defence any king or president has had in the history of the Jewish people'.¹⁰⁹ In the meantime the most that Kissinger could hope to secure for Egypt was nominal sovereignty in Sinai with Israel maintaining a military presence along strategically important points in the peninsula.¹¹⁰ In terms of timescale, Kissinger said that an interim settlement might take until 1974 – after the Israeli elections were held – and a further year for progress on a final settlement.¹¹¹ A despondent Ismail left France realising that the American position meant that Egypt

¹⁰⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Conversation Between Mohamed Hafez Ismail and Dr. Henry Kissinger on May 20, 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁰⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Hafiz Ismail and Henry Kissinger in Moulin St. Fargeau, Rochefort, France, 20 May 1973, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁰⁹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 297.

¹¹⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Hafiz Ismail and Henry Kissinger in Moulin St. Fargeau, Rochefort, France, 20 May 1973, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹¹¹ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Meeting with Hafiz Ismail on May 20, 29 May 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 130, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

would now have to resort to war. Kissinger would offer to meet Ismail again in Spain to continue their talks, but Egypt demurred. The time for diplomacy had come to an end.

Preparations for War

In order to prepare for war Ismail visited Moscow from 11-14 July for talks with Soviet leaders following the superpower summit in June, during which the Soviets made sure to thoroughly adhere to the Arab line. Ismail was told to expect *détente* to last between 20 – 30 years.¹¹² Undeterred, Ismail emphasised the fragility of the situation in the region and the ‘danger of serious explosion’.¹¹³ Preparing for the said ‘explosion’, Ismail emphasised Egypt’s approval of Moscow’s current stance on the issues in question and that a solution to the problem was ‘unthinkable without active participation of the Soviet Union’.¹¹⁴

Having secured his superpower flank, all that remained was for Sadat to patch up his relationships with important local actors. Assad had secretly visited Sadat in April, and the two agreed to go to war in October.¹¹⁵ Sadat then duly sent Shathly to Algeria and Morocco to inform them that war was imminent.¹¹⁶ Qadhafi had been sulking since the date of the proposed Libyan union with Egypt, 1 September, passed unceremoniously. Earlier in June the young leader spent 17 days in Cairo pushing for immediate union, and in July arranged a march of 50 000 Libyans to Egypt calling for immediate federation, all

¹¹² Dessouki, "The Primacy of Economics," 134.

¹¹³ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Dobrynin’s Message on the Middle East: Brezhnev/Ismail Conversations in Moscow, 21 July 1973, NSC/HAK Office Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Sadat, *Al-Bahth*, 326.

¹¹⁶ Al-Shathly, *Harb October*, 297-298.

without success.¹¹⁷ Sadat nonetheless placated Qadhafi, who controlled Libya's vast foreign exchange reserves and Mirage fighter plan squadrons, in the run-up to war. He also mended fences with Jordan on 12 September, when he and Assad restored diplomatic relations with Amman after Hussein flew to Cairo for a tri-partite summit on 10 September. Sadat and Assad had originally planned on a full Arab summit, but were dissuaded by King Faisal, the only other person privy to the details of their war plans. Sadat and Assad envisaged Faisal playing a crucial role in the coming conflict through an oil embargo and financial support for the two frontline states.¹¹⁸

In a secret bilateral session, the Egyptian and Syrian presidents put the final touches on plans – drawn up in August by their top brass in covert meetings in Alexandria – for a simultaneous surprise attack by their forces on Israel on 6 October.¹¹⁹ Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, was chosen as D-day, which would later prove a blessing for Israel as it allowed a faster mobilisation of her army.¹²⁰ Both Egypt and Syria would aim to maximise Israel's casualties and force her to mobilise her military for an extended period of time.¹²¹ Significantly, Syria was led to believe that Egypt's objective in Sinai was the passes rather than the establishment of bridgeheads in western Sinai,

¹¹⁷ P.G.D. Adams, *Egypt: Annual Review for 1973*, 23 January 1974, FCO 93/378, National Archives, Kew.

¹¹⁸ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 359.

¹¹⁹ Seale, *Asad*, 193.

¹²⁰ Eban, *Personal Witness*, 529.

¹²¹ Sabri, *Wathaiq Harb October*, 28.

leading Assad to later claim he was misled.¹²² Sadat would indeed forego the passes for more modest goals, as he had previously confided to a Jordanian official:¹²³

I realize my limitations. I am not good at blitzkrieg. The Israelis are good at blitzkrieg. I will fight a war of political reactivation and not of military liberation. I will wage a limited war: cross the Canal, secure a bridgehead and stop. Then I will ask the Security Council to call for a ceasefire. This strategy will ensure my victory in the battle, cut my losses and reactivate the peace process.¹²⁴

For Sadat, what was of essence was 'to get his peacemaking process under way: how this was to be achieved was rather secondary'.¹²⁵

Sadat convened his National Security Council on 30 September to announce his decision to pursue an Alexandrian solution.¹²⁶ The Soviet ambassador was only told on 4 October, and Moscow duly evacuated its nationals from Egypt on 5 October.¹²⁷ The morrow the Egyptians would launch an all out assault across the Canal, an operation that they had been meticulously preparing for over a year. At any rate, after arrantly threatening to go to war so many times during the previous three years, neither the Israelis, nor the Americans, nor even the Egyptians really believed Sadat's *in terrorem* declarations. Quite simply, Sadat had followed 'an extraordinary tactic that no one fathomed: If a leader announces his real intentions sufficiently frequently and grandiloquently, no one will believe him'.¹²⁸ Crying wolf had achieved its desired effect, allowing Sadat to catch the

¹²² Al-Shathly, *Harb October*, 35; Seale, *Asad*, 198. The Egyptians also cynically informed Moscow that they would aim for the passes, in order to obtain the enhanced military equipment and larger quantities of arms that a push to the passes would require. See Shahed Ala Al-Asr, "Harb October Halaqa 7."

¹²³ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 358, 359.

¹²⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 206.

¹²⁵ P.G.D. Adams, Egypt: Annual Review for 1973, 23 January 1974, FCO 93/378, National Archives, Kew.

¹²⁶ Ismail, *Ann Mir Al-Qawmi*, 288.

¹²⁷ Vinogradov's Version of October Events, 20 April 1974, FCO 93/561, National Archives, Kew.

¹²⁸ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 206.

Israelis with their pants down, and permitting him to replace his political chessboard, depleted of diplomatic pawns and stuck in stalemate, with a fresh one.

Chapter Three: Engagement and Disengagement

At 2.05 PM on 6 October, 200 Egyptian planes swooped into Sinai to attack Israeli targets, and more than 2 000 Egyptian artillery guns launched an hour-long bombardment of Bar-Lev fortifications.¹ This was a prelude to tens of thousands of Egyptian soldiers storming the length of the Suez Canal, where they overwhelmed the outnumbered Israelis protecting the eastern bank of the Canal. Jerusalem had been unable to fathom Egyptian intentions until the eve of the offensive as a result of Sadat's campaign of misinformation and his adroit use of Ashraf Marwan as a double agent, which led Israel to disregard the warnings King Hussein personally delivered to Golda Meir at Mossad headquarters eleven days earlier about Arab plans to attack Israel.² By that point it was too late to reinforce Israel's front lines. Reservists were only mobilised on Yom Kippur, and by then the Bar-Lev fortresses were already besieged by Egyptian troops.

The bewilderment in Jerusalem was shared in Washington. The US had neither foreseen the Egyptian attack nor taken Sadat's threats seriously. Rather, the administration was still 'operat(ing) on the basis of the historical illusion that the Arabs were militarily impotent'.³ This initial strategic shock was compounded over the course of the first week of battle, when the expected Egyptian collapse did not occur, even after Israel had fully mobilised its forces.

¹ Al-Gamasy, *Harb October*, 304-305.

² Ahron Bregman, *Israel's Wars: A History Since 1947*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 115; Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 361.

³ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, 12 August 1974, August 12, 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Box 3, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The degree of improvement in Egyptian military performance was completely unexpected, even by the Egyptian leadership and the Soviet Union. Over the course of the first few days of fighting the Egyptian armed forces managed to secure the entire eastern bank of the Canal and advance fifteen kilometres inland – the limits of the anti-aircraft air defences that neutralised the Israeli Air Force – thereby accomplishing the stated goals of their battle-plan, Granite I. Egyptian soldiers, however, were careful not to stray farther east, as they would lose SAM cover and expose themselves to the rapacious Israeli pilots. Sadat, Ahmed Ismail, and Shathly were all duly cautious: they were aware of the limitations of their forces, and careful not to ask too much of them. Both the army and the air force had been almost completely destroyed six years earlier in the Six-Day War. Accordingly Sadat was keen to preserve his combat strength and force the Israelis to exhaust themselves by attempting to dislodge his soldiers from the east bank of the Canal in a war of attrition, rather than risk his gains by ordering Egypt's armies east.

Indeed, liberating or advancing deep into Sinai was never Sadat's objective in launching his war. Rather, his ambitions were far more modest than *Delenda est Carthago*. Sadat's had a Clausewitzian attitude towards war: it was indeed a continuation of politics by other means; an instrument to render Israel politically helpless rather than destroy her militarily. By launching a limited war to seize the east bank of the Canal Sadat hoped to 'create the impetus which would lead to a diplomatic solution of the Arab/Israel problem'.⁴ He would do so by impressing upon the superpowers, particularly the US, that the situation of 'no-war, no-peace' was no longer tenable. By ratcheting up military

⁴ P.G.D. Adams, *The Fourth Arab/Israel War: Operation Badr, 7 January 1974*, FCO 93/561, National Archives, Kew.

tensions and economic pressure through the imminent Arab oil embargo, Sadat would make clear that America could literally no longer afford to ignore him.

Sadat also aimed to puncture the myth of Israeli invincibility and force Jerusalem to rethink its security doctrine, which was premised upon the assumption that the Arabs would not go to war 'unless they had a prospect of victory, and that even if the Arabs took military action, the Israeli response would be so crushing that they would be suing for a cease-fire within a few hours'.⁵ Instead, Sadat wished to make the point that holding on to Sinai would lead to continued conflict rather than an enforced peace.

However, over the course of the first few days the US – and the rest of the world – still confidently believed that Israel would summarily destroy the Egyptian bridgehead, and waited in vain for an Egyptian collapse. Indeed, Kissinger – now both Secretary of State and National Security Adviser – proposed on 8 October, as an indulgence to Sadat no less, that all combatants return to the lines of 5 October. The Egyptian president had 'made his point', and by ending the conflict now he could spare his military the brunt of the expected Israeli onslaught. Kissinger's thinking, however, was outmoded. Instead, by 9 October Israel's situation had become so desperate that Golda Meir proposed to immediately visit Washington in person to plead for arms.⁶

A Duplicitous Alliance

⁵ Eban, *Personal Witness*, 528.

⁶ Memoranda of Conversation, Kissinger, Schlesinger, Rush, Moorer, Colby, 1 March 1973, October 9, 1973 – WSAG Meeting, Box 1, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Israel faced a desperate situation on both fronts in the first few days of war. The Israelis, however, chose to focus their immediate attention north. Syria was a more pressing concern because of its geographical proximity to Israel's civilian settlements and populated heartland. The foremost worry in Jerusalem was that the primary Syrian armoured thrust would break through Israeli lines to recapture the Golan, and possibly then continue its advance into the Galilee. By 10 October, however, Israel had retaken all land captured by Syria in the initial attack, and by the following day Israel advanced beyond the Golan towards Damascus.⁷

Meanwhile, the Egyptian units in Sinai simply sat and waited for the Israelis to try and dislodge them. This caused great consternation to the Syrians, who thought the Egyptian 'operational pause' a waste of a remarkable opportunity to push on to the strategically important passes as well as a betrayal of their alliance. The pause also undoubtedly cost Syrian lives, as it allowed Israel to concentrate its firepower north, thereby negating the advantages of a two-front war.

Assad felt personally deceived by Sadat. The plans Egypt shared with Syria in 1972 and 1973 all declared the immediate Egyptian objective to be the passes, and did not include any hint of an operational pause after crossing the Canal instead of continuing the offensive.⁸ It was on this basis that Assad agreed to go to war. Sadat had intentionally duped and lied to Assad.

⁷ Al-Gamasy, *Harb October*, 377.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 391.

Why did Sadat prefer trickery to the truth? Quite simply because he feared that Assad would refuse to sign on to a limited war, and worried that attacking Israel alone was too risky.⁹ Sadat thought it better to hedge his bets – and improve the odds of avoiding a stinging defeat – by drawing Assad in. This, however, proved a terrible miscalculation. Putting aside issues of personal probity and morality,¹⁰ allying with Syria constrained Egypt's war strategy, as well as her post-war diplomacy, with a burdensome Syrian albatross: Assad. Sadat would hereafter be obliged to accommodate Assad in negotiations with Israel and forced to share the attention of Kissinger with his Damascene rival.

Furthermore, refusing to advance while Syria's armies were being ravaged led to tremendous Arab pressure on Egypt at a time when she desperately needed Arab financial, military, and diplomatic backing. Sadat could not call for inter-Arab solidarity and an oil embargo to further his cause and simultaneously refuse to allow his army to take advantage of seemingly propitious circumstances in Sinai. Had Egypt gone to war alone – and Shathly certainly believed his armed forces could achieve the limited war aims unaided – she could have conducted and concluded the war on her terms alone, and thereby avoid Arab interference and pressure.¹¹ Eventually, Arab pressure told, and Sadat ordered his commanders – despite the unanimous opposition of the Minister of Defence, Chief of Staff, and senior commanders on the front – to redeploy Egypt's reserve

⁹ Al-Shathly, *Harb October*, 35.

¹⁰ On this score Assad was equally in the wrong, as he had arranged for the Soviets to request a ceasefire on 6 October without informing Sadat, and again on 8 October, in the hope that Syria would have recaptured the Golan by then as a result of its surprise attack. See Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 25.

¹¹ Al-Shathly, *Harb October*, 35.

armoured units from the west bank of the Canal in a thrust east towards the passes on 14 October.¹²

The attack was a disaster. Once the Egyptians lost SAM cover they were devastated by Israel's air force. Moreover, by fighting Israel in the open desert the immobile Egyptians played to Israeli tactical strengths and their own weaknesses. In one day's fighting on 14 October Egypt lost more than 250 tanks, more than her total losses in the war to date.¹³ Egypt achieved nothing and lost much: without those reserve units the denuded west bank was now inadequately defended and open to an Israeli counter-attack, which duly arrived the night of 15 October. Thus Sadat's deceit led to Egypt *not* escalating her attack at the most opportune moment in the immediate aftermath of the crossing. Yet he was nonetheless eventually pressured into a calamitous attack launched a week too late, to disastrous effect.

Strategic Clarity, Tactical Muddle

Sadat's incoherence was evident in other aspects of his management of the war. He had correctly devised a limited war 'aimed not for territorial gain but for a crisis that would alter the attitudes into which the parties were then frozen – and thereby open the way for negotiations'; as such his goals were 'psychological and diplomatic, much more than military'.¹⁴ Sadat did indeed initiate and maintain contact with Henry Kissinger through Hafiz Ismail after the first Egyptian attacks, later prompting the claim that 'in the midst

¹² Ibid., 243.

¹³ Ibid., 353.

¹⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 460.

of war he began to walk the path to peace'.¹⁵ Yet his grand demands were unrevised: he continued to insist on an all-or-nothing predetermined approach to recovering Egyptian territory. During the first week of the war, characterised by Egyptian ascendancy and the greatest extent of Sinai territory under his control, Sadat blithely refused to seriously engage either superpower regarding a ceasefire. When approached by the Soviet ambassador – who confirmed that Moscow was acting on Syria's request – on 6 October, and again on 8 October, Sadat refused to even discuss a ceasefire, directing him to the deputy Prime Minister instead.¹⁶ In his first war-time correspondence with Kissinger on 7 October, Ismail reiterated Egypt's insistence on a comprehensive solution involving an Israeli withdrawal from all occupied land in return for freedom of navigation through the straits of Tiran and a temporary international presence in southern Sinai, following which Egypt would partake in a peace conference!¹⁷ Following a complete withdrawal, the state of belligerency – *not* peace – would come to an end.¹⁸ Why Sadat imagined Israel could agree to evacuate an area ten times greater than that which Egypt captured is unclear. The following day Kissinger unsurprisingly declined the proposal, but promised his personal involvement in the diplomacy to solve the problem.¹⁹ After all, Egypt had already disproved several working American *données*, most notably that Israeli military power would guarantee stability and that *détente* would ensure any Middle East conflict would remain localised.²⁰

¹⁵ Ibid., 528.

¹⁶ Ismail, *Ann Mir Al-Qawmi*, 321.

¹⁷ Ibid., 317.

¹⁸ Department of State Briefing Memo, Estimate of Soviet Intentions in the Middle East Crisis, 13 October 1973, NSC Institutional 'H' Files, Washington Special Action Group Meetings, Box H-093, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁹ Ismail, *Ann Mir Al-Qawmi*, 317.

²⁰ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 125.

Sadat, however, would not revise his demands. On 12 October he instructed the British ambassador that Egypt would only accept a ceasefire 'clearly linked to a final settlement involving the return of the Arab territories'.²¹ Sadat's attitude towards the *in situ* ceasefire proposed by Britain on behalf of America was 'uncompromisingly negative', dismissing the plan as a 'Kissinger trick' and insisting first on 'a timetable for complete Israeli withdrawal'.²² This dismayed Ismail Fahmy, Egypt's new acting foreign minister, who thought it a mistake.²³ What magnifies Sadat's misjudgement was that the Israeli cabinet was prepared to reluctantly accept such a ceasefire, a position that shocked many senior Israeli figures.²⁴ Had Sadat accepted he would have left his diplomats a substantially easier task in the *post bellum* negotiations. Egypt would have emerged from the war with a clear victory and the Israelis on the run, rather than the 'victory' she would settle for a fortnight later. Instead, Sadat's intransigence prompted the US to actively resupply Israel with arms and ammunition, helping turn the tide of battle against Egypt.²⁵ By the time Sadat was announcing in parliament on 16 October his readiness to cease fire and open the Canal in return for an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines, the Israelis had already crossed the Canal and were fighting on the west bank. There the Egyptian rearguard, bereft of armour, desperately fought to forestall an Israeli armoured thrust through Egypt's soft underbelly. The Israeli tactics were to destroy the SAM missile sites on the west bank, thereby allowing the Israelis to again deploy their greatest asset: the air force. Still, Sadat continued to refuse a ceasefire despite the arrival in Cairo of Kosygin, the

²¹ P.G.D. Adams, *The Fourth Arab/Israel War: Operation Badr*, 7 January 1974, FCO 93/561, National Archives, Kew.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 27.

²⁴ Eban, *Personal Witness*, 534.

²⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Ismail Fahmy and Henry Kissinger, 29 October 1973, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 131, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland; Quandt, *Peace Process*, 110.

Soviet prime minister, armed with maps detailing the increasingly precarious situation the Egyptians faced on the frontlines.

In fairness, Sadat was under strong Arab pressure to continue to fight. Faisal had conditioned the Arab oil embargo – which only began on 17 October – on a protracted conflict. Arab demands were reinforced by popular pressures, particularly in the army, that Egypt continue the fight. Having endured six years of national humiliation it was not so easy for Sadat to put the Egyptian war genie back in its bottle at a stroke. In hindsight there was also some contradiction in Egypt's military and political strategies. While Sadat's political strategy mandated a lightning war to quickly capture the east bank of the Canal, the military plans involved maximising Israeli casualties through a mini-war of attrition in western Sinai. Therefore, it would take time, effort, and most importantly a sufficiently large figleaf in order overcome the war fever enveloping Egypt and the Arab world. However, in retrospect it is clear that Sadat should have stuck to his original inclination: capture the east bank of the Canal, cease fire, and allow the political reverberations of a complete – albeit limited – Egyptian victory be felt in Jerusalem and Washington.

By the time Sadat finally accepted a ceasefire *in extremis* on 20 October, following Kissinger's visit to Moscow to agree the terms of the impending Security Council resolution which would order the halt of fighting on 22 October, Sadat's error had left the Israelis on the west bank of the Canal and the 45 000 men of the Egyptian Third Army

almost completely surrounded.²⁶ In-fighting within the Egyptian high command between Shathly, who wanted to withdraw most of Egypt's armoured units from the east bank in order to challenge the Israeli salient at Deversoir near Ismailia, and Ahmed Ismail, who opposed any such move and was ultimately supported by Sadat, undermined Egyptian military performance in the latter stages of the war.²⁷ Sadat refused to rebalance Egypt's military deployment for political and psychological reasons, as the size of his forces in Sinai would be a crucial bargaining device in the post-war diplomacy. Consequently, by 20 October Israel enjoyed a two-to-one advantage in tanks on the west bank.²⁸ While Israeli attempts to conquer the towns of Ismailia and Suez were successfully repelled, post-ceasefire Israeli advances completed the Third Army's encirclement.²⁹ Israel only stopped advancing once Soviet threats reached their threshold, prompting America in turn to put her nuclear forces on alert. By this point Schlesinger, the Secretary of Defence, believed that Moscow had installed nuclear weapons in Egypt,³⁰ and argued that Israel should be encouraged to 'keep the Third Army hostage to keep the Arabs (under) control'.³¹ Kissinger, however, was firmly against any attempt to defeat the Third Army, arguing against 'risking everything for marginal gains, for we had achieved our fundamental objectives'.³²

²⁶ Al-Jazeera Shahed Ala Al-Asr, "Harb October Kama Yaraha Saadedine Al-Shathly, Halaqa 9, 3 April 1999," <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/59BEA6DD-CC02-4B75-83BD-26738D1DD58E>.

²⁷ Al-Gamasy, *Harb October*, 420.

²⁸ Al-Shathly, *Harb October*, 379.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 380-381.

³⁰ Memoranda of Conversation, Kissinger, Schlesinger, Colby, Moorer, Scowcroft, 31 October 1973, October 31, 1973 – Kissinger, Schlesinger, Colby, Moorer, Box 2, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 554.

The Israeli cabinet, too, was divided on whether to continue the war. Israel ultimately decided against attacking the cornered Third Army because she could not stomach the scale of the casualties she expected to suffer to subdue the Egyptians, rather than because of American pressure. In the end, Eban viewed the cease-fire as a 'great salvation' rather than a 'defeat',³³ as 'the hard truth was that Israel had no hope of further military gains. It would have been madly suicidal for us to pursue a subsidiary and sterile aim such as the capture of the Egyptian Third Army at the risk of Soviet intervention, American diplomatic hostility and a huge Israeli casualty list'.³⁴

Indeed, the dominant narrative that Egyptian forces were on the point of annihilation is misleading and uninformed. Though she clearly had the upper hand, Eban recounts Israel 'was in a weak tactical situation', and her need for 'disengagement was more acute even than that of the Egyptians'.³⁵ Even at her nadir, Egypt was far from defeated, as the British embassy in Cairo reported:

It is not true, as many commentators have suggested, that the Egyptians were on the run by the evening of 22 October. Their forces were still largely intact on both banks of the Canal and, although a large party of the Third Army was virtually surrounded, the Egyptians maintained a considerable numerical superiority in the field over the Israelis. The latter were operating with very vulnerable lines of communication and in the event of a really determined counterattack by the Second Army were at least as much in danger of being surrounded as were the Egyptians themselves.³⁶

From Kissinger's perspective, the war ended perfectly. On 9 October he thought 'the best scenario is for Israel to push them across the Canal...We don't want an Arab débâcle.

³³ Eban, *Personal Witness*, 539.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 541.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 540.

³⁶ P.G.D. Adams, *The Fourth Arab/Israel War: Operation Badr*, 7 January 1974, FCO 93/561, National Archives, Kew.

Israel has suffered a strategic defeat no matter what happens. They can't take two-to-one losses'.³⁷ America had succeeded in satisfying three wartime aims: Soviet arms should not be seen to have defeated American weapons, Egypt should not be humiliated, and the US should be in a position to dominate the post-war diplomacy.³⁸ America 'held the cards', and the 'next challenge was to play (her) hand'.³⁹ Sadat now entered into negotiations under much less favourable circumstances than would have held ten days earlier. Nonetheless, Egypt's military accomplishments had transformed the political map. Kissinger considered that crossing the Canal and fending off Israel in Sinai for two weeks gave Egypt the 'political advantage'.⁴⁰ The American Secretary of State believed Sadat was no longer 'negotiating from weakness; he was not a supplicant; he had earned Egypt's right at the conference table; he had, in short, restored Egypt's honour and self-respect'.⁴¹ The British envoy in Cairo shared Kissinger's analysis:

In wider terms the Egyptians have achieved a result much closer to victory than defeat. Although the outlook for peace negotiations is still very uncertain and the possibility of renewed hostilities can by no means yet be excluded, Sadat must feel that, by and large, he has attained the objectives set out.⁴²

Israel, in contrast, was bewildered, her security philosophy discredited, military superiority degraded, and government internationally isolated.⁴³

³⁷ Memoranda of Conversation, Kissinger, Schlesinger, Rush, Moorer, Colby, 1 March 1973, October 9, 1973 – WSAG Meeting, Box 1, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

³⁸ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 127.

³⁹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 554.

⁴⁰ Kissinger, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Dinitz, Gur, Eran, Kissinger, Sisco, US Delegation, 22 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.1 (1), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁴¹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 637.

⁴² P.G.D. Adams, The Fourth Arab/Israel War: Operation Badr, 7 January 1974, FCO 93/561, National Archives, Kew.

⁴³ P.G.D. Adams, The Fourth Arab/Israeli War: Political Results, 16 January 1974, FCO 93/561, National Archives, Kew.

Kissinger in Egypt

Kissinger arrived in Egypt on 6 November to conduct talks aimed at a diplomatic resolution of the military impasse. This was the new Secretary of State's first active involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nonetheless, he had reason to be optimistic about his chances of success. Israel's encirclement of Egypt's Third Army was an invaluable bargaining tool with which to pressure Sadat. Egypt too held many useful cards. She retained much of the east bank, which was brimming with Egyptian troops and armour. Her military had acquitted itself well over the course of the conflict.⁴⁴ Further, Egypt's moment of greatest vulnerability had passed with the end of fighting in late October. Following the ceasefire Egypt had completely surrounded the Israeli enclave on the west bank with several hundred tanks delivered from the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Algeria, as well as more than a hundred SAM missile batteries.⁴⁵ Moreover, the ceasefire had not resulted in the complete cessation of hostilities; low level fighting – a form of Egyptian pressure – would continue until the disengagement agreement was signed.⁴⁶ More than 2 000 Israelis had lost their lives so far, and Jerusalem was being forced into a protracted mobilisation, entailing severe financial and political costs.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ The Arabs, for example, suffered 8 500 deaths in 1973, a fraction of the 61 000 suffered in 1967, Kenneth Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin and the Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace* (London: Routledge, 1999), 91. For an Israeli account of the improvement in the Arab military performance by Israel's then Minister of Defence, see Dayan, *Story of My Life*, 510.

⁴⁵ Heikal, *Secret Channels*, 219; Dayan, *Story of My Life*, 568.

⁴⁶ Dayan, *Story of My Life*, 566.

⁴⁷ Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, 91.

Meanwhile, the oil embargo was ongoing, and the Egyptian blockade of Israeli shipping at the Bab Al-Mandab entrance to the Red Sea continued to be enforced.⁴⁸

In sum, both Egypt and Israel needed a disengagement agreement. Indeed, Kissinger would remark that ‘we couldn’t have done better if we had set the scenario’.⁴⁹ America, having managed to protect relations with the Arabs and *détente* with the Soviets despite her extensive aid to Israel, would now attempt to broker a settlement under ideal conditions.⁵⁰ Peradventure the greatest indicator of both sides’ readiness was the direct military talks they held at Kilometre 101 on their frontlines, beginning on 28 October. Gamasy, Shathly’s replacement as Egypt’s Chief of Staff, met with Aharon Yariv to discuss the implementation of the Security Council resolutions, the return of prisoners of war, and the resupply of the Third Army.⁵¹ Abdelghany Gamasy, who had been Director of Military Operations during the war, was a professional staff officer described as a ‘highly intelligent, capable, yet modest man’ thoroughly disinterested in politics, and as such a very useful asset to Sadat and an utterly reliable agent in dealings with the Israelis.⁵²

Kissinger’s immediate aims in Cairo were to obtain Egyptian agreement to attend a peace conference and end the oil boycott that was causing much economic disruption across the

⁴⁸ Heikal, *Secret Channels*, 219.

⁴⁹ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, 12 August 1974, August 12, 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Box 3, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁵⁰ Department of State Briefing Memo, Estimate of Soviet Intentions in the Middle East Crisis, 13 October 1973, NSC Institutional ‘H’ Files, Washington Special Action Group Meetings, Box H-093, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁵¹ Al-Gamasy, *Harb October*, 461.

⁵² Mohamed Abdelghany Gamasy, 1977, FCO 93/1049, National Archives, Kew

Western world.⁵³ His strategy was to suggest ‘a first step that can be agreed that will give the negotiations some momentum without requiring commitment to final arrangements’.⁵⁴ However, opinions differed as to what would constitute such a first step. Ismail Fahmy, Egypt’s new, slightly more moderate, foreign minister, insisted in Washington that Israel must first withdraw to the original 22 October ceasefire lines, refusing to otherwise accept a peace conference. The significance of the 22 October lines was that they allowed Egyptian access to the Third Army, which was quarantined in later fighting.

Fahmy was a career diplomat with extensive experience of dealing with the Americans, having spent a total of twelve years at the Egyptian mission in New York. He was more pro-Western than his immediate predecessors at the Foreign Ministry, and believed that Egypt had grown too close to Moscow and ought to balance that relationship with better ties with America. Such calls had led him to be suspended – at Soviet insistence – from the foreign ministry in May 1972.⁵⁵ Appointed foreign minister in October, Fahmy was a suitable man to lead efforts to mend fences with the US and pursue diplomacy through American offices. Fahmy had a forthright and earthly approach to diplomacy, and his squat ‘short stature and big cigars accurately mirror(ed) an assertive, frequently abrasive, personality’ which would alienate many of his colleagues in the Arab world.⁵⁶

⁵³ Department of State Briefing Memo, Estimate of Soviet Intentions in the Middle East Crisis, 13 October 1973, NSC Institutional ‘H’ Files, Washington Special Action Group Meetings, Box H-093, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ismail Fahmy, 1977, FCO 93/1049, National Archives, Kew

⁵⁶ Ismail Fahmy, 1977, FCO 93/1049, National Archives, Kew

Fahmy cultivated his relationship with Kissinger much more successfully, but this did not preclude Kissinger dismissing the importance of the 22 October lines, and pushing for a more ambitious use of his limited political capital with the Israelis, who were loath to accept the principle of a return to the 22 October lines.⁵⁷ He instead argued for the release of Israeli prisoners of war to prove Egypt's goodwill. Fahmy, undeterred, offered to return the prisoners once the US guaranteed supplies for the trapped Third Army and Israel returned to the original ceasefire positions. He also offered to re-establish diplomatic relations with the US, severed since 1967, if the deal went forward.

Fahmy also laid out Egypt's plan for what would follow the proposed Israeli return to the 22 October lines: Israel would withdraw to a line *east of the Sinai passes* after the exchange of prisoners of war, whilst Egyptian forces remained in their position on the east bank of the Canal, thereby creating a wide UN buffer zone. Egypt would subsequently end its Red Sea blockade of Israel at Bab Al-Mandab.⁵⁸ Fahmy then expected Israel to withdraw in a 'single stage' all the way to the international border, following which Cairo would end belligerency. A similar Israeli disengagement would also be expected on the Syrian front, during which a UN peace conference would be called with the explicit participation of the Palestinians. Why Fahmy thought Kissinger would recommend such a fanciful plan to Israel is a mystery.

⁵⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Ismail Fahmy and Henry Kissinger, 29 October 1973, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 131, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁵⁸ Oral Note delivered to Dr Kissinger by Foreign Minister Fahmy, President Sadat's Proposal for a Settlement, 31 October 1973, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Furthermore, the Egyptian position was not only too ambitious, but also imprecisely formulated. Their proposals lacked sufficient detail and ‘predicate(d) everything on Israeli withdrawal to the October 22 lines’.⁵⁹ The opening Israeli position in turn, was equally far-fetched. In return for an Israeli withdrawal from the west bank the Egyptians would vacate the east bank, restoring the *status quo ante*. Both countries would then reduce the size of their forces stationed along the Canal. Egypt would also be obliged to reopen the Suez Canal and allow Israeli use of it.⁶⁰

Bridging the Divide

Prior to Kissinger’s arrival in Cairo US officials attempted to formulate a negotiating strategy to bridge the gap between Egypt and Israel, as well as stabilise the shaky ceasefire. Kissinger’s Six Point proposal was just such an instrument, as it managed to sidestep the issue of the 22 October lines. It involved both sides reaffirming their commitment to observe the ceasefire, agreeing to discussions to ‘settle the question of the return to the October 22 positions in the framework of agreement on the disengagement and separation of forces’, guarantees of supplies to Suez and the Third Army, and an exchange of all prisoners of war.⁶¹ The 22 October lines, Kissinger explained to Sadat, were inconsequential. What was important was starting a process that would create the precedent of an Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land and American management of the diplomacy. Sadat would embrace both Kissinger’s proposed diplomatic vehicle as

⁵⁹ Memo, Saunders and Quandt to Kissinger, Israeli and Egyptian Positions on Ceasefire and Disengagement Stage, NSC Files, HAK Trip Files, Box 40, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 641.

well as his strategic approach, making ‘major, even breathtaking, tactical concessions in return for an irreversible psychological momentum’ towards a deal.⁶² Thus by 11 November, Kissinger had managed to obtain Sadat’s consent to the Six Point agreement, ‘largely on Israeli terms’, and persuaded him to abandon Egypt’s maximal demands.⁶³ Work now began on a disengagement agreement and the Geneva Peace Conference.

Egypt was initially keen to conclude a disengagement agreement before the proposed peace conference, but agreed to attend before the signing of a deal.⁶⁴ In December Kissinger returned to Egypt to agree the format of the upcoming peace conference. Sadat reviewed the details of the conference and the strategy Kissinger proposed, including agreement on secondary positions in the event Israel refused to attend on the proposed Arab terms.⁶⁵ The two agreed that Geneva would last up to five days, and would mainly be ceremonial and procedural.⁶⁶ The divisive issue of Palestinian representation would not be raised.⁶⁷ Rather, the focus would be on military disengagement and talks between the participants.⁶⁸ The conference would then be adjourned in advance of elections in Israel.

⁶² Ibid., 642, 643.

⁶³ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Summary Report on Middle East Trip, 19 November 1973, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 139, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland; Ibid., 634, 635.

⁶⁴ Memo, Saunders to Kissinger, Our Position on Egypt-Israel Disengagement talks – A Further Elaboration, 30 November 1973, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁶⁵ Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, Henry A. Kissinger Report on Private Meetings with Sadat, 14 December 1973, NSC Files, HAK Trip Files, Box 40, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Kissinger also agreed with Sadat the outlines of a disengagement agreement similar to proposals Israel had made at Kilometre 101 before those talks were suspended – after American pressure and to American relief⁶⁹ – on 29 November by Sadat.⁷⁰ Kissinger also again pushed for help in ending the oil embargo, arguing that if Egypt wanted American help then she, too, should help America. Sadat readily assured him that the oil embargo would end in January after the peace conference, but asked the Americans to refrain from publicly commenting on the matter.⁷¹ Kissinger also obtained a supplementary private promise from King Faisal to restore oil production once the disengagement agreements were concluded.⁷²

A New Sadat, Same Old Syria

Sadat's approach to negotiations was described by Kissinger as 'both flexible and pragmatic'.⁷³ He had, over the course of a few days in November, vastly reduced his demands. He now accepted Kissinger's step-by-step approach that Hafiz Ismail had rejected only six months previously. Abandoning the insistence on a link between any interim deals and a comprehensive settlement was perhaps the first major departure from the Nasserist policy on a settlement with Israel, a position which had also prevailed

⁶⁹ Matti Golan, *The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger: Step-by-Step Diplomacy in the Middle East* (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times, 1976), 120.

⁷⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 752.

⁷¹ Here Sadat was promising more than he could deliver, as events would duly prove. Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, 14 December 1973, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷² Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, Henry A. Kissinger Report on Meeting with King Faisal, 14 December 1973, NSC Files, HAK Trip Files, Box 40, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷³ Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, Henry A. Kissinger Report on Private Meetings with Sadat, 14 December 1973, NSC Files, HAK Trip Files, Box 40, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

during Sadat's first three years in office. What accounted for this unexpected development? And why was Sadat now cooperating with Kissinger in so forthright a manner?

The most persuasive explanation is that after meeting with Kissinger Sadat finally realised both the difficulty of achieving any agreement and how excessive his initial demands were. There had never been any question of whether or not Sadat wanted a settlement: he desperately sought a political solution in Sinai. However, he was only recently installed as president, and had limited experience in international affairs. As Dayan would later write, Sadat 'knew what he wanted but not how to achieve it'.⁷⁴ His first conceptions of foreign policy were inevitably heavily influenced by his predecessor, Nasser, and the professional diplomats staffing the foreign ministry, such as Riyad and Fahmy. These men were hard-line Arab nationalists, and were charged with implementing Egypt's foreign policy. It is hardly surprising then that they would counsel Sadat to 'aim high', and construe any remaining flexibility in as limited a manner as possible. Once the intermediaries were removed, and once apprised by Kissinger of the necessary approach, the scales fell from Sadat's eyes and he quickly grasped the strategy necessary for success.

Another contributing factor to Sadat's new policy and attitudes was the experience of war. In the aftermath of Yom Kippur Sadat's associates describe a matured man, more confident and willing to take risks.⁷⁵ Undoubtedly the relative successes of his military

⁷⁴ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 97.

⁷⁵ Ismail, *Ann Mir Al-Qawmi*, 185.

forces in combat gave Sadat a new stature, both at home and abroad, and replenished his exhausted political capital. Israel, too, was suppler, partly because the current stalemate meant that Jerusalem found 'itself unable to afford another attritional war, and at the same time unable to score an overwhelmingly decisive victory'.⁷⁶ Syria, however, was not similarly transformed, despite Sadat's attempts to convince Assad of his new policy when they met in Cairo on 24 November.⁷⁷ Assad tried to persuade Sadat to condition a prisoner exchange on Israeli withdrawal to the 22 October lines.⁷⁸ In addition, the Syrian president was dismayed that Egypt no longer insisted on both disengagement agreements being finalised before attending a peace conference.⁷⁹ In his meetings with Kissinger Assad foreswore Geneva unless the US committed Israel to a withdrawal line before negotiations even began.⁸⁰ America, unsurprisingly, declined to provide any such guarantee. If Assad chose to boycott Geneva as a result, then that would be no calamity, but rather 'a blessing in disguise'.⁸¹ Israel had threatened to refuse to attend Geneva if Syria did as Assad continued to refuse to provide a list of Israeli prisoners of war held by Damascus. A Syrian absence was also thought to increase the chances of an Egyptian-Israeli agreement being struck, especially as Egypt had promised to attend come what

⁷⁶ Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, Henry A. Kissinger Report Middle East Peace Conference in Geneva, 19 December 1973, NSC Files, HAK Trip Files, Box 40, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷⁷ Seale, *Asad*, 277.

⁷⁸ Heikal, *October 73*, 997.

⁷⁹ Ismail, *Amn Mir Al-Qawmi*, 377.

⁸⁰ Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, Henry A. Kissinger Report on Meeting with President Asad, 16 December 1973, NSC Files, HAK Trip Files, Box 40, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁸¹ Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, Henry A. Kissinger Report Middle East Peace Conference in Geneva, 19 December 1973, NSC Files, HAK Trip Files, Box 40, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

may,⁸² a stance that prompted Assad to refer to Sadat as a ‘pimp’.⁸³ In any case, Jordan had committed to attend the conference, providing valuable Arab cover for Egypt.

The Geneva Conference

The Geneva Conference began on 21 December with five participants: Egypt, Israel, Jordan, the Soviet Union, and the United States. The first hours were devoted to the farcical task of changing the customary alphabetical seating arrangements so that Egypt’s Fahmy would not be seated adjacent to Israel’s Eban. Disingenuously, Fahmy preferred the Jordanians to be seated adjacent to the Israelis, an idea they predictably refused. The compromise struck was that the absent Syrians would be ‘seated’ next to the Israelis.

The belligerents’ opening speeches were, unsurprisingly, hard-line and targeted at a domestic audience. Fahmy was particularly concerned about refuting the Syrian accusation that Egypt was seeking a separate peace, and posited the standard Arab programme involving the return of all territory seized in the Six-Day War and the ‘exercise by Palestinians of their right to self-determination’, but he also conceded the right of all states to ‘enjoy territorial inviolability and political independence’ guaranteed by the superpowers.⁸⁴ Eban’s rhetoric was more appealing yet still grounded in domestic politics, a necessity as national elections were scheduled for New Year’s Eve.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Memoranda of Conversation, Kissinger, Schlesinger, Scowcroft, 26 December 1973, December 26, 1973 – Kissinger, Schlesinger, Box 3, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper*, 116, 117.

At Geneva, as in Cairo, Jerusalem, and Damascus, the Americans enjoyed a tremendous advantage. As Kissinger reported to his president, the US was ‘the only participant...in close touch with all the parties, the only power that can produce progress, and the only one that each is coming to in order to make that progress’.⁸⁵ Despite not even having official relations with Egypt or Syria, America nonetheless monopolised post-war diplomacy. The ceasefire, the Six-Point agreement, and the Geneva Peace Conference were all American achievements, and the US promised more, with Nixon reaffirming to Sadat that the US is ‘committed, as you know, to full support and implementation of the November 1967 Security Council Resolution’.⁸⁶

Naturally, America was not acting out of altruism. The war had intensely affected her interests in the region, and despite the end of the fighting US objectives had yet to be fully achieved. Principal amongst them was the desire to end the oil embargo. The US strategy was to link continuing her diplomacy to the lifting of the embargo.⁸⁷ Sadat, for his part, was willing to privately wield influence to end the embargo, but only once the US delivered a disengagement agreement.⁸⁸

Dilemma over Disengagement

⁸⁵ Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, Henry A. Kissinger Report on First Day’s Session of the Middle East Peace Conference in Geneva, 21 December 1973, NSC Files, HAK Trip Files, Box 40, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁸⁶ Richard Nixon, Letter to Anwar Sadat, 28 December 1973, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 132, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, 13 January 1974, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 1402, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Sadat again made clear his preference for the rapid conclusion of a disengagement agreement during Kissinger's January visit to Egypt. In protracted meetings Sadat pushed for Kissinger's personal involvement to quickly strike a deal.⁸⁹ The Egyptian president was keen that an agreement be struck and signed within a week, rather than resume talks again in Geneva.⁹⁰

As for the specifics of the deal, it would by and large be based on the plan approved by the Israeli cabinet, which was an elaboration of a proposal presented at Kilometre 101. It involved Israel withdrawing twenty kilometres east of the Canal, Egypt retaining its bridgehead in Sinai, a glacis between the two sides, and force limits on the Egyptians in the Canal Zone.⁹¹ Sadat agreed not to contest Israeli passage through the straits of Tiran, but did contest restrictions on his forces.⁹² This was a major area of disagreement. Sadat was reluctant to concede the principle of limits on his forces on sovereign Egyptian territory for fear of the precedent it could set. Jerusalem was pushing for a limit of two to three Egyptian battalions in Sinai, whereas Sadat's preferred a minimum of two divisions. Another dispute was over how far east Israel would withdraw. Israel wanted her defences west of the strategic Mitla and Giddi passes; Sadat wanted them at the eastern end of the

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Sadat's wish for the agreement to be signed by military officers in Egypt rather than diplomats in Geneva was in order to protect himself from Syrian attacks that he had signed a unilateral 'political' deal. Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, 13 January 1974, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 1402, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁹¹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 801.

⁹² Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, 13 January 1974, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 1402, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

passes.⁹³ Finally, Israel was demanding an agreement to non-belligerency, a demand Sadat adamantly refused, and which was subsequently dropped.⁹⁴

Sadat's celerity was a conspicuous weakness during this stage of the negotiations. Elections had just been held in Israel, and negotiations were ongoing over the formation of a government. As a result political posturing in Israel, never insubstantial, was even worse than usual. If Sadat wanted a quick deal, he would have to pay for it through extensive concessions, which he ultimately acquiesced in, even if it meant accepting demands that Fahmy described as 'meant to undo the effects of October 6, not only politically but militarily'.⁹⁵ Indeed, Fahmy advised that his president refuse the bilateral agreement being negotiated and instead insist that Kissinger 'tackle the Middle East crisis in its totality and in a more substantive way', an echo of Hafiz Ismail's insistence on a comprehensive solution in France.⁹⁶

Fahmy's outmoded advice was fortunately rejected. At a meeting with Kissinger on 14 January in Aswan, Sadat accepted force limitations but only as an obligation undertaken to the US, not Israel, a certain fig leaf but a useful one nonetheless.⁹⁷ They would eventually agree a *numerus clausus* of eight battalions in Sinai – a total of 7 000 men and

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 832.

⁹⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Anwar Sadat, Ismail Fahmy, Mohamed Gamasy and Henry Kissinger, Ellsworth Bunker, Joseph Sisco, and Peter Rodman in Aswan, Egypt, 14 January 1974, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 133, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁹⁶ Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 69.

⁹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Anwar Sadat, Ismail Fahmy, Mohamed Gamasy and Henry Kissinger, Ellsworth Bunker, Joseph Sisco, and Peter Rodman in Aswan, Egypt, 14 January 1974, NSC Files, HAK Files, Country-Files – Middle East, Box 133, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

thirty tanks – meaning that Egypt would withdraw 90 percent of her forces in Sinai.⁹⁸ Egyptian SAM sites would also be moved thirty kilometres back from the frontline. Further Israeli demands, such as guaranteed passage through the Canal and a permanent mandate for UN peacekeepers, were dropped.

The other broad compromise confirmed was that Egypt would retain the land in Sinai that she had captured, while Israel would withdraw entirely from the west bank and to a line 20 kilometres east of the Canal, with a UN zone established between them and the Egyptians.⁹⁹ To seal the deal, presidential letters were exchanged between America and both Egypt and Israel defining the terms of the agreement and the US interpretation of both parties' undertakings.¹⁰⁰ Finally, the text of the military disengagement agreement itself stated that it was 'not regarded by Egypt and Israel as a final peace agreement. It constitutes a first step toward a final, just and durable peace according to the provisions of Security Council Resolution 338 and within the framework of the Geneva Conference'.¹⁰¹

The deal was not popular with Sadat's lieutenants.¹⁰² Gamasy was extremely unhappy with the force limits which stripped both sides of the Canal of substantial Egyptian forces – he thought Egypt needed to station 35 000 men and 300 tanks on the east bank¹⁰³ – and also frustrated at being ordered to sign the agreement in order to preserve the yarn that it

⁹⁸ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 832.

⁹⁹ Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, 16 January 1974, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 140, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper*, 122.

¹⁰² Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 828.

¹⁰³ Al-Gamasy, *Harb October*, 482.

was a purely military arrangement.¹⁰⁴ These domestic pressures were amplified by a Syrian campaign in the Arab world alleging Egyptian betrayal of the Arab cause. Both lines of criticism, however, were exceedingly myopic. Sadat not only managed to strike a quick deal that relieved his marooned Third Army and maintained diplomatic momentum, he preserved all his territorial gains in return for force restrictions, all while securing the first Israeli withdrawal from Arab territory since the coerced disgorgement of Sinai in 1956. The force limitations were an ostensible concession to Israeli domestic politics of limited strategic significance. They would neither prevent war nor protect Israel. If circumstances were to arise that favoured Egypt again pursuing her military option, she could easily move her armies across the Canal overnight.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the agreement's principal political achievement was arguably involving the United States and Henry Kissinger in the diplomatic process, with the explicit promise of further agreements to come. Egypt had angled to involve Kissinger in the Arab-Israeli diplomacy for three years, and had finally accomplished her objective. As Sadat repeatedly stressed to his associates and to Kissinger himself, the agreement was mainly about disengagement with the US, *not* Israel:¹⁰⁶ 'Never forget, Dr Kissinger. I am making this agreement with the United States, not with Israel'.¹⁰⁷ To Sadat, this was about reconceptualising Egypt as a friend, rather than foe, of the US in order to reap the diplomatic benefits. It was to undo a major Nasserist legacy: the Arabist antagonism to America in Egyptian foreign policy that had culminated in Egypt severing diplomatic relations with the world's most powerful state for six years. Establishing a rapport with

¹⁰⁴ Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 79.

¹⁰⁵ Sadat, quoted in Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 824.

¹⁰⁶ Ismail, *Ann Mir Al-Qawmi*, 373; Heikal, *October 73*, 974.

¹⁰⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 643.

America was judged by Sadat as far more important than haggling over tactical advantages. Indeed, Sadat was so anxious to cement his new links that he requested American assistance in ‘insuring his personal security’, and promised to allow American intelligence to inspect the Soviet anti-tank weaponry that had played such a crucial part in the Egyptian infantry’s success!¹⁰⁸

In hindsight, Sadat’s strategy was clearly the correct one to follow. Sadat could have seized on Israel’s exposed salient and his reinforced front lines to try to change the facts on the ground by force. Alternatively, dragging out negotiations could make Israel suffer by forcing her to extend her military mobilisation. Indeed, one could ask what purpose did it serve to adamantly refuse a ceasefire during the war only to frantically chase a deal after the guns fell silent? Then again, allowing the ceasefire to subside into renewed conflict, or drawing out talks, would accomplish little and compound the initial error. The US would again strongly support Israel militarily in the event of renewed conflict, and while tactical successes could be secured, the strategic situation would remain unaltered.¹⁰⁹ On the contrary, Sadat would again be dependent on fickle Soviet goodwill and the bridges being built to Washington would be badly damaged. Worse still, dawdling and excessive diplomatic caution could allow radical Arab opposition – whose shoots had emerged at the Algiers Arab summit in November – to swell further. Moreover, when one compares the deal Sadat obtained with the fruits of Hafiz Assad’s unwearied haggling it becomes evident that procrastination was not a strikingly

¹⁰⁸ By so doing Sadat was helping to ensure a better American, and thus Israeli, defence against the weapons in any future Arab-Israeli conflict. Kissinger, quoted in Memo, Scowcroft to Nixon, 16 January 1974, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 140, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁰⁹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 769.

successful policy. Granted, Syria had fewer *quid pro quos* to offer Israel, but Egypt emerged with perhaps the biggest prize of any party: a new partnership with America and Kissinger's commitment to pursue a solution in Sinai.

Aftermath of Disengagement

Following the signing of the disengagement agreement at Kilometre 101 on 18 January 1974 the stage was set for the public resumption of closer ties with America, with diplomatic relations renewed on 28 February.¹¹⁰ One of the most attractive features of renewed political engagement with America was the possibility of eventually acquiring US arms and ending Cairo's dependency on Soviet supplies. Egypt proposed that the US supply arms to her via Saudi Arabia, thus allowing the administration to sidestep the domestic political difficulties involved in arming Egypt.¹¹¹ Kissinger, though, thought it 'important to us that President Sadat not simply exchange dependency on the USSR for dependency on the US', and that the new relationship 'should be based on considerations broader than the extent of aid we can provide'.¹¹²

Unsurprisingly, Kissinger was not entirely enthused by the prospect of acquiring the responsibility for providing aid, and preferred Egypt look to her oil-rich neighbours for help. Part of the reason for American caution was 'past experiences with massive aid

¹¹⁰ Meital, *Egypt's Struggle for Peace: Continuity and Change, 1967-1977*, 140.

¹¹¹ Letter, Sadat to Kissinger, 7 March 1974, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 640, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹¹² Memo, Henry A. Kissinger, Meeting with Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy, 18 April 1974, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 639, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

programs for Egypt' which 'resulted in mutual disillusionment and bitterness'.¹¹³ Sadat, however, was keen on securing access to US military supplies as he realised his policies strained Egypt's gossamer ties with the Soviets.¹¹⁴ He had already privately informed Kissinger of his desire to revoke Egypt's friendship treaty with the Soviets, and – remarkably – offered to provide America with military facilities in Egypt in return for US arms.¹¹⁵ However, before he could acquire American arms Sadat had to fulfil previous promises made to the US.

Accordingly, Sadat pressured his Arab neighbours to lift the oil embargo, sending his factotum, Ashraf Marwan, to the Gulf to argue for the restoration of full production.¹¹⁶ He was told, however, that they still awaited further US diplomatic engagement with the Syrians and Palestinians. On 18 March, however, most Arab states finally agreed to resume full production at an OPEC meeting.¹¹⁷ In any case, the signing of the Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement on 31 May after a month of intense shuttle diplomacy by Kissinger removed the *casus belli* for the continuation of the embargo.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Memo, Hormats to Kissinger, Report on Meetings in the Middle East, 4 March 1975, Middle East – General (3), Box 1, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Middle East – General (1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹¹⁴ Memo, Saunders to Kissinger, The Pace of Egyptian-US-Soviet Relations, 12 April 1974, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 640, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹¹⁵ Memoranda of Conversation, Kissinger, Schlesinger, Scowcroft, 26 December 1973, December 26, 1973 – Kissinger, Schlesinger, Box 3, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹¹⁶ Letter, Sadat to Kissinger, 7 March 1974, NSC Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 640, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹¹⁷ Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 987.

¹¹⁸ The agreement resulted in Israel giving up territory it captured in the 1973 war as well as withdrawing from the town of Kuneitra, a bone Kissinger persuaded the Israelis to throw to Assad.

Sadat's reward for his cooperation with the US was a presidential visit to Egypt in June. Both presidents needed one another in equal measure: Nixon, dogged by the Watergate scandal, desperately sought foreign policy accolades in order to make up for his domestic shortcomings. Sadat, in turn, was seeking an American presidential imprimatur as justification and reward for his policies. As Kissinger explained to Nixon, despite being 'more popular and stronger politically than ever, both at home and in the Arab world at large', Sadat needed the commitment that US involvement would continue, and that more support for Egypt would be forthcoming.¹¹⁹ Indeed, Sadat now hoped for a new agreement with Israel in the autumn, thereby giving himself enough time to consolidate domestic and Arab opinion.¹²⁰

A second Egyptian agreement, however, was not the sole possible diplomatic avenue. Many in America argued for a disengagement agreement between Jordan and Israel as a 'reward' for Hussein for sitting out the war despite Arab pressure; others maintained that a Jordanian agreement would broaden Arab support for a second Egyptian disengagement agreement.¹²¹ Egypt, in turn, was wary of Jordanian pretensions to precedence, with Fahmy warning that Egypt would do its utmost to void any Jordanian agreement.¹²²

The Egyptians were reluctant to see Jordan strike a deal for several reasons. Foremost was their belief that having Jordan as well as Syria involved in negotiations would

¹¹⁹ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Your Talks in Egypt, June 12-14, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 140, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy – August 14, 1974, CO 159 Egypt, 8/9/74-3/31/75, Box 55, White House Central Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²² Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 96-98.

complicate diplomacy and make Israel slower to satisfy bilateral Egyptian demands. Each withdrawal from Arab territory sapped the Israeli cabinet's limited political capital. And while Egypt accepted a Syrian agreement because of their wartime alliance as well as heavy Arab pressure, she would not wait in the sidelines once more to indulge Hussein. Sadat had been hankering after a deal since he entered office, attempting both diplomacy and warfare to engage the Americans and push the Israelis towards a settlement. Hussein, in contrast, had declined the risks of war, and was now 'cutting the queue', so far as Cairo was concerned.

The king was also a political threat to Sadat. In contrast to the uncompromising Assad, whom Kissinger colourfully described as a 'real rug merchant', and who made Sadat seem ever the more reasonable to the US and Israel, Hussein was moderate, pro-Western, and ready to compromise.¹²³ While not quite political doppelgängers, Sadat and Hussein were cut from the same silk, which explained their mutual antipathy and petty jealousy. To Sadat the personal was political and, as with the Soviets, he had taken a dislike to Hussein that reinforced their rivalry over the prized role of moderate Arab leader. Accordingly, Egypt never missed an opportunity to promote the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.¹²⁴ She knew that Israel would never negotiate with the PLO. Indeed, that was precisely the point. By empowering the PLO Sadat enfeebled Hussein, whilst simultaneously strengthening his popular Arabist *bona fides*.

¹²³ Quoted in Memoranda of Conversation, Kissinger, Schlesinger, Colby, Moorer, Scowcroft, 3 November 1973, November 3, 1973 – Kissinger, Schlesinger, Colby, Moorer, Box 2, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²⁴ Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 114.

Moreover, the primary concern in Israel was Egypt, not Syria nor Jordan.¹²⁵ Another withdrawal from the Golan was difficult because of the proximity of Israeli settlements to Syrian lines.¹²⁶ A deal with Jordan would be complicated by the new Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's pledge to his coalition partners to hold national elections before withdrawing from any West Bank territory, a Pandora's box better left firmly shut.¹²⁷ Egypt, in contrast, was Israel's preferred partner because of her perceived desire for a settlement and her respect for the terms of her disengagement agreement. Unlike Syria, Rabin thought Egypt 'keeps the military part and the civilian part of the agreement...I can't fault them'.¹²⁸ Rabin praised Sadat for carrying out the disengagement agreement 'both in letter and in spirit'.¹²⁹

Thus Kissinger opted for Egypt, remarking that 'while (he) loves the king, Egypt is more important'.¹³⁰ The stark fact remained that by holding his fire during the war Hussein made himself irrelevant in the post-war diplomacy, which would revolve around the combatants. Kissinger's preferred format for talks was again bilateral, preferring to avoid

¹²⁵ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Your Meeting with Foreign Minister Khaddam of Syria, 21 August 1974, Syria (1), Box 30, Gerald R. Ford Papers: Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Saudi Arabia- State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (7), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²⁶ Memoranda of Conversation, Kissinger, Schlesinger, 30 August 1974, August 30, 1974, Kissinger, Schlesinger, Box 5, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²⁷ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy – August 14, 1974, CO 159 Egypt, 8/9/74-3/31/75, Box 55, White House Central Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²⁸ Rabin, quoted in Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Rabin, 10 September 1974, September 10, 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Box 5, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²⁹ Rabin, quoted in Ibid.

¹³⁰ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, 13 August 1974, August 13, 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Box 3, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

a return to Geneva in order to preserve Egyptian manoeuvring space, which would be restricted at Geneva by the other Arabs as well as the Soviets.

A Strained Alliance

Moscow was deeply frustrated at its exclusion from the post-war diplomacy, especially as it was Soviet support for the Arabs that made the war possible. Sadat, in turn, was angry at the USSR for not replacing Egypt's war losses as it had with Syria, or as the US did with Israel.¹³¹ For the time being, however, each party was careful not to completely alienate the other, as Egypt still hoped for Soviet aid, and Moscow still aspired to influence in Cairo.

In the meantime, the Soviet refusal to supply spare parts to the Egyptian armed forces had a deleterious effect on Egypt's military readiness, which in turn hampered her diplomacy.¹³² As the viability of Sadat's war option faded, he would have to pay a higher price for Israeli concessions in negotiations. Sadat was becoming all carrot no stick, a clear failing on his part. This flaw is magnified when one considers that Syria managed to broker a disengagement agreement through Kissinger while maintaining the relationship with the Soviets. Unlike Sadat, Assad took pains not to attack the Soviets or personally humiliate them. Accordingly, Moscow readily armed the Syrians, leaving their military in

¹³¹ Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, Your Talks in Egypt, June 12-14, NSC/HAK Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 140, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹³² Memo, William B. Quandt, Middle East Trip Report, 2 August 1974, NSC Files, Country Files – Mid East, Box 647, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

better shape than before the war.¹³³ Sadat, in contrast, allowed his personal resentments to influence state policy, and duly paid a military price for his folly.

New President, Old Policies

Domestic politics again began to openly intrude on Middle Eastern diplomacy in the summer of 1974, and this time the culprit was the US rather than Israel. The Watergate scandal, which had steadily diminished his authority, finally forced Nixon to resign on 9 August. His replacement was a handpicked successor, Gerald Ford, a former Republican leader in the House of Representatives. Ford's parachuting into the Oval Office shocked many in the Middle East. To Sadat it set a bad precedent of undermining presidential authority. It also meant that he would have to again build a personal relationship with an American president just as his bond with Nixon was beginning to mature and bear fruit.

Sadat nonetheless retained certain advantages. Nixon had in effect ceded foreign policy to Kissinger in his final year in office. The latter was not only both Secretary of State and National Security Adviser, he had *carte blanche* to implement policy. Ford, a novice president, saw fit to retain his predecessor's policies and personnel, chief amongst them Kissinger. Indeed, in a way Kissinger's influence in the White House increased with Nixon's departure, as Ford was inexperienced in international relations and would accordingly defer to Kissinger. However, having Ford as president also posed certain

¹³³ Briefing Paper, Springsteen to Scowcroft, Khaddam Meeting, 22 August 1974, Syria (1), Box 30, Gerald R. Ford Papers: Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Saudi Arabia-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (7), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

difficulties. While he did not suffer the taint of corruption, Ford did lack the legitimacy Nixon enjoyed from being popularly elected. Ford, an appointee to both the presidency and the vice-presidency, had never been on a national ticket. Indeed, the only Americans that had voted for him were those in his Congressional district in Michigan. The limited legitimacy of the ersatz president, in turn, would allow Israel to stake more hard-line positions during the Sinai II negotiations, eventually precipitating a crisis. As Kissinger would later admit to Assad:

Let's be frank – we had one president who was totally under attack, and now a president who was not elected. Until he is elected, he can't speak with the same sweeping authority.¹³⁴

A Second Disengagement

Egypt had been pushing for another agreement with Israel throughout the summer of 1974, and aspired to conclude one before October.¹³⁵ Assad, in contrast, was resolutely opposed to another interim agreement for Egypt, unrealistically arguing instead for a full Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territory.¹³⁶ Damascus, supported by Moscow, pushed for a unified Arab delegation that would negotiate a timetable for complete Israeli withdrawal from all lands captured in 1967.¹³⁷ Syria also alluded to the possibility of

¹³⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, Asad, Khaddam, Kissinger, Sisco, Murphy, 9 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(2), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹³⁵ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy – August 14, 1974, CO 159 Egypt, 8/9/74-3/31/75, Box 55, White House Central Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Your Meeting with Foreign Minister Khaddam of Syria, 21 August 1974, Syria (1), Box 30, Gerald R. Ford Papers: Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Saudi Arabia- State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (7), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

unilaterally restarting hostilities in the winter, which reflected the foolhardy belief that the Syrian military could hold its own with the Israelis.¹³⁸

The US, conscious of the need for alacrity, had been pushing Israel to accept the necessity of withdrawing from the passes and the oil fields in western Sinai – Sadat's minimum demands – in return for Egyptian political, as opposed to military, concessions.¹³⁹ Kissinger argued that this was in Israel's interest, as a second agreement with Egypt would allow the US and Israel to keep control of regional diplomacy.¹⁴⁰ New negotiations also averted the risk of another war, which would both magnify Soviet influence on the Arabs and also lead to the recurrence of international pressure on Israel to withdraw in response to the possibility of another oil embargo. It would therefore be easier and more straightforward to negotiate under the current auspices.

Sadat's initial plans for the new agreement involved Egypt advancing to the Israeli lines, the demilitarisation of the area between the frontlines and El Arish in the north and Sharm al-Sheikh in the south, and Israel keeping territory east of those cities. Interestingly, Sadat's vision was not fundamentally dissimilar to that of Mordechai Gur, the Israeli Chief of Staff, who proposed withdrawing to the El Arish – Ras Mohamed line

¹³⁸ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy – August 14, 1974, CO 159 Egypt, 8/9/74-3/31/75, Box 55, White House Central Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Your Meeting with Foreign Minister Khaddam of Syria, 21 August 1974, Syria (1), Box 30, Gerald R. Ford Papers: Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Saudi Arabia- State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (7), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹³⁹ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Meeting with Yigal Allon, 16 January 1974, Israel (5), Box 15, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Israel (1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

two-thirds of the way across Sinai without demanding political concessions in return.¹⁴¹

Prime Minister Rabin advocated a more gradual approach so as not to arouse domestic political opposition, and was very reluctant to return both the passes and the oilfields. This was especially the case as there would be no tangible *quid pro quo* in return for any Israeli withdrawal. Indeed, Sadat, in turn supported by America, adamantly refused Israel's one substantial demand: that Egypt offer non-belligerency in return for a second interim withdrawal.

Rabin's caution was a result of both his inexperience and his divided cabinet's weak political base. Rabin was a decorated soldier, but a political novice. Before acceding to the premiership Rabin had spent several years as the Israeli ambassador to the US, where he cultivated a relationship with Kissinger that would grow in importance as both men advanced to more senior positions.¹⁴² Rabin's prudence was magnified by his fierce political rivalry with Shimon Peres, the new Minister of Defence and Dayan's political disciple.¹⁴³ Conscious of the danger of being outbid by Peres amongst the party hacks, Rabin formulated and followed an insipid foreign policy.

Rabin duly resisted US pressure to compromise, preferring to procrastinate so as to compel Egypt to make new concessions. Instead, he pushed for expanded US support to

¹⁴¹ Shlaim, *Iron Wall*, 335.

¹⁴² Rabin reportedly set himself the following objectives as ambassador: to ensure US aid to Israel, US deterrence of the Soviets in the region, and agreement with the US on policies towards peace. See Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Your Meetings with Prime Minister Rabin – June 11, 11 June 1975, Israel (10), Box 15, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Israel (1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁴³ Golan, *Secret Conversations*, 233.

serve the dual purpose of strengthening Israel materially and frustrating the Egyptians.¹⁴⁴

The US agreed to increase aid, but only on the understanding that a new agreement was necessary with Egypt.¹⁴⁵

The ‘Non-Belligerency’ Yarn

However, there were still political roadblocks preventing the quick conclusion of a second agreement with Egypt: chiefly, mutually unrealistic expectations of the other side’s concessions. Sadat still suffered the fantasy that Israel would readily return the rest of the Sinai and, what’s more, without a full peace treaty in return. As Rabin complained to Ford on 12 September, Sadat was ‘not ready for peace’ as ‘all he can do, even for a total Israeli withdrawal, is non-belligerency’.¹⁴⁶ Rabin, in turn, wanted to secure non-belligerency in return for only withdrawing east of the passes and returning the oil fields, along with demilitarisation of all the vacated lands. Israel eventually softened her stance, and proposed pulling back up to two-thirds of the way to the international border in Sinai in return for non-belligerency.¹⁴⁷ Kissinger, however, counselled that non-belligerency was simply not ‘attainable’ for the time being.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Prime Minister Rabin’s Visit Thursday, September 12, 1974, 9 September 1974, CO 71 Israel 8/9/74 – 9/11/74, Box 26. White House Central Files: Subject File: CO 70-71, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Rabin, 12 September 1974, September 12, 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Box 5, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁴⁷ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Eilts, Pickering, Murphy, Keating, Scowcroft, 19 February 1975, April 14, 1975, Ford, US Ambassadors Keating (Israel), Eilts (Egypt), Pickering (Jordan), Murphy (Syria), Box 10, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁴⁸ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Rabin, 13 September 1974, September 13, 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Box 5, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The very concept of ‘non-belligerency’ was a novel one. The concept entered the region’s political lexicon after the passing of resolution 242, which mandated the ‘termination all claims or states of belligerency’.¹⁴⁹ As used by both Egypt and Israel, however, non-belligerency meant *de facto* but not *de jure* peace, and largely offering the same benefits save official diplomatic recognition. Indeed, both American and Israeli legal experts could not find any functional differences between non-belligerency and peace,¹⁵⁰ with Kissinger writing to Ford that ‘although one could construct a public explanation of the difference, the real differences are hard to identify in practical terms’.¹⁵¹

For Israel non-belligerency boasted certain attractions, as it provided tangible and appealing political guarantees – or alternatively it could be used as leverage to obtain political concessions. However, to Sadat accepting non-belligerency for anything less than a total withdrawal would be reckless, as he would then have neither military recourse nor significant remaining political carrots to obtain the rest of Sinai. Egypt thus firmly refused to consider non-belligerency, though Sadat was willing to agree constituent elements of non-belligerency and other political *quid pro quos*.¹⁵² When this

¹⁴⁹ United Nations, "Security Council Resolutions - 1967," <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/522868.70777607.html>.

¹⁵⁰ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Eilts, Pickering, Murphy, Keating, Scowcroft, 19 February 1975, April 14, 1975, Ford, US Ambassadors Keating (Israel), Eilts (Egypt), Pickering (Jordan), Murphy (Syria), Box 10, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵¹ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Discussion of Middle East Strategy, 21 April 1975, Middle East – General (8), Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Middle East – General (1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵² Memoranda of Conversation, Sadat, Fahmi, Abdul Ghaffar, Marwan, Kissinger, Sisco, Eilts, Rodman, 10 October 1974, Cairo, Meeting between President Sadat, Foreign Minister Fahmi and Secretary Kissinger, Memorandum of Conversation: 10 October 1974, National Archives. Record Group 59. Department of State Records. Records of Henry Kissinger, 1973-1977, Box 5; Courtesy of The Digital

became apparent Israel manufactured a further artificial distinction, this time between ‘acts of belligerency’ and the ‘state of belligerency’, with Yigal Allon, Israel’s new foreign minister, suggesting that Israel was ‘prepared to take substantial territorial steps in return for an end to *acts of belligerency*’.¹⁵³

Another issue was the duration of the agreement. Israel wanted a five-year deal, designed to ensure that she would not have to negotiate another agreement with Cairo until late 1979 at the earliest, while Egypt envisioned further accords before then.¹⁵⁴ At any rate, Sadat needed an agreement, and fast. His military was chafing at the meagre political results more than a year after the October war and the solitary disengagement agreement. The US ambassador in Cairo observed that Gamasy, now Minister of Defence, was nursing a ‘deep sense of disillusionment, which at times almost verged on bitterness’.¹⁵⁵ The disengagement agreement Gamasy personally signed had, according to him, ‘not been worth the sacrifices Egypt had made’ and further withdrawals were desperately needed.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, the military began to draw up contingency plans for a short war in the event diplomacy failed. Egypt also deliberately violated her disengagement agreement by building five SA-6 missile sites in the limited armament zone in Sinai and allowing a

National Security Archives, <http://www.sadat.umd.edu/archives/negotiations.htm> (accessed 1 August 2010).

¹⁵³ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Allon, Scowcroft, Meeting with Allon, 9 December 1974, December 9, 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Israeli Deputy Prime minister Yigal Allon, Box 7, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵⁴ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 21 October 1974, October 21, 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Box 5, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵⁵ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Gamasy’s Mood, 2 October 1974, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (1), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

destroyer with 130 mm guns through the Canal, both subtle signals to Israel that another war was not an impossibility.¹⁵⁷

Sadat also wanted to act before Arab and Soviet pressures again coalesced to force him back to Geneva. Kissinger recognised Sadat's dilemma, acknowledging that Arab 'radicals are using his moves against him, and if he gets no progress for his efforts and no help from us, he is in trouble'.¹⁵⁸ However, the US still had to come up with a formula that reconciled Israeli demands for an explicitly *political* agreement that included non-belligerency with Egyptian desires for a second *military* settlement that made no mention of non-belligerency, which would be easier for Egypt to defend in the Arab world.

Meanwhile, a further obstacle emerged. Brezhnev, in a bid to prevent Egypt from irrevocably joining the American orbit, announced plans to visit Cairo in January. The visit came about during Fahmy's October visit to Moscow. In an extended meeting Brezhnev violently attacked Egyptian policies and cooperation with US diplomacy, and warned that America would not provide Egypt with sufficient economic, military, or political support.¹⁵⁹ He then announced his plans to visit Cairo in person, which Sadat thought demonstrated how 'the Soviet leadership does not only want not to miss the bus

¹⁵⁷ Memo, CIA Analysis of Egyptian Military Intentions and Contingency Planning, 13 March 75, NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files, Box 60, Chronological File, 4/3/1975 –31/3/1975, Box 9, Declassified RAC Documents: Documents from the NSC Middle East and South Asian Affairs Staff Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵⁸ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, Fahmi, 5 October 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmi, Box 5, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵⁹ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Additional Comments by Fahmy on Moscow Talks, 20 October 1974, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (3), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

for fear of the liquidation of their influence, but they apparently would like to frustrate, at the same time, any new developments in the US Egyptian bilateral relations as well as any future moves towards a peaceful settlement of the Middle East'.¹⁶⁰

Kissinger and his team immediately increased pressure on Jerusalem. The last months of 1974 were one of the few times when the Americans had to actively guard their position in Sadat's Egypt, as reflected in the urgency with which they responded to Egyptian demands. During this period Egypt effectively reverted to the 1950s, when Nasser played off one superpower against the other. However, this state of affairs proved evanescent as Sadat utterly failed to preserve any semblance of a working relationship with Moscow.

For the time being, however, Sadat attempted to benefit from America's discomfort. In a letter to Ford he pressed for their relationship to 'develop in such a manner that the obligations and commitments of both sides would be more publicly known and reflect more concrete and major decisions'.¹⁶¹ Sadat was, in effect, demanding faster diplomatic progress and more aid.¹⁶² Unlike Hussein, Sadat refused to be a cheap American date.

Revolution in Rabat

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Memo, Sadat to Ford, Letter to Gerald Ford, 19 October 1974, Box 12, America Since Hoover Collection, 1929-80, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁶¹ Memo, Sadat to Ford, Letter from Sadat, 19 October 1974, Egypt – President Sadat (1), Box 1. NSA: Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁶² Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 21 October 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Box 5, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Sadat was simultaneously lining up a knockout blow for his Hashemite rival at the forthcoming Arab League summit in Rabat from 26-29 October. For several months there had been much dispute in Arab circles over the question of who should negotiate the return of the Palestinian territories: Hussein, whose grandfather had conquered and annexed the West Bank, or the PLO, which claimed the mantle of the Palestinian people. Despite private promises to the Americans, Sadat endeavoured to deliver an Arab consensus sanctioning the PLO and disempowering Hussein, while simultaneously avoiding Arab restrictions on Egyptian policy towards bilateral negotiations with Israel, which the Syrians were attempting to censure.¹⁶³

Sadat was wholly successful in accomplishing his first aim, but less so the second. Sadat, in a private session with Hussein, Yasser Arafat, Faisal, Assad, and Hassan of Morocco – the heads of state tasked by the plenary summit in Rabat with resolving the dispute between the PLO and Jordan – cast his vote for Arafat and advocated decisively that the PLO be declared the only party authorised to negotiate for the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁶⁴ Sadat, supported by Hassan, argued that ‘there was no question in his mind that the West Bank was Palestinian territory’ and that if it ‘were Jordanian territory, then Jordan would have fought in the 1973 war to regain it’.¹⁶⁵ The summit eventually voted unanimously to declare the PLO the only legitimate party that could negotiate for the Palestinian territories. This was a stunning blow to Hussein, and ensured talk of a Jordanian

¹⁶³ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Letter to President Sadat, 22 October 1974, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (3), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁶⁴ Samir Al-Rifai, "The 1974 Rabat Conference: A Crucial Arab Summit" (Unpublished MPhil Thesis, Trinity College, Cambridge, 1989), 74.

¹⁶⁵ Sadat quoted in *Ibid.*

disengagement agreement was henceforth verboten. Moreover, Egypt had nimbly avoided any diplomatic fallout for its actions at Rabat, as she instead adroitly led the Americans to believe that Syria had been behind the decision.¹⁶⁶

As for Sadat's second aim, the stream of Arab leaders imploring Sadat not to seek any further separate deals with Israel led him to reluctantly – and temporarily – decide to ostensibly seek simultaneous disengagement on both the Egyptian and Syrian fronts.¹⁶⁷ However, Egypt managed to defeat a Syrian resolution specifically forbidding another round of Egyptian unilateral talks with Israel, watering down the motion to a general avowal not to conclude any unilateral *final* settlement with Israel.¹⁶⁸ In any case the impression of Arab pressure and the impending Brezhnev visit helped focus US minds on obtaining an agreement sufficiently generous to entice Sadat to risk Arab opprobrium. In a letter to Ford on 7 December Sadat stressed 'that the next step must be a move of a substantial character and commensurate with all the risks involved and at the same time be finalised and signed within the coming 4 weeks or so', in order to present Brezhnev with a *fait accompli* in Cairo.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Memo, Interagency Intelligence, The Rabat Watershed, 27 November 1974, Middle East – General (3) Box 1, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Middle East – General (1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁶⁷ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Fahmy Message re Rabat Summit, 29 October 1974, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (3), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁶⁸ Memo, Interagency Intelligence, The Rabat Watershed, 27 November 1974, Middle East – General (3) Box 1, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Middle East – General (1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁶⁹ Memo, Sadat to Ford, Letter from Sadat, 7 December 1974, Egypt – President Sadat (1), Box 1. NSA: Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Negotiations Restart

Kissinger accepted that ‘the only way (Sadat) can stay on his present course - leaning toward the US and away from the USSR – is to get a concrete agreement before Brezhnev comes to Cairo on January 15 and before the Syrians can act obstructively’.¹⁷⁰

In a meeting with Yigal Allon on 9 December, Ford and Kissinger pushed hard for flexibility in order to secure a second disengagement agreement before Brezhnev’s January visit to Cairo.¹⁷¹ Allon, however, was reluctant to succumb to pressure and suggested delaying talks until after Brezhnev visited Cairo.¹⁷²

At this point Egypt was still officially demanding an Israeli pullback two-thirds of the way to the international border, including the oil fields and the passes.¹⁷³ However, the only *quid pro quos* on offer were the renewal of the UN peacekeeping forces’ mandate for a longer period than the present six-months, and the restatement of terms agreed in the first disengagement. Israel had yet to clarify her precise offer, yet refused to consider giving up both the passes and the oilfields except in return for a ten-year interim agreement.¹⁷⁴ Failing that, Israel wanted any agreement to last a minimum of five years, plus one year for redeployment of her frontlines.

¹⁷⁰ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Meeting With Israeli Foreign Minister Allon, Monday, December 9, 1974, CO 71 Israel 9/12/74 – 9/30/74, Box 26. White House Central Files: Subject File: CO 70-71, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Allon, Scowcroft, Meeting with Allon, 9 December 1974, December 9, 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Israeli Deputy Prime minister Yigal Allon, Box 7, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷³ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Meeting With Israeli Foreign Minister Allon, Monday, December 9, 1974, CO 71 Israel 9/12/74 – 9/30/74, Box 26. White House Central Files: Subject File: CO 70-71, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

In terms of distance Israel suggested a 30-50 kilometre withdrawal that would not place her frontlines east the passes, while hinting at a larger withdrawal in return for greater political concessions.¹⁷⁵ Israel was clearly turning the screw on Sadat, her most willing Arab partner, as she thought he had no option but to accept what she offered. As Allon contended to Ford and Kissinger, ‘what is his alternative? To stay where he is?’¹⁷⁶ In any case, Allon averred Israel would not grant Sadat’s main demands because it would ‘take away all the Egyptian incentive to take another step and will encourage them to begin agitating’.¹⁷⁷ Unfortunately, it seemed as though Israel had yet to realise, or refused to accept, that Sadat genuinely wanted an accommodation with her.

This did not augur well for the prospects of a deal. On being briefed on Allon’s propositions, Sadat’s response was ‘vehemently and bitterly negative’.¹⁷⁸ He declared that he would act as though he had ‘never heard them’, and accordingly would offer no counterproposals.¹⁷⁹ Instead, he conveyed his displeasure with the US for transmitting such ‘arrogant and impertinent’ ideas, which he felt conveyed the mistaken impression that Egypt had been defeated in war and was suing for peace at any price.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Allon, Scowcroft, Meeting with Allon, 9 December 1974, Ford, Kissinger, Israeli Deputy Prime minister Yigal Allon, Box 7, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Sadat’s Reaction to Israeli Proposals, 13 December 1974, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (6), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Sadat's reaction betrayed the political pressures he was operating under. Both his chief lieutenants – Gamasy and Fahmy – were disillusioned. Gamasy urged Sadat to accommodate Moscow in order to secure arms for the army.¹⁸¹ Fahmy, threatened to resign if Sadat accepted an ungenerous Israeli offer.¹⁸² These pressures were magnified by Arab demands to toe the line. The strains began to tell, and after the Israeli proposal Sadat declared it perhaps more 'honourable' to resume discussions in Geneva and 'let the chips fall where they may'.¹⁸³ Sadat also became more intransigent in his demands, foregoing the passes and insisting on the larger withdrawal to the El Arish – Ras Mohamed line in central Sinai as well as a simultaneous withdrawal in the Golan, arguing that evidently it would take just as much effort to coax the Israelis to withdraw to the passes as beyond them.¹⁸⁴

Despite the hyperbole, the US did consider the Israeli proposal unsuitable in spirit and substance. America was aware that Sadat's loss of confidence in the US in 1973 prompted him to go to war despite poor relations with Moscow, and did not put it beyond him to repeat the feat once more.¹⁸⁵ A letter from Ford on 16 December tried to soothe Sadat's angst and persuade him to engage again in negotiations. The US ambassador

¹⁸¹ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Some Observations on Current Situation in Egypt, 6 February 1975, NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files, Box 47, Peace Negotiations Chronological File, November 23, 1974 – January 8, 1975, Box 9, Declassified RAC Documents: Documents from the NSC Middle East and South Asian Affairs Staff Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Letter for President Sadat from Secretary, 16 December 1974, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (6), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Memo, Oakley/Houghton to Kissinger, The Egyptian Perception of Settlement Prospects: 1971 and 1974, 19 December 1974, Egypt (2), Box 3, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

conveyed Kissinger's assurances that a deal could be agreed by 15 February, or at the very latest 1 March.¹⁸⁶ Before that was possible, however, Egypt had to satisfy at least some specific Israeli demands. These included that any deal would be a step towards a political solution, that Egypt cease all 'acts of belligerency', demilitarise any areas Israel evacuated, end diplomatic efforts to isolate Israel, guarantee free passage through Bab al-Mandab, allow passage through a reopened Canal for Israeli ships flying foreign flags, promise not to demand or accept 'large-scale' Soviet military aid, and commit to honour all aspects of the previous disengagement agreement.¹⁸⁷

Fahmy, though, argued that Egypt had provided all the political concessions it could in the previous disengagement agreement, and that any more would be too damaging to Sadat.¹⁸⁸ As for renouncing acts of belligerency, demilitarising land returned to Egypt, or allowing Israeli ships passage through the Canal, Fahmy thought them all non-starters. Fahmy also wanted to see any agreement implemented within two months of signature, with the oil fields handed over within two weeks.¹⁸⁹ In terms of guarantees of Israel's security, Fahmy offered to provide written assurances to the US that Egypt would not undertake military or paramilitary activities against Israel so long as Israel provided

¹⁸⁶ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Sadat's Reaction to Israeli Proposals, 13 December 1974, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (6), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Meeting with Fahmy, 22 January 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (6), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁸⁹ Memo, Fahmy to Kissinger. Salient Points Related to a Second Disengagement Agreement between Egypt and Israel, February 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(1), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

comparable undertakings towards both Egypt and Syria.¹⁹⁰ In the event of an Israeli attack on Syria, Egypt would not be bound by any undertakings, a position crafted to forestall claims that Egypt was achieving security at Syria's expense.¹⁹¹ Fahmy also committed Egypt to respecting the disengagement agreement with Israel 'as long as the efforts pertaining to further progress towards a just and durable peace are continuing', which was an effort to guard against Israel indefinitely breaking off the talks once a second agreement was signed and holding the Egyptians captive to their commitments.¹⁹²

The positions of the two parties thus remained very far apart. Auspiciously, providence came to the aid of Kissinger. Brezhnev's proposed visit was cancelled in late December after he was hospitalised.¹⁹³ This was a tremendous stroke of fortune, as the Soviets lost a golden chance to woo Egypt during a period of tension with the US and Israel. Brezhnev's absence resulted in the issue of Soviet military supplies remaining unresolved, further embittering the Egyptians, who charged that the Soviets were not fulfilling their commitments in the friendship treaty.¹⁹⁴ It was notable that Sadat welcomed two US allies, Faisal and Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi of Iran, on the days Brezhnev was due to visit.¹⁹⁵

The Soviets, in turn, were exasperated by Sadat yet hamstrung in their ability to deal with him. They were already withholding military and economic aid, and could do little else to

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 149.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 103.

¹⁹⁵ Memo, Oakley to Kissinger, Egyptian/Soviet Relations, 1 February 1975, Egypt (2), Box 3, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

punish Sadat. Indeed, the Soviets were still relying on Egypt for naval port facilities in the Mediterranean and over-flight privileges for their air force.¹⁹⁶ Egypt also owed huge debts to Moscow, and the Soviets had an interest in maintaining basic relations with Cairo if they wished to see any return on their capital. Finally, if they were to be included in the regional diplomacy, Moscow had to rely on Sadat acquiescing in their involvement. Sadat, however, wanted no such thing. In his February visit to Egypt the Soviet foreign minister was strongly rebuffed when he pushed for a March reconvening of Geneva.¹⁹⁷ Egypt would wait for America to deliver the Israelis.

Kissinger and Ford continued to press Israel to be more flexible, communicating that there had to be a settlement by the end of February that included both the Sinai passes and the oil fields.¹⁹⁸ However, while Israel was hardly pliant, the truth was that she was really not offered much in return for a pullback. In effect, Israel was being inveigled to withdraw because the US needed her to. The three main pledges offered by Egypt were a promise to not use force, an open-ended agreement with a promise to extend the mandate of UNEF peacekeepers for a year, and a pledge not to support a Syrian attack on Israel.¹⁹⁹ Yet the US envoy to Cairo concurred that Sadat could not offer much more. If a deal were to be struck, the US would have to top up Egypt's barren offer with a generous

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Gromyko Visit, 7 February 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (12), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁹⁸ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 13 January 1975, January 13, 1975, Ford, Kissinger, Box 8, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁹⁹ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Eilts, Pickering, Murphy, Keating, Scowcroft, 19 February 1975, April 14, 1975, Ford, US Ambassadors Keating (Israel), Eilts (Egypt), Pickering (Jordan), Murphy (Syria), Box 10, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

serving of aid, and the requisite personal touch and manipulation of Henry Alfred Kissinger.

Chapter Four: The Saga of Sinai II

Kissinger arrived in Aswan on 8 March to meet with Sadat before a showdown with the Israelis. During seven hours of talks spread over two days Kissinger persuaded Sadat to abandon Egypt's maximal demands, such as linking a Sinai agreement to another in the Golan.¹ Sadat, while continuing to refuse to accept non-belligerency so long as Israel occupied Egyptian territory, signalled his readiness to acquiesce in many of the 'constituent elements' of non-belligerency, the most significant of which was a *de facto* 'no-war pledge' – even if Syria provoked a war – as a *quid pro quo* for the passes and the oilfields.² Sadat again accepted limitations on Egyptian troops in Sinai, a large buffer zone with the Israelis, an easing of the boycott of US firms active in Israel, and allowing ships bound for Israel through a reopened Canal.³

Kissinger also consulted extensively with Gamasy, who was pushing for Egypt's frontline to be moved east of the passes, which Kissinger thought impossible to achieve.⁴ The most Egypt could hope for, Kissinger explained, would be a limited number of soldiers moving to the current Israeli positions west of the Sinai passes.⁵ Gamasy also sought that both sides' frontlines to be 'secure' from the other's troops, a balance of

¹ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report from Egypt, 9 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(2), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

² Ibid.

³ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 402.

⁴ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report from Egypt, 9 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(2), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁵ Ibid.

Egyptian and Israeli soldiers in the Sinai, and the principle that the agreement should give neither party any military advantage.⁶ To accomplish this he wanted Egypt's new frontline to be advanced far enough east to provide security for the urban areas alongside the Canal, and a fifty percent increase in the number of Egyptian troops in Sinai.⁷ Sadat knew that Gamasy's demands were problematic, but felt he had to allow his Minister of Defence a chance to posit his claims.⁸

Kissinger then left for Israel, after stopping off to brief Damascus on the negotiations. Assad publicly insisted that Syria would only agree to another interim agreement 'provided that it takes place on all the fronts', but privately told Kissinger that in return for a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights he – like Sadat – was ready to end the state of belligerency, but not sign a peace treaty.⁹ Kissinger's handling of Assad was remarkable for the astonishing combination of obsequiousness coupled with conceit. Kissinger repeatedly stroked the Syrian's ego, lamenting how 'there have been occasions when I have yearned for a less intelligent Syrian leader'.¹⁰ At the same time, Kissinger directly let it be known who was in charge:

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Briefing paper for Kissinger, Egyptian Principles on Troop Deployment Lines in the Sinai, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸ Kissinger and Sadat, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 9 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁹ Asad, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Asad, Khaddam, Kissinger, Sisco, Murphy, 9 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(2), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁰ Kissinger, quoted in Ibid.

There is no one in America now, except myself, with sufficient authority to bring about an Israeli withdrawal. Anywhere. And, second, there is nobody in the world right now who can bring about an Israeli withdrawal except the United States. For the next few years anyway. This I consider a fact – regrettable or whatever, but it is a fact!¹¹

Nonetheless, Kissinger generously conceded that he was not omnipotent:

But since I'm not a political figure, I have the sort of popularity that popular Presidents have, but I can't translate it into action the way Presidents can. I'm speaking very frankly. So I have to manoeuvre with some care. And since I have this popularity – I'm rated number one in the most-admired poll – I create a real problem for the opposition, who must reduce my popularity before the election. If a year from now I still have a 80% popularity, then just by being there – I don't have to campaign – I'm a threat to the Democratic candidate.¹²

The purpose of this false display of modesty was to explain why, despite his influence, Kissinger 'can't create conditions simultaneously for Syria and for Egypt'.¹³ All he could offer was a limited Israeli withdrawal in southern Golan.¹⁴ Assad, however, demurred, demanding a withdrawal all along the Golan front. Kissinger thought such insistence on an all-or-nothing deal myopic:

I'll tell you what Israel would like – or at least some in Israel. A total stalemate, then let the Arabs get very angry at the United States and do again what they did after '67. Then they would say, Israel is the only friend of the United States in the Middle East.¹⁵

Sadat, unlike Assad, would not be outmanoeuvred by the Israelis in Washington.

Back in Jerusalem

¹¹ Kissinger, quoted in Ibid.

¹² Kissinger, quoted in Ibid.

¹³ Kissinger, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 9 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Asad, Khaddam, Kissinger, Sisco, Murphy, 9 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(2), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

That same evening Kissinger was meeting with the Israeli triumvirate of Rabin, Peres, and Allon. He emphasised Sadat's determination to strike a deal provided 'he can get what he considers an appropriate agreement'.¹⁶ Sadat, Kissinger judged, had 'made (the) basic decision and is determined to go through with it'.¹⁷ The Syrians, in contrast, were 'violent', accusatory, and lining up the Jordanians and Saudis in support.¹⁸

Rabin put forward several demands. Most importantly, any new agreement with Egypt 'has to be a step toward peace' in both wording and practice, and independent of any other events in Syria,¹⁹ a reference to Cairo's position that agreement be followed by a second Golan disengagement in the 'near future'.²⁰ The US, however, judged that Egypt would conclude 'a separate agreement so long as it doesn't look like a separate agreement'.²¹ In effect, she needed a fig leaf, and the more Israel gave Egypt, the 'more transparent the fig leaf can be'.²²

¹⁶ Kissinger, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 9 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷ Kissinger, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁸ Kissinger, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁹ Rabin, quoted in Ibid.

²⁰ Memo, Response on Rabin's Seven Points, 10 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Rabin also demanded ‘an end to the use of force in the context of Egyptian-Israeli relations’.²³ Kissinger warned that non-belligerency was unattainable but ‘a statement of elements of non-belligerency we could conceivably work out’.²⁴ Egypt was willing to reiterate that ‘agreement is a step towards a final peace’, and would commit to negotiations, renounce the use of force, and promise annual extensions of UNEF peace keepers’ mandate so long as the agreement was still in force.²⁵ She would also continue to reconstruct the cities of the Canal Zone and allow Israeli cargo to pass through the Canal once it reopened.²⁶

Regarding the duration of the proposed agreement, Sadat was willing to accept an indefinite duration and an implementation period of two months after signature.²⁷ This satisfied America, as she believed it too difficult to agree a specified duration for the agreement, and that it would be immaterial in any case. A short implementation period would also preclude rejectionist pressures building up. As for the Geneva conference, it seemed that Israel and Egypt were on the same page, with Cairo content with a declaration of sentiment.²⁸

²³ Rabin, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 9 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. 1(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²⁴ Kissinger, quoted in Ibid.

²⁵ Memo, Response on Rabin’s Seven Points, 10 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. 1(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Quoted in Ibid.

Talks continued the next day, with Kissinger again emphasising that Israel should seize her chance, explaining how Sadat was ‘less nitpicking, less obliged to do mock-heroic things’ than Assad.²⁹ However, if Israel made an insulting offer, his reaction ‘may be more violent than Assad’.³⁰ This was quite a statement to make, as Assad continually alluded to the threat of war.³¹ Kissinger explained Sadat’s approach as based on his perception of the Israeli attitude: ‘If he thinks you are working with us, he will override his advisors. If he thinks you have challenged his dignity, it will be a bloody battle’.³² More than anything, Sadat wanted to be ‘treated as an equal by Israel’.³³

Negotiations resumed on 11 and 12 March. The two most difficult issues continued to be Israel’s determination to obtain an absolute renunciation of the use of force and her demand for the agreement to stipulate a longer duration.³⁴ Rabin thought Egypt’s reluctance to satisfy these demands showed that Sadat was still trying, as was his wont, to

²⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 10 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. 1(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report from Syria, 10 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. 1(2), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

³² Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 10 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. 1(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

³³ Kissinger, quoted in Ibid.

³⁴ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report on Negotiations, 11 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. 1(5), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

get something for nothing. 'I see no vision or courage on the part of Sadat', objected Rabin, who refused to take Sadat's offer to cabinet.³⁵

That evening Kissinger returned to Egypt to attempt to extract more tempting concessions. In the course of a three hour meeting with the Egyptians Kissinger stressed that 'something more than a normal cease-fire is needed'.³⁶ Expressly political concessions were required to obtain both the oil fields and passes. Sadat, though, continued to refuse an indefinite renunciation of the use of force, arguing it would in effect be non-belligerency, and offered instead a temporary renunciation that applied during peace negotiations.³⁷ Sadat would commit to the US to renew the agreement so long as the peace process continued, and that it would remain valid until replaced by a future agreement.³⁸ Additionally, Egypt was prepared to declare the new agreement a significant – but not final – step towards peace.³⁹ Egypt also accepted that there would be no linkage to a Syrian agreement.⁴⁰ Agreeing new frontlines was also a challenge. The Americans pointed out that it would be impossible for Egypt to hold the western entrance

³⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Dinitz, Gur, Kissinger, Sisco, US Delegation, 12 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. I (6), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

³⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, Sadat, Fahmy, Gamasy, Kissinger, Sisco, Eilts, 12 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. I (6), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, Asad, Khaddam, Kissinger, Sisco, Murphy, 9 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. I (2), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Sadat, Fahmy, Gamasy, Kissinger, Sisco, Eilts, 13 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. I (7), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

of the passes. The most they could hope for would be to move to the current Israeli lines and for Israel to hand over the passes to the UN.⁴¹

Before concluding his discussions with Sadat, Kissinger presented a personal letter from Rabin that expressed the Israeli's desire to achieve a second agreement with Egypt. A lachrymal Sadat was touched by the gesture, maudlinly declaring it 'the most important communiqué he has received from Israel' and asked Kissinger to 'assure (Rabin) from my side that I am not dreaming of solving this at Geneva. We will not use force whatever the problems'.⁴² Nonetheless, it still seemed unlikely that an agreement would be struck soon.

Continued Complications

After one week in the Middle East, Kissinger had a much better grasp of what was needed to strike a deal. He had obtained additional Egyptian concessions, but was still unclear whether they were sufficient for Israel to withdraw from both the passes and the oil fields. For example, Israel did not only want a commitment not to use

⁴¹ Memorandum of Conversation, Sadat, Fahmy, Gamasy, Kissinger, Sisco, Eilts, 12 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. I (6), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁴² Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 14 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

force, but to settle all bilateral issues peacefully.⁴³ A greater Egyptian military deployment in Sinai up to the entrance of the passes would also be difficult to swallow.

On 16 March Kissinger was back in Israel. There Kissinger was told that the cabinet was unimpressed with the Egyptian offer. Moreover, the Cabinet still refused to delineate a proposed withdrawal line for Kissinger to show the Egyptians, and Rabin still excluded withdrawing to the passes without an end to belligerency.⁴⁴ Further, even if Egypt were to overtly renounce ‘acts of belligerency’, Israel would only return either the passes or the oil fields.⁴⁵ Kissinger warned that unless Israel conceded more Sadat’s attitude would change, and ‘when he changes, he’ll do totally and brutally, like lightning’.⁴⁶

Kissinger’s frustration was beginning to show. Tired of endless procrastination, he pointed out that there were only two diplomatic strategies available to Israel: his step-by-step approach, or an immediate final settlement that would focus international pressure on Israel. Kissinger underlined that much of the *quid pro quo* that Israel hankered for was

⁴³ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report from Egypt, 14 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. I (7), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁴⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 16 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. II(1), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁴⁵ Memo, Chronology of Decisive Phase of the Negotiation, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. I(1), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁴⁶ Kissinger, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 16 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. II(1), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

in the continued ‘management of the future process’ by America.⁴⁷ Unless Israel showed more flexibility, America would ‘face a unique decision’: his approach would be abandoned, or alternatively linked with aid ‘in a more explicit way than ever before’.⁴⁸

The triumvirate, however, persisted in its futile quest for non-belligerency, offering a withdrawal to El Arish in return, provoking Kissinger to respond that ‘I’ve told every Israeli leader I’ve talked to since July that non-belligerency was out of the question. There is no doubt about it. It is not attainable’.⁴⁹ Extraordinarily, Rabin then acknowledged that the Israeli negotiators were ‘not entitled by the cabinet to discuss anything other than non-belligerency. So we hoped you would bring something closer to that. If so, we would discuss it with the cabinet.’⁵⁰ Kissinger wearily agreed to return to Egypt with Israel’s proposal for non-belligerency, but cautioned of the risks of doing so:

Kissinger: It’s my honest judgment...there is danger that a breakup will produce a parting of the ways between Israel and the United States. It’s not a governmental decision; it’s my honest judgement, but my fear.

Dinitz: Why should he (Sadat) make a concession if he knows this?

Kissinger: He doesn’t know this.⁵¹

Breakdown

⁴⁷ Kissinger, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, Sisco, US Party, 17 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. II(2), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁴⁸ Kissinger, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 16 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. II(1), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

On 17 March Kissinger was back in Cairo to submit the Israeli position. Were Egypt to disavow 'acts of belligerency' Israel would now withdraw from both the passes and the oil fields. However, if the Egyptians accepted the lesser 'non-use of force' formulation Israel would only withdraw to the western entrance to the passes and would share the management of the oil fields with the Egyptians.⁵² Kissinger also presented Israel's precise phrasing on non-use of force which she wanted Egypt to accept.⁵³ Sadat was unimpressed with the Israeli wording – which included a restrictive prohibition of military, paramilitary, hostile, and warlike actions or 'permitting, encouraging, assisting or participating' in them. He charged that the statement was in fact more, not less, restrictive than non-belligerency, as it included general terms such as 'hostile' acts. Indeed, he found the text insulting in the context of such a limited Israeli pullback.⁵⁴ Kissinger then suggested that Sadat propose his most generous offer to see whether it was worth continuing the shuttle.

⁵² Memo, Chronology of Decisive Phase of the Negotiation, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(1), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁵³ Rabin's desired text read as follows: 'Egypt and Israel hereby undertake in the relations between themselves not to resort to the use of force and to resolve all disputes between them by negotiations and other peaceful means. They will refrain from permitting, encouraging, assisting, or participating in any military, paramilitary or hostile actions, from any warlike or hostile acts and any other form of warfare or hostile activity against the other party anywhere.

This undertaking will not be linked to anything (duration, peace process etc.)'. See Memo, Rabin to Kissinger, Non-Use of Force, 17 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. II(2), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁵⁴ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report on Negotiations, 18 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. II(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Sadat duly prepared a new proposal out of personal loyalty to Kissinger.⁵⁵ The principal points were that the agreement would be a 'major step towards peace, to renounce the use of force unconditionally, to have the agreement last until superseded, and to extend UNEF automatically every year'.⁵⁶ Sadat also proposed that the passes sit in the UN zone, with Egyptian and Israeli forces at the western and eastern entrances, respectively.⁵⁷ The offer moved Kissinger to write to Ford that 'Sadat is conceding more than I ever thought possible, but if he goes beyond a certain point he will be destroyed'.⁵⁸ The ball was now back in Israel's court. More ominously, the umpire's sympathies now lay with Egypt.⁵⁹

Before returning to Israel Kissinger complained to Ford about alleged Israeli duplicity:

I regret to say that either by neglect or design the Israeli government strongly encouraged us to engage our full prestige in this exercise and led us to believe that a formula less than non-belligerency would be acceptable to Israel. It was on this assumption that my latest mission was undertaken. Yet I have discovered that Rabin, as well as Peres and Allon and the entire cabinet are strongly committed, for internal political reasons, to getting non-belligerency from Egypt. The impact on our international situation could not be more serious. From the Shah to Western Europe, from the Soviet Union to Japan it will be hard to explain why the United States failed to move a country of less than three million totally dependent on it in the face of Egyptian proposals which will seem extremely generous to them.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Sadat, Fahmy, Gamasy, Kissinger, Sisco, Eilts, 18 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip - Vol. II(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁵⁶ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report on Negotiations, 18 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip - Vol. II(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁵⁷ Memo, Chronology of Decisive Phase of the Negotiation, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip - Vol. 1(1), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁵⁸ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report on Negotiations, 18 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip - Vol. II(3), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

He resolved, with Ford's permission, to take a hard line in Israel despite the domestic political implications of doing so.⁶¹ In a three-hour meeting the following day Rabin, Allon, and Peres reaped the harvest of their obduracy, with Kissinger summarily warning them at the outset that the 'cabinet has to understand that in America this is going to have serious consequences'.⁶² His warnings had an effect on the Israelis, albeit not the desired one. Their response was a blend of recrimination, threat, and only a speck of suppleness. Allon remonstrated that Israel settled for non-use of force rather than non-belligerency, to which Kissinger replied that Israel also now demanded satisfaction on 'hostile acts', which went beyond non-use of force.⁶³ Allon then charged that the new Egyptian text regarding non-use of force was 'worth nothing, politically, not to speak of legally. To give it to the kindergarten of Ginossa would be a disgrace, not to mention the Knesset.'⁶⁴ According to him, it was even weaker than the previous disengagement, prompting a surprised Kissinger to ask how so: 'It is too early to ask our lawyers' replied a confused Allon!⁶⁵ Kissinger then met alone with Rabin, who promised to attempt to convince his cabinet that evening to negotiate on the basis of the Egyptian offer while Kissinger visited Saudi Arabia.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 19 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. II (4), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II(5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report from Israel, 19 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. II (4), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The Cabinet, however, stuck to its guns, insisting on the previously presented Israeli text, despite Rabin's warning that it meant a 98 percent change that talks would fail.⁶⁷ It also still pushed for an agreement to be valid a set number of years. Finally, Cabinet proposed no increase in the number of Egyptian troops in Sinai, but instead to allow existing troops to patrol an additional area up to the current UN line, while all other areas Israel would vacate would remain demilitarised.⁶⁸

Such intransigence finally provoked Kissinger to put a halt to the games, stating:

Now we have to consider the decision of the Israeli cabinet as a deliberate strategic decision probably to go to war this year, to have a confrontation with the Arab states this year, and second, as a decision to have a confrontation with the United States. There is not the slightest attempt to deal with any of the points made to you over many months. There is no need to explain that these points will all be rejected in Egypt. There is no need to explain that to come back to Egypt after Egypt has made clear its position will be seen as a provocation by Sadat. There is no need to discuss each point because each point is unacceptable in itself and you know they are unacceptable. There should be no illusion.⁶⁹

Kissinger reminded the Israelis that he had already delayed negotiations the previous summer at their behest and at the cost of their Jordanian partner, then again in September, December, and February. The US had met all Israel's military and financial aid requests, frustrated the Soviets by not reconvening Geneva, and only embarked on one bilateral negotiation as part of the American commitment to Israel. Kissinger then read out a presidential statement that America 'cannot be in a position to isolate ourselves from the

⁶⁷ Memo, Chronology of Decisive Phase of the Negotiation, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip - Vol. 1(1), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁶⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 20 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip - Vol. II (4), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁶⁹ Kissinger, quoted in *Ibid.*

rest of the world simply in order to stand behind the intransigence of Israel'.⁷⁰ Israel was, continued Kissinger, deliberately attempting to provoke a confrontation with the Arabs at a time of domestic political tumult in the US, which was 'unacceptable'.⁷¹ Furthermore, far from offering 'nothing', Sadat proposed making Egypt the first Arab state to renounce force and attempt to solve disputes peacefully for the duration of the agreement with Israel. Indeed, the pledge was even more significant as it would not only be made to Israel, but America too.

Kissinger's outburst focused Israeli minds. Allon argued that the cause was not lost, and that Israel's offer could be reconsidered. Rabin remonstrated that Egypt's offer was insufficient. Peres insisted that Israel had indeed given up non-belligerency, prompting Kissinger to acidly retort 'not in any way anyone but a Talmudic student could understand'.⁷² The triumvirate duly returned to cabinet where the emphasis on non-belligerency was slightly revised, and compensated for by a smaller withdrawal. Israel's final offer now included a withdrawal to middle of the passes, a presence at the Umm Khesheiba monitoring station, and returning the oil fields to the Egyptians as a separate enclave. Kissinger still thought this insufficient, though he agreed to present it to Sadat. Rabin naïvely believed Sadat would accept it because 'he has no other way', betraying the extent of Israel's miscalculation.⁷³

⁷⁰ Kissinger, quoting Ford in Ibid.

⁷¹ Kissinger, quoted in Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, afternoon session 20 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. II (4), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Sadat did not accept the offer, and insisted on an Israeli withdrawal east of the passes, a link between the oil enclave and Egyptian controlled land through a UN zone under Egyptian civil administration, and also an increase in the limit of 7 000 Egyptian soldiers in Sinai.⁷⁴ Sadat also asked Kissinger to convey an oral promise that if it were independently confirmed that Syria attacked Israel, Egypt would not assist its former ally.⁷⁵ Kissinger returned to Israel with Sadat's counteroffer, but for all intents and purposes the negotiations had already failed.

In retrospect, Israel bore primary responsibility for the botched negotiations, with America sharing secondary blame too. Jerusalem suffered a failure of leadership, as Rabin allowed too many domestic considerations to obstruct his foreign policy. Rabin's disproportionate caution prompted him to refuse Egypt's final offer, which Kissinger estimated delivered 90 percent of what Israel demanded.⁷⁶ The very nature of the negotiations – written promises exchanged for physical assets – would always be inherently asymmetrical, but that should have been taken as given, as Kissinger explained in Jerusalem:

I have been telling you for seven months that you would not get an equivalent quid pro quo. It was understood that the negotiation would be conducted in the interests of an overall strategy that would be overwhelmingly in Israel's interests. An agreement would have meant things in it that would be hard to defend; and that has

⁷⁴ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report from Israel, 21 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. II (7), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁷⁵ Memo, Chronology of Decisive Phase of the Negotiation, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip – Vol. 1(1), Box 3, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol 1(1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁷⁶ Kissinger, quoted in Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 24 March 1975, March 24, 1975, Ford, Kissinger, Box 8, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

bothered me. But the quid pro quo would be in enabling us to control the diplomacy and exhaust all the participants. Compared to that, the location of the line by eight kilometres one way or the other didn't frankly concern me that much.⁷⁷

The US shared secondary blame for strengthening Israel militarily to the extent that she could nonchalantly thwart US policy. Rabin had effectively repeated the strategy he employed as ambassador to the US in 1970 and 1971. Then Israel sought extensive military aid before negotiating with Egypt. Yet once she had secured her desired armaments she relied on her military advantage to endlessly procrastinate.⁷⁸ American deliveries since Yom Kippur meant that Israel could now fight an exhaustive war for four weeks without resupply.⁷⁹ Moreover, in light of Egypt's military decline, Israel's military advantage had increased substantially since 1973, with Jerusalem adjudged to be capable of destroying both Egyptian and Syrian offensive capabilities within a maximum of ten days.⁸⁰ As Kissinger would admit to Ford, 'our fatal mistake was all the equipment we gave them'.⁸¹

Sadat, for his part, was terribly disappointed. He had initially wanted a quick deal with Israel in the latter half of 1974. Instead, negotiations only started in March 1975, during

⁷⁷ Kissinger quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Kissinger, US Delegation, 22 March 1975, March 7-22, 1975, - Kissinger's Trip - Vol. II (9), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: March 7-22, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁷⁸ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Your Meetings with Prime Minister Rabin - June 11, 11 June 1975, Israel (10), Box 15, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Israel (1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁷⁹ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Discussion of Middle East Strategy, 21 April 1975, NSC Meeting, 15/5/75 - Panama Canal (1), Box 10, US National Security Council Institutional Files: 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸⁰ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Economic and Military Assistance Levels for Israel, 11 June 1975, Israel (10), Box 15, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Israel (1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸¹ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 24 March 1975, March 24, 1975, Ford, Kissinger, Box 8, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

which Sadat shelved demands, overruled subordinates, and displayed tremendous flexibility in order to strike a deal. Most impressively of all, he persevered through Israeli machinations despite his frustrations, thereby not providing Israel with the easy excuse that there was no partner for peace. As a result of these actions Sadat managed to precipitate a US-Israeli crisis, and to substantially increase American goodwill towards Egypt under the new president. Indeed, Sadat considered his stature enhanced as a result of his conduct during the negotiations.⁸² He was untroubled by the prospect of reconvening Geneva, seeing Israel as ‘cornered’ whatever the forum.⁸³ Provided the Americans were willing to squeeze Israel, Sadat mused, a deal could be struck at Geneva.⁸⁴ In the meantime, he maintained his counsel and strengthened Egypt’s forward military positions to prepare for all eventualities.⁸⁵ Indeed, Sadat was feeling so comfortable that he conditioned meeting with Ford on certain deliverables, either diplomatic – such as a ‘clean map and a clean agreement’ with Israel – or bilateral, such as a US commitment to provide Egypt with arms, or a nuclear station or two.⁸⁶ America,

⁸² Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Meeting with Sadat, 1 April 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (16), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Preliminary Assessment Egyptian Situation, 26 April 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (15), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸⁵ Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the failure of the March negotiations, and throughout the summer, there were persistent US worries that Sadat might sanction a limited war to seize the passes. See Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Reported Egyptian Military Preparations, 2 August 1975, NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files, Box 51, Peace Negotiations Chronological File, July 22– September 1, 1975, Box 9, Declassified RAC Documents: Documents from the NSC Middle East and South Asian Affairs Staff Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸⁶ Sadat, quoted in Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Meeting with Sadat, 1 April 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (16), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

however, still refused to supply arms, even *sub rosa* through the Saudis, as it would be illegal under US law, and in the post-Watergate world, too risky.⁸⁷

Israel, in contrast, was in a spot of bother. Not only was she in a public confrontation with the US, she was wary of the promised US policy ‘reassessment’, from which Rabin, unlike Sadat, Assad, and Hussein, was excluded.⁸⁸ Rabin, in turn, refused to negotiate with a Sword of Damocles hanging over him. Instead, he exacted a high political price in Washington by relentlessly attacking the administration through America’s Jewish community in order to ‘return to the previous relationship in which Israel received unstinting, virtually unquestioning support’, and only negotiate once the *status quo ante* was restored.⁸⁹ This, however, was not to be, as Ford and Kissinger determined that relations would depend ‘Israel’s making a serious, *bona fide* contribution to getting the peace process moving again’.⁹⁰

Reflection and Reassessment

Despite the bravado, however, there was a paucity of possibilities open to Egypt and the US. They had two main options: an attempt at a comprehensive solution at Geneva, or another crack at an interim pact.

⁸⁷ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, 1 May 1975, Egypt (5), Box 4, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸⁸ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Meeting of the National Security Council: Middle East, 5 May 1975, NSC Meeting, 5/15/75 – Panama Canal (1), Box 10, US National Security Council Institutional Files: 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Your Meetings with Prime Minister Rabin – June 11, 11 June 1975, Israel (10), Box 15, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Israel (1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Egypt ostensibly favoured Geneva, but made no immediate moves to reconvene it, in case step-by-step negotiations were resurrected.⁹¹ Geneva would be complicated by the sheer number of participants and the radical influence of Syria and the Soviets. Procedure, such as disputes over Palestinian representation, would overshadow substance, as in 1973. Further quarrels would be staged over whether negotiations would be held in multilateral fora or in bilateral sub-groups, with Syria and the Soviets preferring to shackle Egypt's energies in the former setting.

Sadat had suggested that the US encourage a comprehensive deal that could be gradually implemented over a period of time.⁹² Sadat's aim was to leapfrog the immediate difficulties over interim lines in Sinai, similar to how Kissinger bypassed the 22 October lines in the aftermath of the war. However, implicit in Sadat's argument was that the 1967 borders would be easily attainable in a comprehensive agreement, an entirely inaccurate postulation. Sadat had yet to glean what America knew, namely that 'the present Israeli objective is to return some of the occupied territories in exchange for new Israeli borders, expanded from 1967'.⁹³ Israel wanted to keep a third of Sinai, half the

⁹¹ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Preliminary Assessment Egyptian Situation, 26 April 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (15), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbour, Michigan.

⁹² Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Meeting with Sadat, 19 April 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (16), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbour, Michigan.

⁹³ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Discussion of Middle East Strategy, 21 April 1975, NSC Meeting, 15/5/75 – Panama Canal (1), Box 10, US National Security Council Institutional Files: 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbour, Michigan.

Golan, up to half of the West Bank, and all of Jerusalem.⁹⁴ Geneva would therefore quickly stalemate ‘as long as the Israelis preclude the 1967 lines as final borders and the Arabs insist on them’.⁹⁵ The US envoys in the region, however, preferred Geneva as the Arabs could then offer significant political concessions that would satisfy Israel, in return for significant Israeli withdrawals.⁹⁶ Indeed at one point, it seemed as though the president was leaning in that direction:

Ford: I am tilting more and more to a comprehensive settlement. I get the impression there is increased polarisation, and to start all over again I don’t think it is worth it. And if there is another war and Israel won, we would be blamed for it.

Kissinger: I have said that under those circumstances, we would have to force them to the ’67 borders. I think an over-all proposal is the best way to avoid a war. But the Israelis will really raise hell.⁹⁷

Ford shrewdly shared his thoughts in a meeting with Rabin on 10 June, declaring that he ‘tends toward favouring an overall Middle East settlement’, with the final borders ‘guaranteed by the powers concerned’.⁹⁸ However, after Ford’s two June meetings with Sadat in Austria, a decision was made to try for a final interim agreement in Sinai, and to afterwards prepare for the reconvening of Geneva in 1977.⁹⁹ The calculation rested on two assumptions. Firstly, the fractious Rabin cabinet did not have the political mandate to attempt something broader than an interim agreement. Israeli elections would be held in 1977, when a new government would hopefully secure a mandate to seek peace with the Arabs. Furthermore, the Ford administration, hampered by an unelected president and

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 28 April 1975, April 28, 1975, Ford, Kissinger, Box 11, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁹⁸ Ford, quoted in Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs*, 263.

⁹⁹ Memo, Kissinger to Rockefeller, Meeting with His Excellency Anwar al-Sadat, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 27 October 1975, CO 159 10/19/75-10/125/75, Box 55, White House Central Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

finite sand in the political clock before the 1976 elections, did not have sufficient political capital to browbeat Israel to Geneva and back. Thus, the US strategy was ‘to use the prospect of the broader negotiation to press for a reasonable Israeli proposal on the interim agreement’.¹⁰⁰

Yet the absence of veritable *quid pro quos* would dog any new negotiation. Fortunately, after being pressed by Kissinger over two days in Austria Sadat agreed new concessions, including accepting Jerusalem’s demand for a three year mandate for UN peacekeepers in the Sinai, *de facto* Israeli manning of the Umm Khesheiba warning station, as well as a further relaxation of the economic boycott.¹⁰¹ He also suggested a new idea to Ford: a demilitarised zone in the passes with a US civilian presence.¹⁰² Nonetheless, the very virtues of step-by-step diplomacy, namely delaying the discussion of the most intractable issues, dissipated with every successive round. The interim approach, by its very nature,

¹⁰⁰ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Your Meetings with Prime Minister Rabin – June 11, 11 June 1975, Israel (10), Box 15, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Israel (1), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁰¹ Memoranda of Conversation, Sadat, Mubarak, Fahmi, Ford, Kissinger, Sisco, 1 June 1975, Salzburg, Meeting between President Sadat, President Gerald Ford and Secretary Kissinger, Memorandum of Conversation: 01 June 1975, National Archives, Record Group 59, Department of State Records, Records of Joseph J. Sisco, 1951-1976, Box 44, Memcons: Secretary-Sadat 1974, Courtesy of The Digital National Security Archives, <http://www.sadat.umd.edu/archives/negotiations.htm> (accessed 1 August 2010); Memoranda of Conversation, Sadat, Mubarak, Fahmi, Ford, Kissinger, Sisco, 2 June 1975, Salzburg, Meeting between President Sadat, President Gerald Ford, Secretary Kissinger, and Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi, Memorandum of Conversation: 02 June 1975, National Archives, Record Group 59, Department of State Records, Records of Joseph J. Sisco, 1951-1976, Box 44, Memcons: Secretary-Sadat 1974, Courtesy of The Digital National Security Archives, <http://www.sadat.umd.edu/archives/negotiations.htm> (accessed 1 August 2010); Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 437.

¹⁰² Memoranda of Conversation, Sadat, Mubarak, Fahmi, Ford, Kissinger, Sisco, 2 June 1975, Salzburg, Meeting between President Sadat, President Gerald Ford, Secretary Kissinger, and Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi, Memorandum of Conversation: 02 June 1975, National Archives, Record Group 59, Department of State Records, Records of Joseph J. Sisco, 1951-1976, Box 44, Memcons: Secretary-Sadat 1974; Courtesy of The Digital National Security Archives, <http://www.sadat.umd.edu/archives/negotiations.htm> (accessed 1 August 2010); Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 290.

was transient and ephemeral. Even if again preferred, it could only eke out one more agreement in Sinai before being discarded given diminishing marginal returns.

A third possibility was to try for a more wide-ranging interim agreement, with a pullback across two-thirds of Sinai in return for non-belligerency, as suggested by Israel near the end of the March negotiations.¹⁰³ Such a move boasted several advantages: it would reduce the need to seek an immediate follow-up agreement, giving Jerusalem some political breathing space, and also retain all the advantages of the step-by-step approach. However, Sadat was loath to grant non-belligerency before a final withdrawal, as it would destroy his bargaining power for a final Israeli withdrawal from Sinai.

A Second Bite of the Interim Cherry

Thus a consensus eventually emerged in favour of an interim agreement, though the question of how far Israel would withdraw still remained. During talks with Kissinger in Washington Rabin posited several factors inhibiting a pullback from the passes. The bulk of Israel's military infrastructure in Sinai was located immediately east of the passes, and withdrawing there would involve relocating many installations away from the frontlines.¹⁰⁴ Israel also needed a warning station in the zone between the belligerents'

¹⁰³ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Discussion of Middle East Strategy, 21 April 1975, NSC Meeting, 15/5/75 – Panama Canal (1), Box 10, US National Security Council Institutional Files: 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁰⁴ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 11 June 1975, June 11, 1975, Ford, Kissinger, Box 12, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

frontlines.¹⁰⁵ The solution was for the US to finance the costs of any withdrawal, and for Americans to man warning stations and monitoring outposts in the passes.¹⁰⁶ New Israeli concessions in return included a forward defence line further east, an unbroken demilitarised Egyptian land link to the oil fields, the presence of an Egyptian company at the western end of the passes, and an increase in the number of tanks and troops allowed in the Egyptian limited armaments zone.¹⁰⁷

However, these concessions were small fare, with Kissinger charging the Israeli ambassador that they were an outrage.¹⁰⁸ When presented to Sadat they were rejected as too similar to the March offer, as Israeli forward positions would still be west of the peak of the passes.¹⁰⁹ An alternative Israeli offer, of unilaterally returning the oil fields in return for the renewal of UNEF until 1977 and accepting a diplomatic stalemate, also did not excite Sadat.¹¹⁰ When presented with these proposals an ‘indignant’ Sadat first demanded the immediate reconvening of Geneva, but the ‘visibly depressed’ president was talked into sticking with the interim negotiations by Fahmy.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 12 June 1975, June 12, 1975, Ford, Kissinger, Box 12, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁰⁷ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Eilts, Sisco, Scowcroft, 21 June 1975, June 21, 1975, Ford, Kissinger, Ambassador Hermann F. Eilts (Egypt), Joseph Sisco, Box 13, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁰⁸ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 21 June 1975, June 21, 1975, Ford, Kissinger, Box 13, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁰⁹ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Preliminary Report on Meeting With President Sadat, 23 June 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (20), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

The US reaction to Israel's tough bargaining was another presidential letter from Ford to Rabin on 27 June, setting forth that Israel's concessions were derisory, especially with regards to her position in the passes. America, Ford advised, would not risk its regional interests to accommodate Israel's whims, and warned that the issue 'goes to the very core of American Israeli relationships'.¹¹² Israel, in turn, demanded that in return for her cooperation America propose no new initiatives for 2-4 years, as well as not force her into negotiations with Syria.¹¹³

By late July the situation looked more promising. Israel's latest proposal had her 'just about out of the passes', and Egypt was informed that any further changes would require American exertions comparable to that needed for a comprehensive settlement.¹¹⁴ The Egyptians, though, were unhappy with having Israelis operate the Umm Khesheiba monitoring station, as well as the six proposed US outposts in the passes.¹¹⁵ Sadat noted that the new Israeli forward line was not outside the passes but around 2.5 kilometres inside the eastern entrance.¹¹⁶ Indeed, Kissinger would later accuse Israel of defining the

¹¹² Letter, Ford to Rabin, 27 June 1975, June 27, 1975, Ford, Kissinger, Israeli Ambassador Simcha Dinitz, Box 13, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹¹³ Memoranda of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 9 July 1975, July 9, 1975, Ford, Kissinger, Box 13, NSA: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹¹⁴ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Meeting with Sadat on the latest Israeli proposals, 20 July 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE - NODIS (22), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Second Meeting with Sadat and Egyptian Counterproposals, 21 July 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE - NODIS (23), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

exit of the passes as twenty metres from the summit.¹¹⁷ Egypt's counterproposal put the Israelis further east and eliminated the US stations in Sinai.¹¹⁸

Those counterproposals made clear how badly Sadat wanted an agreement on reasonable terms. He was led in two different directions by his lieutenants; Fahmy was pushing for practical engagement, whereas Gamasy refused to budge on military concessions.¹¹⁹ Fortunately for Sadat, an agreement finally seemed in the offing. By mid-August, he had confirmed his acceptance of a US civilian presence in the monitoring stations.¹²⁰ America now had to bridge the gap between Egypt's concessions and Israel's demands. She would do so through a massive aid programme. Israel was demanding F-16 fighters as well as further procurements that totalled more than \$3 billion.¹²¹ America agreed to provide \$2.1 billion in aid – an unprecedented figure – provided Israel withdrew from the passes.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Dinitz, Gur, Eran, Kissinger, Sisco, US Delegation, 22 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.1 (1), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹¹⁸ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Second Meeting with Sadat and Egyptian Counterproposals, 21 July 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (23), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹¹⁹ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Egyptian Counterproposals, 22 July 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (23), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²⁰ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Meeting with Sadat, 11 August 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (23), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²¹ Memorandum of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 16 August 1975, August 16, 1975 – Ford, Kissinger, Box 14, National Security Adviser MEMORANDA OF CONVERSATIONS, 1973-1977: July 21, 1975, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²² Ibid. When the extent of US aid to Israel was revealed in the weeks following Sinai II Fahmy reacted very badly, accusing the US of being too generous to Israel. See Memo, Kissinger to Eilts, In Response to Fahmy, 30 December 1976, Egypt - State Department Telegrams From SECSTATE – NODIS (21), Box 6, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams-From SECSTATE NODIS (17), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The Final Shuttle

Kissinger duly returned to Jerusalem on 21 August to push Israel on her forward line, arguing that he had accepted in good faith that the new line took her out of the passes, while it emerged that ‘by no conceivable stretch of imagination’ could she be said to have left the passes.¹²³ Kissinger urged the Israelis not to negotiate in such a ‘negative, grudging, piddling way’, and that whether the frontline were in the middle the passes or beyond them would make no difference to their security.¹²⁴ The Israelis, Kissinger reported to Washington, would come to an agreement, but not out of good will:

My overall impression is they want to achieve the interim agreement – not because they view it as opening a new chapter in Israeli-Egyptian relations and ushering in new hope for the future, but rather because the terms they are expecting to get will leave them in a strategic position in the Sinai not significantly inferior to their present position and because an agreement provides the vehicle to ensure continue Israeli military supremacy resulting from the \$2.5 billion in aid and the military equipment Rabin seeks and because it will stabilise American-Israeli bilateral relationships.¹²⁵

Kissinger compared Rabin’s performance unfavourably to Meir and Dayan’s stewardship of talks in 1973.¹²⁶ Indeed, he thought Rabin was using the agreement to consolidate his

¹²³ Kissinger, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Allon, Peres, Dinitz, Gur, Eran, Kissinger, Sisco, US Delegation, 22 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.1 (1), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²⁴ Kissinger, quoted in Ibid.

¹²⁵ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report from Israel, 23 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.1 (2), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

‘position to resist efforts to achieve an overall settlement in the long run on any terms the Arabs might accept’.¹²⁷

Fortunately, Sadat was still keen to strike the best bargain as quickly as possible. Fahmy had demanded that Israel refrain from changing the ‘demographic composition of Sinai’ or exploring for oil in Sinai, as well as compensate Egypt for exploiting Sinai’s oil resources.¹²⁸ However Sadat’s principal objective, reflecting his armed forces’ main concern, was to ensure that Israel withdrew east of the passes. In return Sadat accepted Egyptian forces not advancing beyond the current UN line.¹²⁹ Sadat also acquiesced in a US-managed Israeli warning station – provided Egypt were provided with a similar facility – and even agreed to an Israeli cargo ship passing through the Suez Canal, reopened since June, the following week.¹³⁰ Sadat, however, would provide no satisfaction for Israel’s political demands.

The US strategy was to reveal Egypt’s compromises, as well as a US guarantee of Israeli oil supplies to compensate for the loss of the Sinai fields, as recompense for the absence of political concessions.¹³¹ In Jerusalem, however, Kissinger was confronted with

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Memo, Kissinger Checklist: Meeting with Israelis, 23 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.1 (3), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹²⁹ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report from Egypt, 23 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.1 (3), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Memo, Kissinger Checklist: Meeting with Israelis, 23 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.1 (3), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

reluctance to withdraw farther, both in the strategically important north, as well as in the less important south. This led Kissinger to scold that ‘you can’t say you can’t move out of the strategically important areas because they are strategically important but you can’t move out of the strategically unimportant areas because they are unimportant and therefore why should anyone move you out of there’.¹³² The Israelis conceded ‘nothing’ despite pocketing every compromise Sadat yielded, as shown in the following exchange:

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Kissinger: They want no new Israeli settlements placed in the Sinai and that doesn’t have to be in the agreement.

Peres: What do they call Sinai?

Kissinger: I didn’t ask. I am sure they mean anything beyond the 1967 border.

Rabin: We don’t ask anything in terms of the overall settlement from them and they can’t ask us anything in terms of the overall settlement. It’s either way.¹³⁴

The Israelis, however, were asking for much in terms of the overall settlement. Besides seeking extensive Egyptian political assurances, they also demanded a ‘memorandum of understanding’ with America to govern future Arab-Israeli negotiations, as well as unprecedented guarantees of aid and political support.¹³⁵ By 26 August Kissinger was insisting that Egypt was at ‘the ragged edge’ and asking for more would risk losing everything.¹³⁶ Fahmy and Gamasy were both losing patience, with the former even

¹³² Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Israeli delegation, Kissinger, US delegation, 24 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.1 (5), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹³³ Kissinger, quoted in Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger report from Israel, 25 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.1 (7), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹³⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, Rabin, Israeli delegation, Kissinger, US delegation, 26 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.II (1), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and

declaring to the Americans his regret that Nasser was no longer president!¹³⁷ Sadat, though, patiently persevered and reaffirmed a non-resort to force clause, disavowed future blockades of Israel, and committed to at least three annual renewals of UNEF.¹³⁸

On 27 August, after a marathon 7 hour meeting with Rabin, followed by a three-hour evening meeting with Sadat, the gap was shrunk further but Israel still demanded more assurances from Sadat.¹³⁹ The following day Kissinger, after another six-hours with Sadat, returned to Israel with new Egyptian commitments and a draft text of an agreement.¹⁴⁰ Only a few issues now remained to be resolved. Gamasy had wanted 21 000 men and 150 tanks in Sinai, but had to be satisfied with 8 000 soldiers and 75 tanks.¹⁴¹ An Egyptian and an Israeli surveillance station in the buffer zone with up to 250 personnel in each were also agreed, as well as three US watch stations in the passes and

Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger Report from Egypt, 26 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.I (6), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹³⁹ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger report from Egypt, 27 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.II (3), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Kissinger Trip Vol II (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁴⁰ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger report from Israel, 28 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.II (5), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Sinai Disengagement Agreement Vol II (4), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁴¹ Briefing Paper, Checklist for Jerusalem, 28 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.II (5), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Sinai Disengagement Agreement Vol II (4), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

four electronic sensor fields.¹⁴² The oil fields would be returned to Egypt within ten weeks, and Israel's redeployment completed within five months.¹⁴³

The final agreement included many significant mutual commitments, including the promise 'not to resort to the threat or use of force or military blockade against each other' and that the conflict 'between them and in the Middle East shall not be resolved by military force but by peaceful means'.¹⁴⁴ The agreement was acknowledged 'as a significant step toward a just and lasting peace' but 'not a final peace agreement'.¹⁴⁵ Finally, it would 'remain in force until superseded by a new agreement'.¹⁴⁶ As Kissinger reported to Ford, America's 'most optimistic assessments never included the possibility that Sadat would be willing to commit himself in a public document, contrary to the mainstream of the Arab world, against blockades and in favour of cargoes going through the Suez Canal – yet he has done so'.¹⁴⁷

The new Sinai agreement was as much an agreement between America and the belligerents as between Egypt and Israel. Many Egyptian commitments were made to the US in order to satisfy political sensitivities. Sadat provided letters to Ford containing commitments to annual UNEF renewals, Israeli passage through the Canal and Bab al-

¹⁴² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper*, 131, 142.

¹⁴³ Statement, White House, Agreement Between Egypt and Israel, 1 September 1975, ND 18/ CO 1-7, Box 31. White House Central Files: Subject File: ND 18/CO 1-7 to ND 18/CO 1-7, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper*, 125.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Kissinger report from Israel, 28 August 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.II (5), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Sinai Disengagement Agreement Vol II (4), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Mandab, early warning systems, reducing anti-Israel agitprop, loosening the economic blockade on US firms active in Israel, and upholding Sinai II if there were no progress at Geneva.¹⁴⁸ The Americans, in turn, passed on these commitments together with a bilateral memorandum of understanding to Israel, and also made policy pledges on reconvening Geneva, compensatory financial aid and the supply of F-16 aircraft.¹⁴⁹ The novel ‘memorandum of understanding’ contained six points, including a promise that Geneva would ‘be reconvened at a time coordinated between the United States and Israel’ as well as assurance that US policy towards the PLO would not change.¹⁵⁰ Additionally, the US would ‘make every effort’ to ensure that Geneva negotiations would be conducted bilaterally. America also promised to veto any Security Council resolution that would ‘alter adversely the terms of reference of the Geneva peace conference’, a reference to Syrian efforts to obtain a new, revisionist, Security Council resolution.¹⁵¹ A presidential letter to Rabin recognised that the agreement ‘constitutes an act of great significance on Israel’s part in the pursuit of final peace’ and that future negotiations over a final

¹⁴⁸ Memo, Agreement Between Egypt and Israel: Index, 1 September 1975, September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Documents (2), 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.III (9), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Sinai Disengagement Agreement Vol II (4), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Letter, Kissinger to Allon, 1 September 1975, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁴⁹ Letter, Kissinger to Allon, 1 September 1975, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁵⁰ Memo, Memorandum of Agreement between the Governments of Israel and the United States: The Geneva Peace Conference, 1 September 1975, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

settlement would ‘not require the US to put forward an overall proposal of its own’.¹⁵²

Moreover:

Should the US desire in the future to put forward proposals of its own, it will make every effort to coordinate with Israel its proposals with a view to refraining from putting forth proposals that Israel would consider unsatisfactory.¹⁵³

Those aforementioned commitments would attain great significance during the Carter administration.

The US provided Egypt with a presidential letter stating American policy on future negotiations, a letter from Kissinger conveying Israeli promises not to attack Syria, as well as a letter dealing with aid.¹⁵⁴

Sinai II: An Appraisal

Sadat had finally achieved his desired second Israeli withdrawal, but a year later than he had hoped, and on far less generous terms than he aspired. However, was Sinai II a good deal for Egypt? On balance, undoubtedly so. Sinai II was, as Kissinger described it, ‘the most far-reaching agreement ever made in the history of the Middle East conflict’.¹⁵⁵ On

¹⁵² Letter, Ford to Rabin, 1 September 1975, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Memo, Agreement Between Egypt and Israel: Index, 1 September 1975, September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Documents (2), 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.III (9), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Sinai Disengagement Agreement Vol II (4), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Ford, Fisher and American Jewish Leaders, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 8 September 1975, September 8, 1975 – Ford, Kissinger, Max Fisher, and American Jewish Leaders, Box 14, National Security Adviser MEMORANDA OF CONVERSATIONS, 1973-1977: July 21, 1975, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

the debit side of the ledger, Sadat ostensibly abandoned his prerogative to use force despite most of Sinai remaining occupied.¹⁵⁶ The agreement also led to the US supplying Israel with additional advanced weaponry that further widened the military gap with Egypt.¹⁵⁷

Politically, Sadat had gone further than any other Arab leader was willing to go, and paid a price for it in the form of isolation. No Arab power – not even a staunch US ally such as Saudi Arabia – came out in favour of the agreement, while Syria and the radical Arabs attacked it relentlessly.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, this isolation prompted Fahmy to demand that America pressure on America her Arab allies to come out in public support of Egypt,¹⁵⁹ and Ford to urge Sadat to stay the course and keep to the agreement he had signed.¹⁶⁰

Sadat, on the credit side, had secured the ‘best’ part of Sinai: Israel’s withdrawal to just beyond the strategically important Mitla and Giddi passes, as well as the return of the oil

¹⁵⁶ Kissinger, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Hussein, Rifai, Ben Shaker, Kissinger, US delegation, 3 September 1975, August 21 - September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol.III (9), Box 4, National Security Adviser: Kissinger Reports on USSR, China, and Middle East Discussions: Middle East Memcons and Reports: August 21 - September 1, 1975, Sinai Disengagement Agreement Vol II (4), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵⁷ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, President Sadat’s letter to President Ford, 22 September 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (29), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵⁸ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Helping Sadat, 9 September 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (25), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Memo, Ford to Sadat, Message for President Sadat, 10 September 1975, Egypt – President Sadat (1), Box 1, NSA: Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

fields.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, his gains, unlike Israel's, were tangible. Egypt's concessions were significant but provisional. Were the diplomatic process to culminate in a full peace treaty, Egypt would provide political guarantees surpassing the Sinai II pledges. On the other hand, if negotiations gridlocked and war loomed again, then Egypt could renounce its Sinai II undertakings as null and void. In the meantime, Sadat would have deprived Israel of the use of the oil fields, reduced her strategic advantage by forcing her to the passes, as well as set the new precedent of a peacetime Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land.

Sinai II also consolidated his partnership with the US. America's commitment to Egypt grew in scale and depth, with substantial new aid pledges and an unprecedented willingness to back Egypt over Israel. A package for \$750 million in economic aid and one million tonnes of grain was duly proposed by the Ford administration.¹⁶² The US also indicated a willingness to conclude a nuclear cooperation agreement with Egypt, another step that revealed the strides Sadat had made in Washington's corridors of power.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ However, it emerged that the Israelis had managed to delineate the lines so as to exclude four oil wells, leading Cairo to demand that the lines be adjusted accordingly. See Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Helping Sadat, 9 September 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE - NODIS (25), Box 7, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE NODIS (3), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁶² Memo, Kissinger to Rockefeller, Meeting with His Excellency Anwar al-Sadat, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 27 October 1975, CO 159 10/19/75-10/125/75, Box 55, White House Central Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁶³ Memo, Kratzer and Atherton to Kissinger, Nuclear Agreement with Egypt, 10 October 1975, Egypt (8), Box 4, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan. American conditions on nuclear assistance were exceptionally tough, and included banning fuel reprocessing in Egypt and allowing the US to 'take title to' any plutonium produced in Egypt. See Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, The Egyptian and Israeli Nuclear Agreements, 23 September 1976, Egypt (14), Box 4, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Finally, in assessing Sinai II, one must consider what the alternative was. It was not a superior interim agreement on better terms, or indeed the possibility of an acceptable comprehensive agreement. Rather it was complete diplomatic stalemate reminiscent of 1971-72, or a forced reconsideration of Egypt's war option at a time when she suffered a marked military disadvantage. Granted, Sadat's limited options were partly of his own making. He had prematurely burned his bridges with Moscow, and sabotaged all Fahmy's effort to reconcile with the Soviets.¹⁶⁴ As a result his military arsenal grew dilapidated, lending Jerusalem confidence that diplomacy was the only game Sadat could play. The Brezhnev visit episode demonstrated how Egypt could have benefited from the preservation of some vestiges of her relationship with the USSR. Nonetheless, the neglect of Syria's demands made plain that even an Arab army brimming with Soviet weaponry was insufficient to induce an Israeli withdrawal.

The Arab Reaction

Few in the Middle East took such a dispassionate view of Sadat's accomplishment. Assad attacked the Sinai II accords for allegedly being too generous to Israel, dividing the Arab states, and overlooking the Palestinians.¹⁶⁵ Syria was also worried by the consequent strengthening of Israel through expanded US aid programmes, as well as the introduction of a US presence in Sinai.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, opposition to Sinai II was not restricted to the

¹⁶⁴ Willie Morris, *Who Rules Egypt?*, 16 July 1977, FCO 93/1041, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁶⁵ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Cable from President Giscard d'Estaing of France, 19 November 1975, Outside the System Chronological File, 11/20/75 – 11/28/75, Box 3, National Security Adviser: Outside the System Chronological File 1974-1977, Chronological file: November 3, 1975, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

usual suspects. Crown Prince Fahd, the new de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia after the assassination of Faisal, declined to openly support Egypt, preferring to strike a Laodicean stance. This was discomfiting for Sadat, as the kingdom was a crucial wartime ally, a generous financial benefactor, and a bellwether state in the Arab world. The Saudis were worried that Sinai II would imply no more agreements in the immediate future on the Golan or the West Bank.¹⁶⁷ On this issue they were heavily influenced by Assad, who despite a professed insistence on a comprehensive agreement to secure Palestinian rights, was in fact devoted to securing Syrian interests first and foremost. This was demonstrated by his willingness in private talks with Kissinger to consider demilitarisation of the Golan and agree to formal non-belligerency in return for an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan, a position crafted in order to encourage the Israelis to stall their negotiations with Cairo.¹⁶⁸ Assad's *realpolitik* persuasions were also in evidence in the Lebanese civil war, where he backed the fascist Maronite Phalange, the very same group Israel supported. The Syrian army decimated both Palestinian forces in Lebanon and leftist Lebanese militias, along with much of Damascus' Arabist credentials. Sadat, cynically, supported the Palestinian *fedayeen* and the most intractable Lebanese left-wing elements that were allied with the Soviets, all because Assad supported their enemies.¹⁶⁹ As Syria contested Egypt's Arab leadership in the wake of Sinai II, Sadat endeavoured to ensure the failure of the

¹⁶⁷ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Meeting With Prince Saud Bin Faisal Al Saud, 18 September 1975, Saudi Arabia (1), Box 27, Gerald R. Ford Papers: Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Pakistan (4), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁶⁸ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, Discussion of Middle East Strategy, 21 April 1975, NSC Meeting, 15/5/75 – Panama Canal (1), Box 10, US National Security Council Institutional Files: 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 396.

¹⁶⁹ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Your Meeting with President Numeiri of the Sudan – Situation in Lebanon, Sudan (2), Box 6, NSA: Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Lebanese Developments, 28 March 1976, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (40), Box 9, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (36), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

challenge, even if that entailed alliances of convenience in the backstreets of Beirut with radicals such as Iraq and Libya.¹⁷⁰ Egypt also attempted to undercut Syrian activities in the Security Council, calling for a meeting on 3 May to debate the situation in the Middle East.¹⁷¹

Jordan echoed Syria's admonishment of Egypt, with the Crown Prince believing that the 'Sinai agreement was more than called for'.¹⁷² Jordanian criticism, though, was Pharisaic. Hussein himself was willing to abandon the Arab consensus for a certain price, with his Prime Minister Zaid Rifai offering in the White House to 'ignore all the other Arabs only for the return of all the West Bank and East Jerusalem'.¹⁷³ In truth, Jordanian attacks could be ascribed to frustration that Sadat had pinched Hussein's moderate policies and applied them far more successfully, as reflected in Rifai's complaints that despite being America's 'old friends' 'Johnny-come-lately' Egypt enjoyed more support.¹⁷⁴

Sadat attacked his Arab and Soviet critics in a petulant speech on 15 September, articulating popular Egyptian frustration with Syrian Baathist policy, Palestinian attacks

¹⁷⁰ Memo, Oakley/Houghton to Kissinger, President's Friday Brief: The Lebanese Crisis: Shifting Arab Patterns, 10 June 1976, NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files, Box 77, Peace Negotiations Chronological File, 12/5/1976 –21/6/1976, Box 10, Declassified RAC Documents: Documents from the NSC Middle East and South Asian Affairs Staff Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷¹ Memoranda, Scranton and Sisco to Ford, United Nations Security Council Debate on the Middle East, 22 May 1976, Box 32, White House Central Files: Subject File: ND 18/CO 1-7 to ND 18/CO 26, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷² Crown Prince Hassan, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Ford, Hassan, Scowcroft, 9 December 1975, December 9 1975 – Ford, Jordanian Crown Prince Hassan, Box 16, National Security Adviser MEMORANDA OF CONVERSATIONS, 1973-1977: October 10, 1975, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷³ Rifai, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, King Hussein, Rifai, 24 March 1976, March 31 1976 – Ford, Kissinger, King Hussein, Rifai, Box 18, National Security Adviser MEMORANDA OF CONVERSATIONS, 1973-1977: February 19 1976, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷⁴ Rifai, quoted in *Ibid.*

on Cairo, and Soviet attempts to undermine Egypt.¹⁷⁵ Such diatribes were not helpful, as they simply increased Egypt's unilateral reliance on the US and encouraged the Soviets to further challenge Egyptian policy.¹⁷⁶ In any case Moscow, while frustrated by its exclusion from the diplomacy, could not do much to contest the American achievement.

Significantly, however, Sinai II was popular domestically. Egyptians were prepared to take their leader's word that the agreement was good for Egypt, and were eager to secure a peace dividend and a reduction in their pecuniary hardships.¹⁷⁷ Elements in both the far left and far right of the Egyptian political scene attacked Sadat for securing too little for Egypt and conceding too much, but opposition was neither concerted nor effective.¹⁷⁸ Within the regime, Sadat enjoyed broad support. Fahmy did complain about the agreement in the wake of the Arab fallout, but nonetheless remained supportive. The military too, though increasingly concerned about the Soviet arms embargo and America's reluctance to provide weapons, remained loyal to the president's policy.¹⁷⁹

The Fruit of Sadat's Labour

¹⁷⁵ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Potential Impact of Sadat's Anti-Soviet Stance, 17 September 1975, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – EXDIS (5), Box 6, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams-From SECSTATE NODIS (17), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Briefing Paper, State Visit of Egyptian President and Mrs Sadat: Background Paper for Mrs. Ford, White House Central Files, CO 159 5/1/75-10/18/75, Box 55, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷⁸ Memo, Kissinger to Rockefeller, Meeting with His Excellency Anwar al-Sadat, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 27 October 1975, CO 159 10/19/75-10/25/75, Box 55, White House Central Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Despite the distancing of erstwhile friends in the East, Sinai II opened doors in the West, particularly America. Sadat arrived there on 27 October for an official state visit. The visit epitomised the remarkable turnaround in relations with the United States over which Sadat presided. At the start of his presidency Egypt had no diplomatic relations with the US. Five years on, Sadat was being fêted in the White House.

Thus far, Sadat's wager – that only the US could deliver Israel and return Egyptian land – had succeeded. If the first disengagement agreement arguably could have been secured through the Soviets, Sinai II demonstrated the central role America would henceforth play in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Were it not for US political heft, Sinai II would not have seen the light of day. Without American financial largesse, the gap between Egypt and Israel simply could not have been bridged. The US was the only intermediary whose assurances Israel would accept, and Egypt was only willing to provide guarantees to the US. Only America, by virtue of her status as Israel's paymaster and protector, could bend Jerusalem to her will, and even then only partially so.

Sadat personally expressed his thanks for all this to 'his brother' Ford.¹⁸⁰ He also again pushed for more aid. Sadat wanted short-term American loans rolled over into longer-term maturities, as well as permission to purchase US F-5E fighters to replace Egypt's grounded fleet of Soviet MiGs.¹⁸¹ The US administration, though, was in two minds. On

¹⁸⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, 6 November 1975, November 6 1975 – Ford, Kissinger, Box 16. National Security Adviser MEMORANDA OF CONVERSATIONS, 1973-1977: October 10, 1975, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁸¹ Sadat, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Sadat, Fahmy, 27 October 1975, October 27-28 1975 – Ford, Kissinger. Sadat, Fahmy, Box 16. National Security Adviser MEMORANDA

the one hand it though it fair to reward Sadat by providing arms.¹⁸² On the other it was wary of both Congressional opposition and the potential magnitude of Egyptian demands. One compromise solution was to provide the Egyptians with small-scale military relief, but that would neither satisfy Cairo nor please Jerusalem.¹⁸³ All the same, it was all political circumstances would allow, and it was the choice Ford opted for by deciding to provide 8 C-130s transport planes and training to select Egyptian officers, despite heavy Israeli opposition.¹⁸⁴ Significantly, the transport planes were supplied under Foreign Military Sales public financing – subject to Congressional approval – rather than as a strictly commercial arrangement.¹⁸⁵ The symbolism and precedent of an official military link between Egypt and the US was gratifying to Sadat, and was yet another significant policy milestone for the Egyptian president, and another visible sign of US confidence in him.¹⁸⁶

Reculer Pour Mieux Sauter

OF CONVERSATIONS, 1973-1977: October 10, 1975, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁸² Memo, US Military Relationship with Egypt, Egypt (8), Box 4, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Memo, Granger and Oakley to Scowcroft, FMS Sales to Egypt of C-130s and Military Training, 13 November 1975, Egypt (8), Box 4, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Memorandum of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Eilts, Scowcroft, 9 March 1976, March 9 1976 – Ford, Kissinger, Eilts, Box 18, National Security Adviser MEMORANDA OF CONVERSATIONS, 1973-1977: February 19 1976, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁸⁵ Memo, Scowcroft to Kissinger, C-130s for Egypt, Egypt (12), Box 4, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁸⁶ Memo, Kissinger to Ford, US Military Relationship with Egypt, 12 January 1976, Egypt (8), Box 4, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt (5), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

In the aftermath of his visit to the US, and the successful implementation of the Sinai II accords, Sadat could focus once again on internal issues in Egypt. Diplomacy would – by mutual American-Egyptian agreement – fade into desuetude for the following 18 months, as the Ford administration prepared for the upcoming elections. Sadat's sympathies were firmly with the Republicans, accustomed as he was to successfully working with Kissinger, and grateful to Ford for pressuring Israel as no US president had done since Eisenhower. In the meantime, Sadat turned his attention to Egypt's myriad domestic problems. Egyptians had been expecting to reap a peace dividend, yet their hopes were not fully met. The economy was rapidly expanding, but growth was being fuelled by oil money inflows rather than productivity gains, and the resulting inflation hurt the most vulnerable classes of society. Sadat's open door *infitah* economic policy exacerbated this, prompting an import boom that aggravated Egypt's twin budget and current account deficits.

Egypt's economic ills regularly intruded on her foreign policy. Sadat had to repeatedly request aid, cap in hand, in both Arabia and the West. Nonetheless, the Egyptian government was still reluctant to decisively confront its structural economic maladies, preferring instead to soothe the symptoms through foreign aid. Donor nations, however, increasingly pressed Egypt to undertake fundamental reform, and conditioned more aid on the implementation of measures recommended by the International Monetary Fund.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Memo, Scowcroft to Ford, Letter from President Sadat on Egyptian Economy – Proposed Reply, 29 November 1974, Egypt – President Sadat (2), Box 1, NSA: Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Those measures would cause much angst in the years to come, though Sadat initially agreed to gradually embark upon economic restructuring.¹⁸⁸

While Sadat contentedly watched his diplomatic eggs hatch, Assad attempted a new tactic to pressure Israel into a second withdrawal in the Golan. He confounded Israel in a new forum: the United Nations, which was perceived as more advantageous because of the influence of the USSR, European, and non-aligned states. Syria refused to renew the UNDOF peacekeepers' mandate in the Golan except after the Security Council debated Israel's occupation of the Golan and other Arab territories.¹⁸⁹ The Security Council duly met on November 30 and in Resolution 381 agreed to debate the 'Middle East problem including the Palestinian question' in January,¹⁹⁰ leading Rabin to accuse the US of allowing the Syrians a 'tactical success' by approving the resolution.¹⁹¹ Rabin was equally dismayed by the January Security Council sessions in which the PLO participated, even though America cast the only vote against a resolution calling on Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories and reaffirming the Palestinian right to self-determination and refugees' right of return.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Anwar Al-Sadat and Hermann Eilts, at Barrages, Egypt, 14 October 1976, President Sadat (2), Box 1, NSA: Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁸⁹ Memo, Rabin to Ford, Letter from Rabin, 16 December 1975, Israel – Prime Minister Rabin, Box 2, NSA: Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁹⁰ United Nations, "Security Council Resolutions -1975."
<http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res/1975/scres75.htm>.

¹⁹¹ Memo, Rabin to Ford, Letter from Rabin, 16 December 1975, Israel – Prime Minister Rabin, Box 2, NSA: Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, 1974-1977, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁹² Embassy of Israel Report, The Security Council Debate on the Situation in Jerusalem and the West Bank, 22 March 1976, Israel (24), Box 16, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Israel (15), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Rabin's foreign policy in the aftermath of Sinai II was centred on two planks: the reconvening of Geneva and a dependence on crude military power if faced with the prospect of renewed conflict.¹⁹³ Ironically, Israel renewed her interest in Geneva – previously Syria's favoured forum – only after Assad attempted to shift negotiations to the Security Council. All new invitees to Geneva were subject to the veto of the original participants, thus Israel could prevent the infandous PLO from participating, and instead offer to accept West Bankers in the Jordanian delegation.¹⁹⁴ The US supported Israel on this point, arguing fairly that so long as the PLO refused to accept Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 it could not partake in the peace process aiming to implement them.¹⁹⁵

The new American strategy was to persuade Israel to withdraw from substantial territories on all three fronts in return for non-belligerency,¹⁹⁶ a concept that was accepted by the Israeli cabinet in principle.¹⁹⁷ The US reasoning was that as none of the Arabs was willing to offer full peace, and Israel was certainly unwilling to fully withdraw to the pre-1967 boundaries, the only way to reconcile the parties was to substitute non-belligerency for peace, and a substantial for a full withdrawal, respectively. This was a less ambitious approach than that which the Carter administration would follow. In the case of Egypt

¹⁹³ Memo, Toon to Kissinger, Rabin: His Style and His Policy, 15 January 1976, Israel (22), Box 16, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Israel (15), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁹⁴ Memoranda, Scowcroft to Rockefeller, Meeting with Yigal Allon, CO 71 Israel 1/1/76 – 1/25/76, Box 27, White House Central Files: Subject File: CO 71-71, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Eilts, Scowcroft, 9 March 1976, March 9 1976 – Ford, Kissinger, Eilts, Box 18, National Security Adviser MEMORANDA OF CONVERSATIONS, 1973-1977: February 19 1976, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁹⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 1037.

this meant a withdrawal to the line of El Arish – Ras Mohamed, leaving approximately a third of Sinai in Israeli hands.¹⁹⁸ Fahmy suggested that in return Egypt would only affirm her intent to declare non-belligerency once Israel left Sinai entirely.¹⁹⁹ Sadat, however, eventually warmed to the possibility of non-belligerency in return for a withdrawal to within 25 kilometres of the international border.²⁰⁰ Both Hussein and Assad, though, remained non-committal, preferring as ever to wait and see.²⁰¹ In any case, the American plan would not be attempted before the US presidential elections. In the few remaining months of the Ford administration, with the Republicans trailing in the national polls, the US could not attempt to produce progress in the Middle East. Diplomacy would lie fallow until a new political map emerged in 1977.

In many ways this, too, worked in Sadat's favour. He would have a year to rebuild domestic consensus in favour of another deal with Israel. In the meantime, Sadat would have to endure the continuing Syrian vitriol that led the two countries to sever diplomatic relations, though he took evident pleasure in the difficulties Assad was encountering in Lebanon after Syria's military intervention there. Sadat was careful not to involve his own troops in the quagmire, relying instead on Lebanese proxies and the PLO – both of whom he supported with arms – to insure that the Arab radicals remained divided by

¹⁹⁸ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Talk with Sadat RE Non-Belligerency Concept, 12 March 1976, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (39), Box 9, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (36), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

¹⁹⁹ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Fahmy on Non-Belligerency Concept, 18 March 1976, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (39), Box 9, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (36), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²⁰⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 1035.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1052.

Lebanon.²⁰² Indeed, Fahmy would quip that ‘if there were no (war in) Lebanon, we would have to create one’.²⁰³ Sadat, however, was willing to send soldiers to support Numeiri, his long-standing ally in Sudan.²⁰⁴ His tactics largely succeeded. By the autumn of 1976 Assad had neither persuaded Sadat to renounce Sinai II nor successfully isolated him in the Arab world. Instead, Syria was on the defensive in Lebanon, forced to declare a truce in the war of words with Egypt. At a meeting in Riyadh in October, a deferential Assad buried the hatchet with Sadat for the time being.²⁰⁵ In return, Sadat accepted the Syrian presence in Lebanon under an Arab League banner.²⁰⁶ Sadat further agreed to host Hussein in Cairo after the personal intercession of Assad.²⁰⁷ But his personal dislike of the ‘jackal’ Hussein had intensified in light of Jordan’s support for Syria.²⁰⁸

More serious was Sadat’s incontinent anger with Qadhafi for his condemnation of Sinai II, as well as Libyan attempts at subversion in Cairo, Khartoum, and Tunis, which

²⁰² Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Meeting with Sadat, 11 June 1976, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (44), Box 9, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (36), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²⁰³ Fahmy, quoted in Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Talk with Fahmy, 27 August 1976, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (48), Box 9, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (36), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²⁰⁴ Sadat sent two infantry battalions and one MiG squadron to assist Numeiri. See Memo, US Defence Attaché Cairo to DIA, Egyptian Military Assistance to Sudan, 2 August 1976, NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files: Box 23: Country File Sri Lanka-Syria, Box 8, Declassified RAC Documents: Documents from the NSC Middle East and South Asian Affairs Staff Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²⁰⁵ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Fahmy on mini-summit and summit, 30 October 1976, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (44), Box 9, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (36), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Sadat, quoted in Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Talk with Sadat, 11 August 1976, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – NODIS (47), Box 9, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (36), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

prompted Egypt to seriously threaten her western neighbour with military action.²⁰⁹ Sadat ordered a troop build-up of 10 000 soldiers as well as aircraft and helicopter squadrons on the Libyan border to both intimidate Qadhafi as well as encourage an internal Libyan coup.²¹⁰ US intelligence estimated a sixty percent chance that Egypt would invade before the end of October, and predicted that if she did she would quickly emerge victorious.²¹¹ The tension gradually subsided, however, with Sadat wisely choosing not to squander Arab political capital by invading a neighbour, as Assad had done in Lebanon, and to maintain an equable focus on retrieving Sinai.

Farewell, Moscow

Sadat, however, did hit back at the Soviet Union, the ringleader of the radical Arabs. In a lengthy speech on 14 March, Sadat announced a final break with the Soviet Union, and requested that parliament abrogate the Treaty of Friendship with the USSR.²¹² Sadat had repeatedly pondered annulling the treaty, which he felt was forced on him as the price for dismissing Ali Sabri and his fellow Soviet sympathisers in 1971.²¹³ The straw that broke

²⁰⁹ Libya had been linked to the bombing of a government building in central Cairo. See Memo, Oakley/Houghton to Kissinger, President's Thursday Brief: Possibility of Egyptian Attack on Libya, 18 August 1976, NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files, Box 80, Peace Negotiations Chronological File, 1/8/1976 –12/9/1976, Box 10, Declassified RAC Documents: Documents from the NSC Middle East and South Asian Affairs Staff Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Memo, Analyses of Egyptian-Libyan Confrontation, NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files, Box 80, Peace Negotiations Chronological File, 1/8/1976 –12/9/1976, Box 10, Declassified RAC Documents: Documents from the NSC Middle East and South Asian Affairs Staff Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²¹² Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Preliminary Comments on Sadat's Speech, 14 March 1976, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE – EXDIS (6), Box 6, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams-From SECSTATE NODIS (17), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²¹³ Ibid.

the Egyptian camel's back was Moscow blocking Cairo's attempts to obtain spare parts for its Soviet airplanes from India's arsenal.²¹⁴ This time, despite the misgivings of Fahmy, the die was finally cast.²¹⁵

Taking such a step at a time of extreme economic difficulty and a complete military embargo was quite daring. In many ways the decision to revoke the treaty was comparable to the 1972 decision to expel Soviet military personnel from Egypt. Both decisions were justified by arguing that the Soviets were not fulfilling their commitments to Egypt. In the case of the friendship treaty Cairo charged that Moscow had neither fulfilled the spirit of the treaty nor its obligations under article 8 by not only withholding new weapons and spare parts from Egypt, but also interceding to prevent other states such as North Korea from providing needed equipment.²¹⁶ Moscow's ungenerous stance with regards to debt repayments was perceived in a similar vein. Yet the move also reflected Egypt's confidence in the wake of Sinai II, as well as the reality that the Soviets were perhaps already doing their utmost to diminish Egypt's standing in the region.²¹⁷ They had already ceased all military and economic aid, and actively opposed Egyptian influence in the Middle East. There was not much more they could do to hurt Egypt.

Fortunately for Sadat, the United States was finally becoming more of a benefactor. Over and above the \$700 million in aid the US committed in 1976, a further \$650 million was

²¹⁴ Telhami, *Power and Leadership*, 69.

²¹⁵ Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 176.

²¹⁶ See Memo, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-21-17-3-85-3, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²¹⁷ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Preliminary Comments on Sadat's Speech, 14 March 1976, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE - EXDIS (6), Box 6, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams-From SECSTATE NODIS (17), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

forthcoming in 1977.²¹⁸ The principle of official US military aid to Egypt had also been established, with the administration forcefully arguing in Congress that Egypt merited assistance, especially in light of the Soviet arms pouring in to her rivals Syria and Libya.²¹⁹ America's military aid spigot was opened at a particularly apt time, as the rumblings of discontent emanating from Egyptian barracks were growing increasingly audible in 1976. Gamasy was forced to redeploy Egypt's second and third armies on field exercises in order to counter subversion of officers stationed in the Canal Zone.²²⁰ In Ismailia military riot police had to be deployed to counter insurrections in both the army and the air force, with over fifty officers arrested and cashiered.²²¹ By providing arms America sought to personally strengthen Sadat, with Ford declaring that 'we must keep Sadat in office' as 'he has done more than anyone since I have been president to try and find a non-military understanding with Israel'.²²² Moreover, it was far preferable for the US to control the regional military balance than any other state, with Ford rationalising

²¹⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, American Jewish Leadership Group, 17 March 1976, March 17 1976 – Ford, Kissinger, American Jewish Leadership Group, Box 18, National Security Adviser MEMORANDA OF CONVERSATIONS, 1973-1977: February 19 1976, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Memo, US Defence Attaché Cairo to DIA, Reported Dissension Within Egyptian Armed Forces, 31 March 1976, NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files: Box 2: Country File Egypt, Box 8, Declassified RAC Documents: Documents from the NSC Middle East and South Asian Affairs Staff Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²²¹ Memo, US Defence Attaché Cairo to DIA, Reported Dissension Within the Egyptian Armed Forces, 13 April 1976, NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files: Box 2: Country File Egypt, Box 8, Declassified RAC Documents: Documents from the NSC Middle East and South Asian Affairs Staff Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Memo, US Defence Attaché Cairo to DIA, Unrest in the Military, 2 April 1976, NSC Middle East and South Asia Affairs Staff Files: Box 2: Country File Egypt, Box 8, Declassified RAC Documents: Documents from the NSC Middle East and South Asian Affairs Staff Files, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

²²² Ford, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, American Jewish Leadership Group, 17 March 1976, March 17 1976 – Ford, Kissinger, American Jewish Leadership Group, Box 18, National Security Adviser MEMORANDA OF CONVERSATIONS, 1973-1977: February 19 1976, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

that 'it is better for us to be able to turn them on and off than for others to be in that position'.²²³

Fin d'année, Fin d'époque

The end of 1976 brought unwelcome news to Sadat. Jimmy Carter, the Democratic challenger, defeated Ford in a race that went down to the wire. Ford's political career was over, and more ominously for Sadat, so was Kissinger's. Henry Kissinger, more than anyone, had been the target of Sadat's foreign policy since becoming president in 1970. Sadat had identified him as the man to solve Egypt's predicament. He had previously unsuccessfully approached Kissinger through Hafiz Ismail in 1972. Following Yom Kippur it was Kissinger and Sadat who, more than anyone else, dominated the post-war diplomacy through their personal rapport. Sadat was comfortable with Kissinger's *modus operandi* and trusted his judgement. He bet heavily on Kissinger for three years, and despite the occasional setback, his wagers largely won. The prospect of not having Kissinger marshal future negotiations with Israel was a bitter and bewildering pill for Sadat to swallow.

Sadat also now again faced the considerable burden of re-establishing a personal relationship and ensuring policy synergy with a third American president in three years. He had expended considerable time and energy on his relationship with Ford, and by the eve of the elections could contemplate with satisfaction his success in persuading Ford,

²²³ Ford, quoted in Ibid.

like Nixon before him, to enact policies favourable to Egypt. Sadat's past successes were now extraneous. He would have to start from scratch with Jimmy Carter and his Democrats, a party viewed in Cairo as in the pay of the Jewish lobby and remembered for the antagonistic policies of Lyndon Johnson.

The unwelcome international news was compounded by the most serious popular domestic challenge the Egyptian regime had ever faced. Sadat's sudden slashing of public subsidies on 17 January 1977, as long advocated by the US and the IMF, led to extensive and widespread rioting across Egypt. The Egyptian state was faced with an unanticipated explosion of anomie that lasted several days, and which was only overcome through a series of curfews, the rescinding of the subsidy cuts, and the deployment of the army in the streets of Cairo.²²⁴ A more inauspicious start to the year could not have been imagined.

²²⁴ Memo, Eilts to Kissinger, Secretary's Farewell Messages to Sadat and Fahmy, 19 January 1977, Egypt - State Department Telegrams TO SECSTATE - NODIS (53), Box 9, Presidential Country Files for the Middle East and South Asia: Country File: Egypt-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE NODIS (36), Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Chapter Five: Sadat's *Via Ardua*

Nineteen seventy-seven heralded unprecedented domestic discontent and renewed international uncertainty for Sadat. The aftermath of the food riots left him in an agitated state, eager for further diplomatic progress in order to relieve the defence burden and economic strain on the Egyptian state. Moreover, as a result of his gradual liberalisation of domestic politics, organised opposition to Sadat was beginning to emerge and coalesce around two focal points: right-wing Islamism and the evergreen left-wing Nasserism. Both attacked his accommodationist policy towards America and Israel as well as his belligerent stance towards radical Arab states such as Libya, a policy that also generated controversy within the armed forces.¹ Sadat was also under pressure from his military to obtain more arms from the US, including F-5 jets and anti-tank missiles.² Sadat had more ambitious aid objectives, including a Rommel-inspired US-equipped 'Africa Corps' that Egypt could deploy against Communists in the Horn of Africa.³ But the new American administration was still an unknown quantity, and that provoked much confusion over the future direction the Arab-Israeli peace process would follow.

¹ Memo, Bowdler and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments, 1 September 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE 17 B-4-19-7-3, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Armed clashes broke out on the border in July after the Mossad informed Cairo about an alleged Qadhafi plot to assassinate Sadat. See Hirst and Beeson, *Sadat*, 285.

² Memo, Holcomb to Cabinet Secretary, Subjects for President Carter's Meeting with President Sadat 4-5 April 1977, 30 March 1977, Egypt, President Sadat, 4/4-5/77: Cables and Memos, Box 3, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: VIP Visit File: China through Egypt: Collection 5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Memo, Communist Aid to Less Developed Countries, 1976, June 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-31-23-4-1-7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

³ Memorandum of Conversation, PRC Meeting on Middle East, 19 April 1977, [Meetings – PRC 13: 4/19/77], Box 24: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Meetings – Muskie/Brow/Brzezinski: 10/80-1/81] through [Meetings – PRC 55: 2/27/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Jimmy Carter was the consummate Washington outsider. He hailed from the small town of Plains, Georgia. Originally trained as a US naval officer, Carter had become a peanut farmer before entering the political arena. He had served two terms as state senator in Georgia, before winning the post of Governor, which he held from 1971-1975. Carter had been a complete unknown on the national political stage before he announced his intention to run for president. He also had no foreign policy experience, and little knowledge of the Middle East other than what he gleaned from his nightly readings of the Bible. During his presidential campaign he had, however, admitted a preference for the comprehensive peace plan published by the Brookings institution, and had appointed one of the authors – Zbigniew Brzezinski – his National Security Adviser. Brzezinski was a Polish born American political scientist from Columbia University in New York. He would serve in the new administration as the Democrats' Kissinger. Cyrus Vance, the new Secretary of State, was a lawyer with a long career of service in previous Democrat administrations. He had served as the Secretary of the Army under John Kennedy and Deputy Secretary of Defence under Lyndon Johnson. Vance, too, favoured an all-inclusive strategy. The new administration decided that the US would forthwith begin consultations with the Middle Eastern states on their respective visions for a settlement, but favoured a comprehensive approach involving the reconvening of the Geneva conference in the latter half of 1977, an aspiration that Rabin acceded to after meeting Carter in early March.⁴ The administration also supported, to Sadat's dislike and Israel's

⁴ Memo, Quandt to Brzezinski, PRM – 3 – Middle East, 3 February 1977, [Meetings – PRC 2: 2/4/77], Box 24: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Meetings – Muskie/Brow/Brzezinski: 10/80-1/81] through [Meetings – PRC 55: 2/27/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Press Release, 7 March 1977, Rabin (Israel) Visit, 3/77, Box 11, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Schecter Chrons: 9/79 through 5/7-8/77 President Trip to London: Collection 13, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

despair, the participation of the Soviets in the peace process as guarantors of any agreements reached.⁵ Unlike Nixon and Kissinger, Carter and his team did not think it in America's interests to entirely marginalise the USSR from the peace process. Instead they preferred to use Soviet influence to persuade the more radical Arabs to enter negotiations. This new policy was epitomised by a joint Soviet-US statement on 1 October on the Middle East, which included key coded language in support of traditional Arab-Soviet positions, such as the need for 'the resolution of the Palestinian question including insuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people'.⁶ The new emphasis on a multilateral approach was also stark, with the declaration stating:

The United States and the Soviet Union believe that the only right and effective way for achieving a fundamental solution to all aspects of the Middle East problem in its entirety is negotiations within the framework of the Geneva Peace Conference, specially convened for these purposes, with participation in its work of the representatives of all the parties involved in the conflict including those of the Palestinian people, and legal and contractual formalisation of the decisions reached at the conference.⁷

However, America's initial conception of Geneva was not necessarily hazardous to the prospects of bilateral peace treaties. Rather, the Carter administration thought of Geneva as a symbolic forum that would be used to consolidate agreements once the major issues were resolved, which was also similar to how Sadat conceived of the forum.⁸

⁵ Memo, Quandt to Brzezinski, PRM – 3 – Middle East, 3 February 1977, [Meetings – PRC 2: 2/4/77], Box 24: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Meetings – Muskie/Brow/Brzezinski: 10/80-1/81] through [Meetings – PRC 55: 2/27/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶ Statement, Joint Soviet-US Statement on the Middle East, Israel, Prime Minister Begin: Briefing Book, Box 7, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: VIP Visit File: Israel through Italy: Collection 5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Memo, Quandt to Brzezinski, PRC Meeting on the Middle East, 18 April 1977, [Meetings – PRC 13: 4/19/77], Box 24: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Meetings – Muskie/Brow/Brzezinski: 10/80-1/81] through [Meetings – PRC 55: 2/27/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

What Sadat wanted most was a final agreement to bring about a full Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. However, he continued to regard the prospect of full peace with Israel as anathema, preferring the more watered down non-belligerency nomenclature. In his first meeting with Carter in April Sadat initially dismissed the prospects of a peace treaty and full diplomatic relations, arguing that distrust between Arabs and Jews was still too intense, and that normalisation should await future generations.⁹ Sadat managed to once again establish a close personal relationship with a new American president at first acquaintance, with Carter describing his meeting with the Egyptian president as a ‘shining light burst on the Middle East scene’.¹⁰ Sadat, after pressure by Carter, eventually proffered the possibility of full peace within five years of a settlement. This was a momentous development, comparable to the change of heart that prompted Sadat to sign on to Kissinger’s step-by-step diplomacy in the winter of 1973. His acceptance of full peace provided the US with a political and moral *quid pro quo* with which to demand the full return of Sinai by Israel. It was a major break from Sadat’s previous policy and that of Nasser. Sadat also accepted minor changes in the 1967 borders in some areas, and concurred with Carter that Jerusalem should not be re-divided so long as Arabs could control their holy places within the city. Equally significantly, Sadat signalled his readiness to negotiate directly with the Israelis, ‘provided the Palestinian issue is resolved’.¹¹ This was another milestone in Egyptian policy, as Sadat, like Nasser before

⁹ Carter, quoted in Memo, Lewis to Clough to Carter, Israeli Cabinet decisions on Next Steps in Peace Process, 22 January 1978, 1/24/78 [1], Box 69, Staff Offices: Office of Staff Secretary: Handwriting File: State of the Union [Address] Drafts [1/19/78] [3] through 1/24/78 [2], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁰ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 282.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 283.

him, had steadfastly refused meeting directly with Israelis. All the same, Sadat still pushed strongly for America's involvement in the diplomacy as an active participant rather than an interlocutor between the two sides, and requested a US peace proposal to bridge the gap between the Arab and Israeli positions and reignite the diplomatic process.

Israel, however, continued to demand a full peace treaty in return for an incomplete final withdrawal, with Rabin's Labour cabinet hoping to expand Israel westwards to absorb Sharm al-Sheikh, as well as retain a *cordon sanitaire* of Israeli settlements in northern Sinai designed to separate Egypt from Gaza; indeed the Sinai settlements served as statements of intent with regards to Israel's planned territorial enlargement.¹² As for the position of Syria, she demanded a comprehensive Israeli withdrawal and satisfaction for the Palestinians, all in return for non-belligerency. Such a gap between Israeli, Egyptian, and Arab positions, begged the questions of how, where, in what order, and to what end would negotiations be conducted?

It was resolved that Vance would seek to agree basic principles with the participating states over the summer of 1977 in preparation for the reconvening of Geneva later in the year.¹³ That meant that Egypt and the other Arab states had to contemplate and articulate what precisely each would offer Israel in an immediate settlement, and Israel had to ponder what exactly she meant by 'normalisation' with the Arab states and how far she

¹² Memo, CIA Directorate of Intelligence Memorandum: The Politics of Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories, 30 March 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-25-103-7-2-1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹³ Memorandum of Conversation, PRC Meeting on Middle East, 19 April 1977, [Meetings – PRC 13: 4/19/77], Box 24: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Meetings – Muskie/Brow/Brzezinski: 10/80-1/81] through [Meetings – PRC 55: 2/27/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

would withdraw in return for it.¹⁴ In a draft peace proposal prepared in August by the Egyptian Foreign Ministry Cairo offered its hackneyed package: non-belligerency and a peace ‘agreement’ – rather than a ‘treaty’ – in return for complete Israeli withdrawal from all Arab lands conquered in 1967 and self-determination for Palestinians.¹⁵ This meant no full peace, no immediate normalisation, and minimal security guarantees.¹⁶ The Israeli draft, in turn, demanded full peace and normalisation in return for a withdrawal to borders to be negotiated between the parties – code for an incomplete pullback – and the demilitarisation of all evacuated Egyptian land, as well as other myriad guarantees.¹⁷

The involvement of the PLO in Geneva was a further major point of difference, with Israel extremely hostile to its presence and Syria entirely insistent on it. Moscow too, preferred the PLO to attend, and was pressuring the organisation to renounce terror and accept both Israel’s right to exist and resolution 242 – America’s pre-conditions for PLO involvement in the peace process.¹⁸ Sadat also wanted the PLO attend – if only to frustrate his nemesis Hussein, but would not jeopardise the negotiations over the issue.

¹⁴ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Weekly National Security Report #11, 29 April 1977, Weekly Reports [to the President], 1-15: [2/77-6/77], Box 41: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Trios] – Four Power Meetings: [9/77-1/80] through Weekly Reports (to the President), 61-71: [6/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁵ It is crucial to note here the *décalage* between the proposals prepared by the foreign ministry diplomats, such as the one cited above, and those formulated by Sadat, which on the whole were far more flexible and realistic. Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 217.

¹⁶ For example, demilitarised zones in Sinai would not exceed five kilometres. See *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁸ Memo, Quandt to Brzezinski, PRC Meeting on the Middle East, 18 April 1977, [Meetings – PRC 13: 4/19/77], Box 24: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Meetings – Muskie/Brow/Brzezinski: 10/80-1/81] through [Meetings – PRC 55: 2/27/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Hussein naturally opposed the PLO attending Geneva in its own right, and still harboured designs for the return of Hashemite rule to the West Bank.¹⁹

Like Assad, Hussein also preferred a united Arab delegation at Geneva in order to avert Arab pressure on Amman as well as prevent a separate Egyptian-Israeli bilateral agreement.²⁰ The Syrio-Soviet push for a united Arab delegation was designed to constrain Egyptian diplomacy and thwart any bilateral agreement with Israel. Their proposed united delegation would not only meet for the plenary session, but would collectively negotiate with Israel according to a functional basis that would apply on all fronts. For example, it would negotiate the question of demilitarisation in Sinai, the Golan, and the Palestinian territories, all at once. The concept was fundamentally impractical and unmerited, and purely formulated to ensure a deal for Syria, or no deal at all. Egypt and Israel preferred to negotiate on a geographic rather than functional basis, which would maximise the chances of success at Geneva by avoiding haggling to the lowest common rejectionist denominator.

Likud's Bolt from the Blue

Preparations for Geneva were severely disrupted, however, by political change in Israel. The fractious Labour government finally fell after Rabin was forced to resign on 22 April for minor financial infractions. The May parliamentary elections, however, did not

¹⁹ Memo, Husayn Visit, 20 April 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-25-104-3-11-4, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰ Ibid.

produce the expected Labour triumph. Instead the Likud coalition, under the intransigent leadership of Menachem Begin, marshalled a stunning parliamentary victory.

This was most unwelcome news as Likud, espousing Ze'ev Jabotinsky's hard-line revisionist Zionism, was far more ideological and considerably less pragmatic than Labour. Begin, in turn, was one of the most uncompromising members of Likud and was the leader of Herut, the successor party to the Irgun. He regarded himself as Jabotinsky's 'political heir', a claim substantiated by the policies promoted throughout his political career.²¹ The new prime minister was an old Irgun terrorist, and his strident belligerence had not diminished with time. He was also, like Sadat, vociferously anti-Soviet; his political hostility mixed with personal resentment for the anti-Semitism suffered during his childhood in the Russian Empire.

Likud's *Weltanschauung* held serious implications for the prospects of a peace conference; there existed considerable differences in the party's attitudes to negotiations with different countries. While virulently opposed to withdrawal from the West Bank and (less so) the Golan, the Likud retained some flexibility over Sinai.²² This was due to a mixture of security and religious reasons. The high ground of the Golan and the Judean Hills was perceived to be strategically important, as it overlooked Israel's narrow populous coastal plain. The West Bank – or Judea and Samaria as the Likud referred to it

²¹ Memo, Lewis to Vance, Begin's Visit to Washington: Begin the individual, 21 July 1977, Israel, Prime Minister Begin, 7/19-20/77: Cables and Memos, 6/21/77-7/15/77, Box 6, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: VIP Visit File: Ireland through Israel: Collection 5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²² Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Weekly National Security Report #32, 14 October 1977, Weekly Reports [to the President], 1-15: [10/77-1/78], Box 41: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Trios] – Four Power Meetings: [9/77-1/80] through Weekly Reports (to the President), 61-71: [6/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

– was biblically significant and therefore untouchable. Unlike Labour, who in principle could consider a deal with Jordan over the territories and only wanted to retain parts of the West Bank, Likud deeply coveted the territory in its entirety and in perpetuity. The Likud did not have much regard for the Hashemites or their Kingdom. To Likud Jordan was already a ‘Palestinian state’, thereby obviating the need for a ‘second’ Palestinian state in the West Bank.²³

This ideology gave rise to Begin’s uncanny claim that resolution 242 did not apply to the West Bank, but only to Sinai and the Golan. This, however, was an *ex post facto* political formulation, as in August 1970 Begin himself – at the time a member of Israel’s national unity cabinet – argued that approval of 242 implied acceptance of withdrawal from the West Bank, and accordingly resigned in protest.²⁴ He had clearly understood that as formulated in the UN, and accepted by the Israeli government, the resolution did indeed apply to the West Bank. As Begin could not now set aside 242 – the only accepted basis for peace – he chose to illiberally construe it instead. Thus from the outset it seemed that the prospects of a deal being struck with Egypt were more favourable. Still, Begin, like his Labour predecessors, was not willing to even contemplate a complete withdrawal from Sinai or the dismantlement of the Sinai settlements, much less both, meaning the odds of a deal with Egypt remained long. Indeed, Begin was planning on retiring in a sunny Sinai settlement himself.

²³ The argument that ‘Jordan is Palestine’ referred to the fact that Jordan originally formed the bulk of the Palestine mandate, but was unilaterally detached by Britain to create an emirate for their Hashemite ally, Abdullah.

²⁴ See Memo, Quandt to Brzezinski, Begin on 242, 23 February 1978, Israel 1-3/78, Box 35: National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: County File: Israel 7/77 through Israel 7-12/80: Collection 6, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Accordingly, in his first speech to the Knesset as prime minister Begin announced the establishment of new settlements ‘on the land of the homeland’ and invited Israel’s neighbours ‘to conduct direct negotiations for the signing of a peace contract between them, without prior conditions from either side and without a formula for a solution being invented externally’, a reference to US attempts to agree a framework to govern the peace diplomacy.²⁵ Begin, however, was not so disciplined as to apply these principles to himself when he announced his own precondition: he would not abandon his attachment to Greater Israel and would thus not return to the 1967 lines, even with minor modifications.²⁶

There were, however, positives in Begin’s announcements. He agreed to hold in abeyance his claim to Israeli sovereignty over the disputed territories – including the West Bank – so long as peace negotiations were ongoing, declaring ‘the Knesset has by law authorised the government to impose by order the state’s law, jurisdiction and administration over all the territory of Eretz Israel...this will not be activated as long as negotiations for a peace contract...are being conducted’.²⁷ The Likud government was hence still interested in participating in Geneva and in peace negotiations.²⁸ This satisfied Moshe Dayan’s preconditions for joining Begin’s government: that cabinet would not extend Israeli sovereignty beyond the 1948 armistice lines, and that peace negotiations

²⁵ Begin, quoted in Memo, Quandt to Brzezinski, Begin and Dayan Speeches to the Knesset, June 20, 1977, 21 June 1977, Israel 7/77, Box 35: National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: County File: Israel 7/77 through Israel 7-12/80: Collection 6, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁶ Begin, quoted in *Ibid.*

²⁷ Begin, quoted in *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

would be prioritised.²⁹ Begin's appointment of Dayan, the Labour turncoat, to the foreign ministry was another good omen. Dayan was one of the most creative, pragmatic, and resourceful Israeli political figures, and as foreign minister could perchance temper Begin's most extreme policies and obviate a political confrontation with the US. Dayan could also ally with other cabinet moderates, such as his former brother-in-law and current Defence Minister Ezer Weizman, the man behind the deep-penetration bombing of Egypt and Begin's election campaign director. Weizman crucially enjoyed more widespread support within Likud than Dayan, thereby anchoring government policy within the rank and file.³⁰ Aharon Barak, Israel's attorney general inherited from the Labour government, would also play a crucial constructive role. The hardliners, however, were more numerous and had the most party support. Figures such as Ariel Sharon, David Levy, Yitzhak Moda'i, Eliezer Shostak, and Zevulun Hammer brooked no compromise, though they controlled less influential ministries within government.³¹ Begin, opportunely, would hold sway as both king and kingmaker.

Procedural Landmines

Thus the atmosphere in the Middle East in the summer of 1977 was far from hopeful, and once again most eyes looked towards the United States to hasten progress. Cyrus Vance attempted to do so in his trip to the region in August. Vance took with him five US-

²⁹ Shlaim, *Iron Wall*, 354.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 291.

³¹ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Weekly National Security Report #32, 14 October 1977, Weekly Reports [to the President], 1-15: [10/77-1/78], Box 41: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Trios] – Four Power Meetings: [9/77-1/80] through Weekly Reports (to the President), 61-71: [6/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

formulated principles in order to establish the modalities of pre-Geneva negotiations. Unfortunately, the only principle accepted by all parties was that any comprehensive settlement would be based on UN resolution 242, a telling testament to Lord Caradon's nebulous prose.³² Assad thought the third principle – the establishment of normal peaceful relations with Israel – an infringement of sovereignty, while the Saudis pushed for the less forthright 'development' of relations.³³ All Arab parties, however, had reservations regarding the fourth principle – 'phased withdrawal to secure and recognised borders with mutually agreed security arrangements' – with Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia insisting that any minor border adjustments apply only to the Green Line.³⁴ Jordan, in turn, demanded that any withdrawal be completed over the course of months rather than years, and that during the interim period no 'physical, cultural, or demographic changes' be instigated in the West Bank.³⁵ Syria also objected to the final principle – the creation of a demilitarised Palestinian 'entity' enjoying self-determination – as she deemed demilitarisation 'unnatural'.³⁶ Israel, on the other hand, pushed for Arab autonomy in the West Bank under her continued military protection.³⁷

As for the thorny question of Palestinian representation, the Arab states – with the notable exception of Egypt – still insisted on a unified Arab delegation which would include Palestinian members, which Israel rejected.³⁸ Cairo, in turn, suggested Arab

³² Memo, Sick to Brzezinski, Summary of Vance's Middle East Trip, 12 August 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE 16 A-13-18-1-2, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

³³ Quoted in *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

League representation for the Palestinians, but this was dismissed by other Arab parties, who also shelved Sadat's ideas of working groups to prepare for Geneva, preferring instead to continue talks at a meeting of foreign ministers in New York in September.³⁹

The latter idea did see the light of day, with a succession of foreign ministers meeting with Carter and Vance in September. During his meeting with Dayan Carter pressed for more flexibility, negatively contrasting Israel's stance with her neighbours'.⁴⁰ The cabinet's provocative stance on settlements was singled out for special criticism, with Carter describing settlements as 'illegal' and Begin and Ariel Sharon's statements on the issue as irreconcilable with 242 and 'of such nature as to make a renewed Geneva conference impossible'.⁴¹ Dayan proposed that new settlements be restricted to military personnel only, so as to better satisfy the letter of international law.⁴²

Regarding the Geneva conundrum, Carter suggested a compromise: a unified Arab delegation including some Palestinians that would devolve into national working groups after the plenary session, thereby satisfying the Israeli requirement that negotiations

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting of Foreign Minister Dayan With President Carter, 19 September 1977, Middle East – Negotiations: [9/75-9/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁴¹ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

⁴² These ostensible military personnel, however, would still be settlers who had 'joined the army' and settled in the 'married quarters' of the camps. Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting of Foreign Minister Dayan With President Carter, 19 September 1977, Middle East – Negotiations: [9/75-9/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting of Foreign Minister Dayan with President Carter, 19 September 1977, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

proceed bilaterally.⁴³ The West Bank and Gaza would be discussed with Egypt, Jordan, and Palestinians, with the latter attending in their own right rather than as members of the Jordanian delegation. Dayan would not commit on whether the Israeli cabinet would agree, though he personally favoured the idea and promised to recommend it.⁴⁴ On the thorny subject of the West Bank, Dayan continued to reject returning the territory to Jordan, granting it independence, partitioning it, foregoing Israeli sovereignty over it, or eventually granting its inhabitants a referendum on their future.⁴⁵ He melodramatically asserted that the return of the territory to Jordan would ‘mean the destruction of Israel’.⁴⁶ Allowing a referendum on self-determination was also unacceptable because the results of any plebiscite were already known: Israel would be asked to leave.⁴⁷ Dayan also rejected proposed US guarantees of Israeli security in return for a withdrawal from strategic areas in Sinai, Golan, and the West Bank, arguing that there would be no substitute for stationing Israeli troops extra-territorially.⁴⁸ These positions led Carter to air

⁴³ Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting of Foreign Minister Dayan With President Carter, 19 September 1977, Middle East – Negotiations: [9/75-9/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁴⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting of Foreign Minister Dayan with President Carter, 19 September 1977, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting of Foreign Minister Dayan with President Carter, 19 September 1977, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁴⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting of Foreign Minister Dayan With President Carter, 19 September 1977, Middle East – Negotiations: [9/75-9/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

his doubts about whether Begin even wanted peace, despite Dayan's profession that his prime minister wanted it 'from all his heart'.⁴⁹

Still some progress was slowly being made. After meeting again with Carter on 4 October Dayan agreed to recommend the following proposal to cabinet: the US would provide Israel in advance with a list of Palestinian members of the unified delegation, Israel could in turn veto individuals – 'using reasonable criteria' – whom the US would then persuade the Arabs to exclude.⁵⁰ If any objectionable Palestinian delegates remained then the US accepted Israel's right to refuse to attend Geneva.⁵¹

This was a small step forward, and cabinet ultimately accepted Dayan's endorsement. Unfortunately, Syria was still unlikely to approve the proposals as they stood, despite the bulk of the differences having been settled after tremendous political capital was expended over the procedural wrangling.⁵² Syria's insistence on a unified delegation at Geneva that would jointly negotiate agreements with Israel clashed fundamentally with Egyptian and Israeli visions for Geneva: a forum to hold a plenary session which would afterwards break up for bilateral talks. No amount of American finessing could reconcile these two clashing conceptions. In a handwritten letter to Sadat on 21 October, Carter

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Agreed Minute of Conversation from the President's Meeting with Foreign Minister Dayan of October 4, 1977, Middle East – Negotiations: [9/75-9/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Memo, Quandt to Brzezinski, Significance of US-Israeli Agreement on Procedures for Geneva, 5 October 1977, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

personally appealed to Sadat for the help he had promised him on entry into office.⁵³ He wanted Sadat's 'early public endorsement' of the US approach in order to convince Syria to commit to Geneva.⁵⁴ An Egyptian endorsement, however, would never inspire a Syrian change of heart. Instead, Sadat was planning on fulfilling his commitment to Carter in a wholly different manner.

Sadat Strikes Again

The previous few months had deeply frustrated Sadat. He had complained that some US actions, such as abstaining in a UN General assembly vote condemning Israeli settlement expansion, were too pro-Israeli.⁵⁵ However, the bulk of his dissatisfaction was caused by the endless bickering over proposed procedure at Geneva.⁵⁶ Convening the conference had become a labour of Sisyphus. Assad, Arafat, and Begin were all equally intransigent about the form of Palestinian representation as well as the particulars and modalities of a joint Arab delegation. Such procrastination was thoroughly disinteresting to Sadat, whose approach to diplomacy – for better or for worse – was premised upon strategy, not tactics. Sadat did not want prolonged bureaucratic tussles over Geneva's minutiae to further delay the start of negotiations, rather he preferred moving nineteen to the dozen.⁵⁷ Moreover, he worried that even if reconvened Geneva would be rife with procedural

⁵³ Letter, Carter to Sadat, 21 October 1977, Sadat, Anwar al, Box 109, ___ through SALT treaties, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Information Items, 5 November 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-4-3-29-2, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Memo, Eilts to Vance, Codel Wright Meeting with Sadat, 29 November 1977, Box 61, Staff Offices: Office of Staff Secretary: Handwriting File: 1128/77 [1] through 12/1/77, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

squabbles and not ‘conducive to moving quickly and decisively towards dealing with the hard questions’.⁵⁸ What Sadat wanted to promptly address was the return of all of Sinai, not the seating arrangements in a hall in Romandy. No other Arab party felt the same pressing urgency as Egypt to achieve a solution, and Sadat was not willing to indulge the slothful. The rising pressure from the army, the man in the street, and the budding organised political and militant opposition were constant reminders of the necessity of swift action. Carter’s letter asking for help in reviving the stalled diplomacy now mandated a decisive move. Sadat’s initial suggestion was to invite representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council as well as all concerned parties – including the PLO – to East Jerusalem to discuss a way forward,⁵⁹ but this idea was dismissed by the US as too ambitious.⁶⁰ So Sadat swapped it with a much more audacious move.

Sadat was a man qualified to stir stagnant diplomatic waters by hitching his wagon to a star. He had done so several times during his presidency, most notably by summarily expelling Soviet soldiers in 1972 and unexpectedly going to war the following year. He would surprise the world once more in his speech to parliament on 9 November, when at the end of a long oration he dramatically announced his willingness to travel anywhere, even ‘the Knesset, in order to further the cause of peace.’⁶¹ Sadat’s taste for trickery demanded the invitation of Arafat to attend the speech in parliament. The following day

⁵⁸ Quandt, quoted in Briefing by NSC Staff Member William Quandt on the Middle East, 6 December 1977, Middle East 12/77, Box 31: National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Brzezinski Office File: Country Chron.: Micronesia 1977 through Middle East 5/78: Collection 15, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁵⁹ This idea was initially proposed by Fahmy as a substitute for Sadat’s tentative plans to visit the Knesset in person, which Fahmy vehemently opposed. See Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 259.

⁶⁰ Carter, quoted in Camp David 25th Anniversary Forum, 17 September 2003, Camp David Accords 25th Anniversary, Box 8A, Camp David Accords through Carlucci, Frank C., Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper*, 151.

the Egyptian press carried photos of the PLO leader, who had no inkling of Sadat's intentions, applauding Sadat's declaration of readiness to visit to Israel!

This was an extraordinary announcement, even by Sadat's splendid standards. That he would be willing to personally meet Begin anywhere would have been shocking, but to offer to visit him in Jerusalem, a city of colossal religious and political significance to both Arab and Jew, was truly astounding. Here was a gesture of true magnitude, and laced with a not inconsiderable amount of political and personal risk too. Sadat could not be sure how Israel would respond to his initiative, and he only had the prior assurances of Romania's Ceausescu – who maintained personal relations with both Sadat and Begin – that the Israeli was a 'strong man' and serious about peace!⁶²

Sadat's proposed visit broke several taboos and, as was his wont, did not elicit the united support of his lieutenants. Opposition centred in the Foreign Ministry, the most Arabist institution in the Egyptian state. Fahmy was not overjoyed to hear of Sadat's plans, and tried in vain to convince him to abandon the idea.⁶³ In light of Sadat's insistence on his initiative Fahmy attempted to sabotage the speech to parliament by removing the relevant paragraph from the printed text, but an alert Sadat ad-libbed convincingly. Fahmy then attempted to downplay the Egyptian press' coverage of the speech, suggesting that Sadat's offer was hyperbole.⁶⁴ Fahmy's opposition and conduct made his position untenable, leading him to tender his resignation and Sadat to immediately accept it, as he

⁶² Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 254.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁶⁴ Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 267.

thought Fahmy's actions a 'betrayal'.⁶⁵ Fahmy's nominated replacement, minister of state Mohamed Riyad, also tendered his resignation from the ministry.⁶⁶ They were replaced by Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel – Egypt's ambassador to Germany and Sadat's fellow gaol mate and conspirator in the assassination of Ameen Othman – and Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the francophone professor of international law at Cairo University of patrician Coptic stock, who would serve as minister of state for foreign affairs. The Foreign Ministry's institutional opposition, however, was not replicated elsewhere within the Egyptian state.⁶⁷ Gamasy and the army remained loyal, and publicly supported the president.⁶⁸ Sadat proceeded with his visit, cheered on by millions of Egyptians stunned by their president's boldness.⁶⁹

However, while Sadat's journey to Jerusalem aimed to break the deadlock and create a new political environment for negotiations it was not entirely clear what specific objectives Sadat expected to achieve. Sadat had thought up a truly significant gesture, yet had neglected to develop the details necessary to ensure that it would result in tangible progress. Sadat, it seemed, expected Israel to make unilateral concessions to 'match' his visit. But it was naïve of Sadat to expect Begin to compromise on substantive issues

⁶⁵ Sadat, quoted in Memo, Atherton and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli developments No. 296, 20 November 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-67 D88-1-1-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶⁶ Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 278.

⁶⁷ Memo, Atherton and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli developments No. 296, 20 November 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-67 D88-1-1-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶⁸ Memo, International Reaction to the Sadat and Begin Speeches, 21 November 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-2-6-3-2-8, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶⁹ Memo, Atherton and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli developments No. 296, 20 November 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-67 D88-1-1-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

simply because he visited Jerusalem and broke the ‘psychological’ barrier.⁷⁰ From his experience of previous Israeli governments and his observation of the US-Israeli relationship, Sadat ought to have understood that when an Israeli cabinet is presented with concessions it invariably pockets rather than matches them. And while there were Israeli calls to make Sadat ‘an offer he cannot refuse’, Begin was not swayed.⁷¹

In fairness to Begin, he had demonstrated considerable backbone in immediately issuing Sadat an unconditional invitation to Jerusalem, an act the cautious Rabin was unlikely to have matched. Further, while Sadat’s visit from 19-21 November did offer Israel something the country deeply craved – Arab recognition – the Egyptian president did not come armed with new ideas to overcome the political chasm between the two neighbours. On the contrary, Sadat refused to be drawn into specifics during his visit, and instead delivered an uncompromising speech to the Knesset to cover his exposed Arab flank.⁷² Consequently, while Sadat insisted in the Knesset that ‘complete withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied is a logical and undisputed matter’ and ‘no one should plead for that’, Begin’s level-headed attitude was that Israel ‘shall discuss and negotiate about every point’.⁷³ While Sadat wanted to strike a deal on principles, Begin wanted to mesh out every detail at this early stage. Moreover, when Begin suggested a return visit to

⁷⁰ Sadat would describe the obstacles to peace as 70% psychological and 30% substantive. See Memo, Eilts to Vance, Codel Wright Meeting with Sadat 29 November 1977, Box 61, Staff Offices: Office of Staff Secretary: Handwriting File: 1128/77 [1] through 12/1/77, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷¹ Rabin, quoted in Memo, Atherton and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli developments No. 296, 20 November 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-67 D88-1-1-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷² Boutros-Ghali, *Egypt's Road to Jerusalem*, 21.

⁷³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper*, 177, 192.

Cairo, he was rebuffed by a fretful Sadat and invited to Ismailia instead.⁷⁴ Begin's wish to address the Egyptian parliament was also deferred until agreement on a declaration of principles was reached.⁷⁵ That is not to say no progress was made: the two leaders, in a private talk after the state dinner, agreed three crucial principles to govern later negotiations: no more war between Egypt and Israel, the restoration of Egyptian sovereignty over all of Sinai, and the complete demilitarisation of Sinai beyond the passes.⁷⁶

Arab Uproar

Sadat was no doubt flustered by the opposition brewing across the Arab World, with Libya breaking off relations with Egypt and Iraq cancelling Bayram ceremonies in protest at his visit.⁷⁷ Syria, refusing to be outdone, declared the day of Sadat's arrival in Jerusalem one of national mourning.⁷⁸ Hussein obliquely criticised Sadat for acting unilaterally.⁷⁹ Only Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, and Oman openly supported Sadat.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Memo, Jordan to Carter, 30 November 1977, Box 61, Staff Offices: Office of Staff Secretary:

Handwriting File: 1128/77 [1] through 12/1/77, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷⁵ Memo, 19 December 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-4-8-7-1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷⁶ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 91.

⁷⁷ Memo, Atherton and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli developments No. 296, 20 November 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-67 D88-1-1-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 396.

⁸⁰ Memo, Atherton and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli developments No. 296, 20 November 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-67 D88-1-1-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Assad had the most to fear from Sadat's gesture. During Sadat's stopover in Damascus prior to his journey to Israel the Syrian president failed to convince his counterpart to abandon his trip, or be convinced by Sadat's claim that the visit was part of the preparations for Geneva.⁸¹ Syria, as ever, feared that Egypt was preparing the way for a bilateral deal and worried about being left out. The Saudis, who held much influence in the Arab world for their moderate policies and abundant foreign aid budget, supported Syria. The Saudi leadership was annoyed by Sadat's failure to consult it despite the fact that he was in Riyadh immediately before he made his big announcement.⁸² Saudi Arabia also felt that by going to Jerusalem Sadat fractured Arab unity in the run-up to Geneva, thereby ruining any chance for comprehensive peace.⁸³ Sadat, for his part, could not accept that 'Arab solidarity' entailed, as Brzezinski eloquently put it, that 'the country which shoulders the heaviest burden must subordinate its national interest to (Arab) whims and be subject to their veto'.⁸⁴

Thus Sadat found himself out of the Arab fold, and without much of a plan for what to do next. He settled on convening a conference in Cairo on 14 December to agree basic principles for peace in preparation for Geneva, to which Israel, America, and concerned Arab parties – including the PLO – were invited. However, despite American efforts to

⁸¹ Sadat, quoted in Memo, Eilts to Vance, Codel Wright Meeting with Sadat 29 November 1977, Box 61, Staff Offices: Office of Staff Secretary: Handwriting File: 1128/77 [1] through 12/1/77, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸² Musa Sabri, *Al-Sadat: Al-Haqiqah wa Al-Usturah* (Cairo: Al-Maktab Al-Misri Al-Hadeeth, 1985), 528-531.

⁸³ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Information Items, 30 November 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-4-5-43-4, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸⁴ Willie Morris, *President Sadat's Peace Offensive: Chapter 1: The Visit to Jerusalem*, 28 November 1977, FCO 93/1277, National Archives, Kew.

ensure wider participation, all Arab invitees chose to boycott the meeting.⁸⁵ Instead, from 2-5 December Syria fronted its own gathering of the Arab Front of Steadfastness and Opposition in Tripoli to condemn Egypt, prompting Cairo to pre-emptively break off relations with Damascus again, as well as with the other participants in the conference: Algeria, Iraq, Libya, and the People's Republic of Yemen.⁸⁶ In many ways the bellicose Syrian policy was myopic: by boycotting and alienating Egypt Assad was making it more likely that Egyptian diplomacy would only pursue a bilateral deal.⁸⁷ Empty gestures in Libya, such as removing Sadat from the 'presidency' of the moribund Confederation of Arab Republics and transferring its headquarters from Cairo to Tripoli, imposed no real cost on Egypt, and certainly did not daunt Sadat.⁸⁸ The Saudis, in contrast, concluded that for the time being they would retain 'more influence with Sadat by supporting him than opposing him'.⁸⁹

Moroccan Sojourns

Ironically, the Cairo Conference, which opened on 14 December, accomplished little to justify the fuss. Both sides duly recited their standard peace plans, while the real

⁸⁵ Briefing by NSC Staff Member William Quandt on the Middle East, 6 December 1977, Middle East 12/77, Box 31: National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Brzezinski Office File: Country Chron.: Micronesia 1977 through Middle East 5/78: Collection 15, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸⁶ Willie Morris, *President Sadat's Peace Offensive: Chapter 2: From Jerusalem to Ismailia and Back to Jerusalem*, 6 February 1978, FCO 93/1703, National Archives, Kew.

⁸⁷ Briefing by NSC Staff Member William Quandt on the Middle East, 6 December 1977, Middle East 12/77, Box 31: National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Brzezinski Office File: Country Chron.: Micronesia 1977 through Middle East 5/78: Collection 15, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸⁸ Memo, Atherton and Saunders to Vance, *Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments*, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE 17 B-6-31-7-7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

diplomacy was being conducted elsewhere through secret bilateral contacts. In September and December Hassan Tuhami, the deputy prime minister of Egypt and a supporter of the peace process,⁹⁰ was sent to Morocco to secretly meet with Dayan, an arrangement brokered by Morocco's King Hassan.⁹¹ Rabin had suggested to Hassan direct Egyptian-Israeli talks the previous year, but Sadat had at the time declined.⁹² On 5 September Dayan requested Hassan's help in arranging a high-level bilateral meeting with the Egyptians.⁹³ This time, however, Sadat agreed to a tryst, sending Tuhami as his personal envoy to meet with Dayan on 16 September. The talks were inconclusive. Tuhami starkly communicated an offer of peace – and the carrot of direct talks with Sadat – in return for acceptance of the principle of complete withdrawal from all lands captured in 1967.⁹⁴ The West Bank would be linked with Jordan, and Egypt would indirectly supervise Gaza.⁹⁵ Tuhami proposed secretly negotiating a settlement in Morocco, without American help or knowledge, to be signed at Geneva. Egypt would be prepared to consider all guarantees, including stationing of UN forces in Sinai or superpower guarantees, and would convince Jordan and Syria to also negotiate with Israel.⁹⁶ Dayan gave a non-committal response, conveying his 'firm belief that (Israel) could arrive at a suitable arrangement with Egypt', and agreed to report to Begin and meet again with Tuhami in two weeks, during which he would prepare a peace proposal.⁹⁷ A credulous Tuhami, however, mistakenly concluded

⁹⁰ Peres, *Battling for Peace*, 289.

⁹¹ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 41-44.

⁹² Shlaim, *Iron Wall*, 348.

⁹³ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 41.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 45, 47.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 48, 49.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 51, 52.

that Dayan had actually agreed to Egypt's terms, and reported as much to Sadat.⁹⁸ He did not appreciate Israel's nuanced position, and was confused by Dayan, whom others would indeed describe as 'skilful at vague and obfuscating formulas'.⁹⁹ Indeed, it is possible that Sadat decided to visit Israel because he misguidedly believed Israel to have accepted the principle of complete withdrawal as a result of Tuhami's erroneous account of Dayan's position.¹⁰⁰

Tuhami and Dayan would not meet again until 2-3 December – after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem – when Dayan presented a personal proposal for a purely bilateral peace treaty entailing complete normalisation. Eastern Sinai would be entirely demilitarised, supervised through either joint Egyptian-Israeli patrols or the stationing of UN forces in the area, and in the latter case would be forbidden to both Egyptian and Israeli military units.¹⁰¹ The Sinai settlements would remain and the settlers allowed to arm themselves with weapons including anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, minefields, and armoured vehicles.¹⁰² The military airfields in Sharm al-Sheikh and eastern Sinai would remain

⁹⁸ Interview with Mustapha Khalil, 26 February 1997, *BBC: The Fifty Years' War: Israel and the Arabs*, GB 165-0346, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College Oxford, Peres, *Battling for Peace*, 289.

⁹⁹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 269.

¹⁰⁰ David Kimche, at the time a senior Mossad spy involved in the relationship with Morocco and later Director-General of the Israeli foreign ministry, provides an account that partially substantiates Tuhami's claims. Kimche asserts that Dayan gave Tuhami a three-line handwritten note which 'said simply that Israel was prepared to return the whole of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for a peace treaty, open boundaries and normal relations. Just that.' General Avraham Tamir also claims that Dayan offered Tuhami all of Sinai in return for peace. Such offers would *not* be incompatible with Israel's later position on retaining the Sinai settlements and airbases. Nevertheless, Dayan's account seems the most accurate and plausible, as in all available official records of the relevant diplomacy in late 1977 and 1978 Sadat makes no mention of any such ironclad offer to either the US or the Israelis. Elyakim Rubinstein, Dayan's assistant at the talks, also supports Dayan's account and maintains no such clear-cut offer was made. See David Kimche, *The Last Option: After Nasser, Arafat and Saddam Hussein; The Quest for Peace in the Middle East* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 76; Meital, *Egypt's Struggle for Peace: Continuity and Change, 1967-1977*, 162.

¹⁰¹ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 93.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 93, 94.

under Israeli civilian administration and UN supervision.¹⁰³ Tuhami, in turn, again stressed on Sadat's behalf the need for any agreement to encompass a solution for the other Arab parties and not be solely bilateral in its nature.¹⁰⁴ This was especially pertinent in light of the seething Arab reaction to Sadat's Jerusalem visit. Egypt, though, would only seek a detailed agreement for Sinai, and content herself with agreement on the principles that would govern talks with the other parties, a position that would endure and evolve at Camp David the following year. An independent status of some sort for the Palestinians would also be needed. Finally, any security measures would need to provide mutual security to both sides.¹⁰⁵ Israeli soldiers and settlers certainly had to be withdrawn, with Tuhami underlining that 'the President and the people of Egypt will not agree to a single Israeli settlement or soldier remaining in Sinai'.¹⁰⁶

The Begin Plan

Other important meetings were taking place in Washington in mid-December. Begin was in town to share his new Palestinian autonomy proposals with the Americans, before presenting them to Sadat in Ismailia, where he was due to visit on Christmas day. Begin's plan for the Palestinian territories, which Sadat urged him to formulate during his visit to Jerusalem, centred upon a five-year interim period of 'home rule' in the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁰⁷ Palestinian Arab inhabitants of the territories would be granted 'autonomy' and a

¹⁰³ Ibid., 94.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 95-96.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Tuhami, quoted in Ibid., 95.

¹⁰⁷ Begin, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, President's Meeting with Begin, 16 December 1977, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski

degree of self-government under Israeli military authority.¹⁰⁸ This autonomy, crucially, would apply to the inhabitants and not the territories themselves. As for the crucial question of sovereignty, Israel would not renounce its claim over 'Judea, Samaria, and Gaza' but would accept that Arabs also made claims to sovereignty over the territories, and would therefore 'leave the issue open' as 'it cannot be solved for now'.¹⁰⁹ A locally elected 'administrative council' would be created, though it would explicitly not be tasked with any aspects of self-determination nor any formal handover of territory.¹¹⁰ Security and public order would remain in Israeli hands.¹¹¹ The council would also not be based in Jerusalem, as that was 'the capital of Israel' and 'there cannot be two capitals in Jerusalem'.¹¹² Finally, the Arab inhabitants of the territories would be given the eventual choice of Israeli or Jordanian citizenship.¹¹³

Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁰⁸ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Weekly National Security Report #40, 16 December 1977, Weekly Reports [to the President], 1-15: [10/77-1/78], Box 41: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Trios] – Four Power Meetings: [9/77-1/80] through Weekly Reports (to the President), 61-71: [6/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁰⁹ Begin, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, President's Meeting with Begin, 16 December 1977, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹⁰ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Weekly National Security Report #40, 16 December 1977, Weekly Reports [to the President], 1-15: [10/77-1/78], Box 41: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Trios] – Four Power Meetings: [9/77-1/80] through Weekly Reports (to the President), 61-71: [6/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹¹ Memorandum of Conversation, President's Meeting with Begin, 16 December 1977, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹² Begin, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, President's Meeting with Begin, 16 December 1977, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

To Begin, this autonomy proposal satisfied resolution 242 as the 1967 borders were not ‘secure’, thus Israel could not return to them.¹¹⁴ His aims in putting forward such a plan were to obtain US and Egyptian agreement to his ideas and thus prevent talk of the creation of a Palestinian state, even a demilitarised one, as such a state’s very existence would be a ‘threat’ to Israel.¹¹⁵ Begin’s proposals reflected, in Brzezinski’s judgement, that he was ‘genuinely groping for a truly historically significant solution, but was limited by his own zealotry in regards to “Judea and Samaria”’.¹¹⁶ Brzezinski nevertheless thought that there was ‘opportunity for progress to be exploited’, and that Begin ought to be encouraged to improve and develop his plan further.¹¹⁷ He counselled pushing Begin to accept a UN presence in the West Bank, to restrict Israel’s military presence to only a few strategic locations, and to shift the location of the administrative council to East Jerusalem during the 5-year interim period.¹¹⁸ However, Begin’s autonomy plan became steadily *less* generous each time it emerged from his briefcase, in response to domestic brickbats from the right, with Weizman documenting a total of fifteen restrictive changes – several of which major – to the version first presented to Carter.¹¹⁹

Israel would also prove resilient in her views about the extent of her withdrawal from Sinai. In the talks with Sadat and Gamasy that preceded Begin’s visit to Ismailia, Weizman made clear that Israel’s security needs compelled a continuing military

¹¹⁴ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Weekly National Security Report #40, 16 December 1977, Weekly Reports [to the President], 1-15: [10/77-1/78], Box 41: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Trios] – Four Power Meetings: [9/77-1/80] through Weekly Reports (to the President), 61-71: [6/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, NSC Weekly Report #40, 16 December 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-33-18-5-4-7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹⁹ Weizman, *The Battle*, 191.

presence in Sinai as well as the retention of settlements and airfields in the peninsula.¹²⁰ Israel probably also wanted to set the precedent of not withdrawing fully from territories captured in 1967 for future reference in negotiations with other Arab parties. This, however, was a complete non-starter for Egypt and indicated significant differences on the principles for a settlement. Sadat strongly opposed the Israeli demands, and insisted on the acceptance of the principle of complete withdrawal from Arab territories lost in 1967 and a ‘solution’ for the Palestinian problem, in return for full peace and normalisation with Israel.¹²¹ He had bitten the bullet and conceded Israel’s demands for a peace treaty. It was now Israel’s turn to make difficult sacrifices for peace.

The Ismailia Talks

Begin’s delegation arrived in Ismailia on Christmas day. While the day was of no religious significance to either the Jewish guests or their Muslim hosts, it was personally significant to Sadat as he celebrated his 59th birthday. Begin began his private talks with Sadat by suggesting twin bilateral preparatory committees – political and military – a proposal immediately agreed to by Sadat.¹²² In their meeting with their full delegations Begin presented to the Egyptians his prolix plans for a peace treaty with Egypt. In it Begin offered to withdraw Israeli forces to the 1967 borders over two phases in return for

¹²⁰ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Information Items, 23 December 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-4-8-21-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹²¹ Weizman, *The Battle*, 88.

¹²² Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, US Delegation, Sadat, Egyptian delegation, Meeting in Camp David, 4 February 1978, Serial Xs – [8/77-8/78], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

a peace treaty and the complete normalisation of relations.¹²³ Phase A would involve a pull-back to the El Arish – Ras Mohamed line in central Sinai, with Phase B – a withdrawal to the international boundary – to be completed within 3-5 years of the signing of the treaty.¹²⁴ The area between the El Arish – Ras Mohamed line and the border however would be demilitarised and placed under the ‘supervision of a UN force under the UN flag’.¹²⁵ Furthermore, Israeli settlements in this area would *not* be dismantled – which Sadat thought was a ‘joke’¹²⁶ – and would be entitled to raise a ‘local defence force’, as Dayan had informed Tuhami in Morocco.¹²⁷ Furthermore, two of the three Israeli airfields in the demilitarised area would revert to Israeli civilian control, while the third would remain an Israeli military airbase.¹²⁸ Israeli civilians would be allowed free entry into the UN zone, as would ‘Arab residents of Sinai’.¹²⁹ Egyptian military units would not be allowed to enter the UN Zone, and the limits on military personnel and matériel in western Sinai agreed in the Sinai II disengagement agreement would also remain in place.¹³⁰ Neither side could withdraw the UN forces in Sinai

¹²³ Telegram, Lewis to Vance, Transmission of Texts of Israeli Peace Proposals to President Sadat, 27 December 1977, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Sadat, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, US Delegation, Sadat, Egyptian delegation, Meeting in Camp David, 4 February 1978, Serial Xs – [8/77-8/78], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹²⁷ Telegram, Lewis to Vance, Transmission of Texts of Israeli Peace Proposals to President Sadat, 27 December 1977, Middle East – Negotiations [10/77-12/77], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

without the agreement of the other as well as unanimous Security Council approval. Finally, the straits of Tiran would be declared an international waterway.¹³¹

Begin's proposal, while a step in the correct direction in acknowledging Cairo's sovereignty over all of Sinai, was still far from satisfactory to Sadat. Rather than return to Egypt her remaining territory in the Sinai, Begin proposed handing it over to the UN, declaring it 'demilitarised', yet continuing to maintain Israeli bases, settlements, and militias in Sinai.¹³² In fact this plan was similar to Kissinger's idea in 1972 about separating security and sovereignty in the Sinai, and which Dayan had been briefed about *qua* Israel's defence minister at the time. The concept was rejected by Egypt then, and nought had changed in the interim. In short, Begin's plan was designed for Israel to have her cake and eat it too: a full peace treaty, complete normalisation of relations with Egypt, as well as the retention of her settlements and military installations in the Sinai.

Sadat's reaction to Begin's autonomy plans was similarly negative, with the Egyptian president continuing to insist on self-determination for the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. Dayan thought that Sadat's reaction demonstrated his 'deep feeling' on this issue; he was not paying 'mere lip-service' to the Arab consensus.¹³³ He did, however, begin to appreciate Israel's security dilemma in the West Bank, and to consider ways to accommodate Begin's need for security guarantees in the territories.¹³⁴ And while Sadat

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 104.

¹³⁴ Sadat, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, US Delegation, Sadat, Egyptian delegation, Meeting in Camp David, 4 February 1978, Serial Xs – [8/77-8/78], Box 36: Donated Historical Material:

pressed for a suitable solution for the Palestinians, he never mentioned a Palestinian state in his dealings with the Israelis.¹³⁵ Even more reassuringly, Sadat explicitly excluded the PLO from his plans for the future of the Palestinian territories, a result of both distaste for PLO terrorism – including the assassination of his close friend Yusuf Al-Sibaei in Cyprus by Palestinian gunmen – and Israeli sensitivities.¹³⁶ The question, however, remained as to whether Jordan would involve itself in the unfolding diplomacy in the PLO's place. However in a meeting in Tehran with Carter on New Year's day Hussein conditioned his involvement on two principles unacceptable to Israel: withdrawal to the Green Line with only minor adjustments and the acknowledgment of the principle of self-determination.¹³⁷

In the meantime, the twin political and military committees did not make much progress. In the military talks Gamasy reacted badly to Weizman's suggestion that Egypt agree to change her borders to allow Israel to annex much of eastern Sinai so that it would not be obliged to dismantle the Sinai settlements or military facilities.¹³⁸ The most generous offer Gamasy would make was to allow the settlers to remain under Egyptian sovereignty as regular foreigners.¹³⁹ He would refuse Weizman's later request that Israel be allowed to keep at least one of its Sinai airfields and maintain three early warning stations in Sinai – and corresponding Egyptian stations in Israel – for fifteen years after a peace treaty's

Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹³⁵ Weizman, *The Battle*, 295.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹³⁷ Hussein, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, US Delegation, Hussein, Jordanian delegation meeting in Tehran, 1 January 1978, PRC Meeting on Egyptian Military Supply Relationship, 20 September 1979, [Meetings – PRC 123: 9/20/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹³⁸ Al-Gamasy, *Harb October*, 498.

¹³⁹ Weizman, *The Battle*, 209.

ratification.¹⁴⁰ Gamasy also attempted to retract the substance of Sadat's promise to Begin in Jerusalem that the Egyptian military would not advance beyond the Sinai passes.¹⁴¹ He instead proposed a demilitarised zone that encompassed both sides of the Egyptian-Israeli border, and with no constraints on the Egyptian military in the south and west of the peninsula.¹⁴² These differences in the military talks would continue to dog the negotiations until they were satisfactorily resolved at Camp David.

Gamasy would make a one-time offer regarding the Palestinian territories that went a substantial way towards satisfying Israeli concerns. On 30 March Gamasy proposed that Egypt and Israel secretly agree and initial two documents: one pertaining to a bilateral agreement and another a declaration of intent to withdraw from the Palestinian territories while retaining a military presence in certain areas.¹⁴³ Sadat envisioned inviting Jordan to negotiate for the West Bank, and if Hussein declined Egypt would negotiate for the territories in his stead. Israeli settlements in the territories would be allowed to remain, and continued settlement on private lands in the territory would be allowed, so long as their owners sold their lands voluntarily to Israeli settlers. An arrangement would be negotiated over the purchase of state lands for settlements. Existing settlements in Sinai would also be allowed to remain, but under Egyptian sovereignty. Israelis in Sinai would be granted Egyptian citizenship, and would no longer be protected by the Israeli military. This plan was the most flexible yet presented by Sadat, and could conceivably have

¹⁴⁰ Al-Gamasy, *Harb October*, 530, 538.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 500.

¹⁴² Weizman, *The Battle*, 178.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 300-301.

broken the logjam. However, the morrow after Gamasy presented it, Sadat withdrew the offer because of Palestinians' opposition to it and their insistence on self-determination.

Ominously, far less progress was made in the political committee, which was tasked with developing a declaration of principles and resolving the Palestinian territories dilemma. Sadat recalled his political committee delegation from Jerusalem on 19 January, only one day after its arrival, because of a hard-line speech Begin gave at a welcome dinner that offended Kamel, as well as because of the perception that the Israelis wanted 'to offer partial solutions' which would go 'into subsidiary issues' rather than deal with the heads of agreement.¹⁴⁴

The Road to Camp David

By the time Sadat visited Carter at Camp David, Maryland in February 1978, it seemed as though diplomacy was yet again gridlocked. An Israeli ruse of constructing dummy settlements in Sinai in order to barter their removal for the preservation of existing settlements in the Rafah area – which was a brainchild of Sharon – had shattered the limited trust Egyptians still had in their Israeli partners, and made Cairo even more insistent on the recovery of the entirety of the Sinai.¹⁴⁵ Begin's attitude towards the Sinai settlements had upset Sadat.¹⁴⁶ Carter was also frustrated by Israel's settlement policies.

¹⁴⁴ Shlaim, *Iron Wall*, 368; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *White Paper*, 255.

¹⁴⁵ Weizman, *The Battle*, 142, 170.

¹⁴⁶ Sadat did offer to accept 10 000 Israelis of Egyptian origin back into Egypt, were they inclined to return. Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, US Delegation, Sadat, Egyptian delegation, Meeting in Camp David, 4 February 1978, Serial Xs – [8/77-8/78], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew

Despite Dayan promising in September that no new settlements in the Palestinian territories would be allowed, thirteen had been established since then, all of which America considered ‘illegal’.¹⁴⁷ Sadat complained to Carter of Begin’s intransigence despite Egypt offering him direct negotiations, recognition, and full peace – in short all of Israel’s long-standing demands.¹⁴⁸ Sadat thought that the Israelis had ‘done nothing other than what they would have done had we gone to Geneva, as if I had never gone to Jerusalem’.¹⁴⁹ Israel still adopted ‘an incremental approach’, showed ‘arrogance, that she is not ready for peace, and that Israel wants land that is not hers.’¹⁵⁰

Carter summarised the obstacles to a deal over Sinai as being the Israeli settlements, as well as the disputed limits on Egyptian forces between the passes and the international border.¹⁵¹ Sadat argued for only a limited armaments zone beyond the passes, maintaining that he had never committed to complete demilitarisation, but rather that no ‘main forces’ would traverse the passes.¹⁵² Furthermore, any demilitarised zone also had to ‘be proportional on each side of the border’ between Egypt and Israel, and extend only 15 kilometres into Egyptian territory.¹⁵³ Carter believed this particular disagreement was due to a genuine misunderstanding, with Begin interpreting Sadat’s language on ‘main forces’ to mean demilitarisation.¹⁵⁴

Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁴⁷ Carter, quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Carter, describing Sadat’s position, quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Egypt also did not approve of Begin's autonomy plan for the Palestinians, and on this issue Sadat again found succour in Washington. The US too wanted an Israel military withdrawal from the Palestinian territories and 'some acceptable form of determination by the people who are governed', and Carter remained optimistic that this could be achieved:

I have a feeling, a political feeling that in a showdown, Begin would lose in Israel if settlements were viewed as an obstacle to permanent peace...I can see the possibility of a five-year interim agreement on the West Bank and Gaza that would be acceptable to you, to Begin, to Jordan, and to the Palestinians, we are not yet here. But there is no insurmountable obstacle to that.¹⁵⁵

To do so, however, Carter needed to rely on Sadat refraining from intemperate gestures such as recalling his political committee from Jerusalem, actions that allowed Begin to pose as a moderate and present Sadat's talks with Carter as a failure. Brzezinski described the situation as follows:

if you announce your negative decision on the political and military talks, it will be seen that the Carter-Sadat meeting has failed. You won't gain anything from that and we won't. Only those in Israel who do not want compromise will benefit. If instead, you were to say that the political talks could be resumed, and combined that with strong statements on settlements and a strong statement on resolution 242 as it applies to all of the territories, then you could get strong support. If the talks were to resume, then Israel would be on the defensive, especially on the issues of settlements and 242.¹⁵⁶

Carter also stressed how other foreign policy objectives, such as his quest for Senate ratification of the controversial Panama Canal treaty, required the backing of Israel's US supporters whom he could not afford to alienate.¹⁵⁷ Instead of waiting for America to convince Israel to give in, Carter advised Sadat to instead endeavour to demonstrate how Israel was blocking progress:

¹⁵⁵ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

I have noticed your view that 99 percent of the influence is in Washington, and only one percent is in Israel. I don't agree with that. This takes the pressure off of the Israeli government and puts it on me. I don't object to pressure, and I'm not afraid of a confrontation or a showdown when the right time comes. But it should be clear to the world that the breakdown of progress is not due to Washington, but to Begin.¹⁵⁸

Sadat, however, still believed that Carter underestimated his influence in Jerusalem, stating that 'the American position is central' and that 'Israel will only heed the US':¹⁵⁹

We have reached the point where the American position must be made quite clear to Israel. It must be put in very elementary principles on which one differs. No one can tread on others' sovereignty or land. We are not against the security of Israel. We say that Israel has right to feel secure, yes. We say the US can have a special relationship with Israel, yes. But we have tried since 1967 to get an American position on principles, but we could not get that.¹⁶⁰

Sadat then alluded to the deadlocked negotiations in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur war, and how Kissinger's proposal had forged a way forward. Sadat wanted a similar US proposal now. Carter accepted that 'the time has come for a plan parallel to what Henry Kissinger did', but argued that such a proposal so soon after meeting Sadat would be 'seen as collusion'.¹⁶¹

Instead Brzezinski recommended that Sadat collude with the US by resuming negotiations and presenting an overly ambitious plan of his own, and when the Israelis rejected it the US could then step in with its own 'compromise' plan.¹⁶² In the interim US support for the Egyptian position was demonstrated in the statement released by the White House after Sadat's departure, which stated that America was fully committed to a peace settlement that goes 'beyond the mere termination of belligerency', that any

¹⁵⁸ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Sadat, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Sadat, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

settlement 'should be comprehensive', 'based on all the principles' of 242 which applied 'to all fronts of the conflict', and 'that there had to be a solution for the Palestinian people'.¹⁶³ The statement also reiterated Carter's 4 January avowal in Aswan that 'there must be a resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects. The solution must recognise the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and enable the Palestinians to participate in the determination of their own future'.¹⁶⁴ For good measure, the statement also restated US policy 'that Israeli settlements in occupied territory are contrary to international law and an obstacle to peace, and that further settlement activity would be inconsistent with the effort to reach a peace settlement'.¹⁶⁵

A Less Altruistic Egypt

What was missing in the statement, as well as in Sadat's talks with Carter, was an express desire to see progress between Israel and Syria. Sadat had consistently entreated Henry Kissinger for progress on the Golan, if not out of a genuine commitment to restore Syrian territorial integrity then borne of a desire to make Egypt's life easier in the Arab world. Any pullback from the Golan made further progress for Egypt much easier to swallow for Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Arab moderates. Sadat, though, no longer emphasised progress for Syria. He still retained a genuine commitment to achieve progress on the Palestinian issue – if only to spite the reviled Hussein – but now adopted the attitude that

¹⁶³ Statement, White House Statement Following Final Meeting Between President Carter and Egyptian President Sadat, 8 February 1978, Israel, Prime Minister Begin: Briefing Book, Box 7, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: VIP Visit File: Israel through Italy: Collection 5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

the Syrian government was responsible for solving its own problems. Perhaps this was a reaction to Syrian traduccements, or his observation of Syrian procedural obfuscation in the lead-up to the proposed Geneva conference. Even with regards to the Palestinian territories, however, Sadat was much less ambitious in his aims. Unlike in Sinai, he neither demanded a complete Israeli withdrawal nor the dismantlement of all Israeli settlements. Only the sands of Sinai were sacred to Sadat – an Egyptian nationalist first and foremost.

His attitude was also a reaction to the evolution of the views of his officials and the populace at large. Outside the foreign ministry, there existed a notable preference for a bilateral treaty rather than continued deadlock. The military certainly detested continued Israeli control of Sinai and the no-war no-peace *status quo* more than the prospect of a separate settlement, and was enticed by the possibility of more American military aid that would accompany a peace deal.¹⁶⁶ Public Arab attacks on Egypt, and Palestinian terrorist attacks on prominent Egyptians, further strengthened an ‘Egypt-first’ mentality in Cairo.¹⁶⁷ Thus, for example, when Fahmy resigned to protest Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem – and when his successor Kamel resigned over the subsequent Camp David Accords – both found themselves out of step with the prevailing Egyptian public mood. In contrast, Sadat was greeted by millions of cheering Egyptians on his return from Jerusalem, and again after the Camp David summit. Naturally, however, this popular inclination to support a

¹⁶⁶ Memo, Quandt to Brzezinski, Analysis of Negotiating Outcomes, 20 March 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-6-50-5-20-3, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

separate deal would be greatest were the Syrians and Jordanians first seen to reject a reasonable offer by Israel, and if Egypt were to satisfy its main *desiderata*.

Begin's Defiance

The road to a bilateral settlement, however, was still long and arduous, with no prospect of a smoother passage to come. In his meeting with Carter in March, Begin charged that Egypt had gone back on her commitments, and that Sadat had pledged in Jerusalem to demilitarise Sinai beyond the passes.¹⁶⁸ Begin also claimed that in their private meeting in Ismailia Sadat had agreed to the Israeli declaration of principles as they related to Egypt. The only differences between the two were allegedly over Begin's autonomy plan for the Palestinian territories, which according to Begin was referred to as a 'step forward' by Sadat.¹⁶⁹ The reason for the complications to date, in Begin's estimation, was that Sadat had been swayed by his officials to adopt a more hard-line stance. Begin claimed 'Sadat was willing to agree earlier, but then his advisers persuaded him not to agree'.¹⁷⁰ Post-Ismailia, however, Begin claimed Sadat reverted to the language of total withdrawal and Palestinian self-determination as opposed to the Israeli formulation referring to Palestinians' 'right to participate in the determination of their own future'.¹⁷¹ Such demands were the 'obstacle to negotiations, no other'.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Begin, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, US Delegation, Begin, Israeli Officials, 21 March 1978, Serial Xs – [8/77-8/78], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁶⁹ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷² Begin, quoted in Ibid.

Carter, however, refuted those charges, declaring ‘unequivocally and accurately that President Sadat does not insist on complete withdrawal (from the Palestinian territories), and that he is prepared to see some modifications in the 1967 lines, on a negotiated basis’.¹⁷³ Furthermore, Sadat did ‘not insist on an independent Palestinian state’.¹⁷⁴ In Carter’s opinion, the differences between the two sides were negligible and could be bridged:

On resolution 242, you say that negotiations should be on the basis of 242, and Egypt says they could bring about the implementation of 242. I can’t see a major difference. Our suggested compromise calls for the fulfilment of the principles of resolution 242. I can’t tell the difference...on the Palestinian issue, we’ve put forward some suggestions. Both governments agree that here should be a ‘just solution’ you can define that how you wish, as can Sadat. These are innocuous words. We are trying to find a compromise.¹⁷⁵

Carter, however, pushed Begin distinguish between Israel’s political claims and security needs in the West Bank, an issue he saw as the ‘crux of the negotiations’.¹⁷⁶ Carter thought Begin ‘should withdraw (his) political claims, and concentrate on (his) security needs. Then (he) and others can work out a resolution of the Palestinian question.’¹⁷⁷ Begin, though, was neither willing to accept this, nor relinquish control of the Palestinian territories following the five-year interim period.¹⁷⁸ Carter considered this a ‘profound point’, as ‘without Israeli willingness to give the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza any voice in determining their own future...there is no chance for a peace

¹⁷³ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Begin proposed that Israel, Jordan, and the administrative council must jointly agree to a future plan, thereby ensuring that Jerusalem maintained a veto over any future changes.

settlement' with Egypt as Sadat would not acquiesce 'if the prospect of choice is foreclosed'.¹⁷⁹

Carter emphasised that Begin had a great opportunity to strike a deal with Sadat, who was not conditioning his involvement on the participation of any other Arab state. Carter shared with Begin Sadat's promise that 'if Egypt and Israel could agree on the Sinai question – the settlements, the force levels, the airfields – and if agreement could be reached on a statement of principles, (Sadat) would then move on to a peace agreement with Israel, even if Jordan stays out'.¹⁸⁰ Sadat was neither demanding a full Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, nor the Golan, nor a Palestinian state, nor that Jordan enter negotiations.¹⁸¹ His only firm prerequisites were a full withdrawal from Sinai and the removal of all Israeli settlements and bases from Egyptian territory.

This, however, the Israelis were still not prepared to do, with Dayan stating that:

My personal view is that if he rejects the Israeli settlements remaining in place under Egyptian sovereignty, protected by some Israeli defence forces, and if his only alternative is that we clear out of the entire area, with our settlements and our airfields, and this is not required by 242, then we will go back to 242 and say that we have a right not to go all the way back to the international border. Then we will forget our proposal, because after three wars, we just can't leave Sharm al-Shaykh, El Arish, and Gaza. This would mean that the Arab population in Sinai and in Gaza would be a continuous one.¹⁸²

Begin concurred with Dayan's analysis, and proposed the novel argument that the principle of non-acquisition of territory by force did not apply to Israeli conquests in 1967 because 'the state of Israel has never been branded as an aggressor in the 1967 war.

¹⁷⁹ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁸² Dayan, quoted in Ibid.

The Security Council never made such a determination. So changes in borders are permissible and should be agreed upon'.¹⁸³

Begin's attitude in this meeting, as well as during a 90-minute private meeting with Carter later that evening, had disheartened the US president, who shared his feelings with the Israeli delegation the following day:¹⁸⁴

The Israeli position, as I understand, is that even if there were a clear statement by us, and if it were accepted by Egypt, against total withdrawal in the West Bank and against a Palestinian state, Israel would not stop new settlements, or the expansion of settlements; Israel should not give up the settlements in Sinai; Israel would not permit Egyptian or UN protection over the Israeli settlements in Sinai; even with military outposts, Israel would not withdraw political authority from the West Bank and Gaza; Israel will not recognise that 242 applies on all fronts, including the principle of withdrawal; Israel will not give the Palestinian Arabs, at the end of the interim period, the right to choose whether they want to be affiliated with Israel, with Jordan, or to live under the interim arrangement. This is my understanding of the present situation. If I am correct, the likelihood that the talks can be resumed with Egypt is very remote. There are no immediate prospects of substantial movement toward a peace agreement.¹⁸⁵

Begin contested Carter's 'negative' description, pointing out that Israel 'could ask for border changes, but we did not, for the sake of reaching an agreement with Egypt. But the UN zones with settlements is our alternative to asking for rectifications in the international border'.¹⁸⁶ Begin also considered the decision not to establish new Sinai settlements and instead expand existing ones a generous concession.¹⁸⁷ He also praised his own flexibility, as in his opinion Israel had 'produced three documents for peace' as opposed to Egypt, which only produced 'one peace plan which calls for full withdrawal

¹⁸³ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, US Delegation, Begin, Israeli Officials, 22 March 1978, Serial Xs – [8/77-8/78], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁸⁵ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

and the creation of a Palestinian state’, and ‘that takes no intellectual effort’.¹⁸⁸ Sadat, according to Begin, ‘made no counter-proposals, he has only offered an ultimatum’.¹⁸⁹

This was not at all fair. Sadat had shown flexibility by offering to play an interim role in Gaza and to accept a Jordanian role in the West Bank alongside a limited Israeli security presence for the duration of the five-year interim period.¹⁹⁰ But as Sadat would emphasise to Carter in a hand-written letter in late April, any declaration of principles had to be ‘unambiguous and unequivocal in order to serve as a plausible and valid basis for a meaningful progress’.¹⁹¹ There was no scope for diplomatic sophistry, and ‘concepts embodied in the declaration, as well as its wording should be of such a nature as to yield solutions to the remaining problems, and not to confuse’ the issues.¹⁹² Only then could the parties reach a far-reaching settlement. However, until Begin budged a settlement would remain distant, as Sadat this time would not back down.

Begin was now under increasing political pressure, both abroad as well as within Israel, in the wake of his unsuccessful visit to Washington. Weizman criticised him for being too rigid and risking a golden opportunity for peace.¹⁹³ Weizman also publicly suggested the establishment of a ‘peace coalition’ government with Labour to pursue peace talks

¹⁸⁸ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Memo, Brzezinski to Mondale, Sadat’s Views, 24 March 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-15-10-9-13-1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹¹ Letter, Sadat to Carter, 24 April 1978, Middle East – Negotiations [7/78], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Memo, The Situation Room to Brzezinski, Weizman on the Tight Rope, 17 July 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-4-14-4-6-2, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

with Egypt more flexibly.¹⁹⁴ Such a government would not be hamstrung by Begin's disingenuous exegesis of resolution 242. Begin was also attacked on this point by Shimon Peres, leader of the opposition, who emphasised in the Knesset that 242 had always required Israel to withdraw some way in the West Bank, and this was accepted by all previous cabinets.¹⁹⁵

Begin, though, refused to show any flexibility on the issue, and insisted instead that his autonomy proposal satisfied the withdrawal requirements of 242.¹⁹⁶ While Sadat's attempts to meddle in Israeli politics to undermine Begin by 'cultivating' and prominently meeting Weizman and Peres in Austria backfired,¹⁹⁷ the prime minister was nevertheless beginning to feel 'despondent' about the political impasse and actively contemplated resignation.¹⁹⁸ Political pressures on him were compounded by severe health problems.¹⁹⁹ The Israeli cabinet was deeply divided and 'a world of contradictions', with Begin steadily losing his authority over his ministers.²⁰⁰ In his April visit to Washington Dayan offered no new concessions or ideas. Dayan continued to reject any withdrawal from the West Bank under any conditions, yet had no suggestions

¹⁹⁴ Memo, Atherton and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments, 24 March 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE 17 B-9-46-4-1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹⁵ Memo, Israel: Criticism of Begin Peace Proposals, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-4-36-1-4-3, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹⁶ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Israeli Cabinet Statement, 20 June 1978, Israel 5-6/78, Box 35: National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: County File: Israel 7/77 through Israel 7-12/80: Collection 6, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹⁷ Willie Morris, President Sadat's Peace Offensive: The Last Chapter but One?, 12 February 1979, FCO 93/2199, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁹⁸ Weizman, *The Battle*, 311.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 332.

on how sovereignty would be resolved in the West Bank following the end of the proposed five-year interim period.²⁰¹

Egypt, in contrast, did develop an alternative foreign ministry proposal that involved giving up the long-standing demand for Palestinian self-determination in return for an Israeli commitment to ultimately quit the West Bank and Gaza and dismantle her settlements.²⁰² Egypt proposed that she and Jordan cooperate with Israel to guarantee security in the territories for five years during which the two Arab states would administer the territories ‘in trust’ before allowing the Palestinians to choose what type of link they would enjoy with Jordan.²⁰³ Hussein, however, was ‘non-committal’, preferring as ever to wait and see how events would unfold.²⁰⁴ Dayan was worried by Amman’s reluctance to be involved with the process, and shared his concerns with the US as to whether Sadat could really negotiate over the West Bank and deliver on his commitments should he remain the only Arab leader willing to negotiate with Begin.²⁰⁵

Sadat Under Pressure

Diplomacy was still deadlocked when Vance visited the region in June 1978, and unrest was brewing once again in Egypt over the failure to advance the peace process – with

²⁰¹ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Your Meeting with Prime Minister Begin, May 1 1978, 1 May 1978, Israel 5-6/78, Box 35: National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: County File: Israel 7/77 through Israel 7-12/80: Collection 6, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰² Memo, Aaron to Carter, Egyptian Proposals for West Bank/Gaza, 22 May 1978, 5/23/78 [i], Box 87, Staff Offices: Office of Staff Secretary: Handwriting File: 5/23/78 [1] through 5/30/78 [2], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

bilateral talks suspended since January – and the deteriorating economic conditions.²⁰⁶ The suspension of negotiations allowed Begin to pose as ‘a paragon of reasonableness and flexibility, clearly pleased that, thanks to Sadat, Israel was no longer on the spot’.²⁰⁷ The May passage of a bill approving the sale of US F-5 jets to Egypt was a timely boost to Sadat.²⁰⁸ Nonetheless pressure was building on the Egyptian president. Sadat’s expulsion of Israel’s military liaison committee from Cairo on 26 July signalled his frustration with Israel after she refused Sadat’s request to Weizman that Israel unilaterally return El Arish and Mount Sinai to Egypt as a ‘gesture for peace’, and severed the last direct bilateral link between the two countries.²⁰⁹

Vance came armed with ‘nine points’ on peace to present to Israel. Begin, however, continued to refuse *a priori* any new concessions and instead pushed for talks to resume without preconditions.²¹⁰ After the five-year interim period, Begin restated, Israel would be prepared only to ‘discuss’ sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza, but not ‘come to a decision’ over the issue.²¹¹ The Israeli position was later finessed to ‘a solution of this (sovereignty) question is possible’.²¹² Sadat would not readily accept this offer, and instead offered his own six principles on 3 July. These included that both sides ‘take into

²⁰⁶ Memo, The Situation Room to Brzezinski, Additional Information Items, 7 July 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-7-1-25-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰⁷ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Secretary Vance’s Talks in Israel, 20 June 1978, Israel 5-6/78, Box 35: National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: County File: Israel 7/77 through Israel 7-12/80: Collection 6, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 249.

²⁰⁹ Kamel, *Camp David Accords*, 202, 225.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

²¹² Memo, Saunders to Vance, Talks in Jerusalem, 28 July 1978, Middle East – Negotiations [7/78], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

account' the Palestinian people's 'legitimate rights' as well as Israel's security needs.²¹³ Military government would be abolished at the 'outset of transition'.²¹⁴ There would be a timetable for Israeli withdrawal, 'mutual security arrangements for all parties', and 'modalities for the implementation of relevant UN resolutions on the Palestinians'.²¹⁵ Jordan and Egypt would supervise the territories in cooperation with elected Palestinian representatives and under US supervision, with Jordan and Egypt guaranteeing security.²¹⁶ Following the transitional period the Palestinians would determine their own future.²¹⁷

This, however, was rejected by Israel, with Dayan resolute that Israel would not agree to return to the 1967 borders in the West Bank and Gaza even if there *were* security arrangements because of – paradoxically – security and practical considerations.²¹⁸ At a foreign ministers' meeting between Kamel, Dayan, and Vance at Leeds Castle in Kent on 18-19 July each side again rejected the other's tabled proposals over the territories.²¹⁹ While Israel wanted to defer the question of sovereignty, Egypt's hard-line foreign ministry proposal insisted on addressing it at the very outset, insisting that at the end of the transitional period 'the Palestinian people will be able to decide their own future'.²²⁰

²¹³ Memo, Saunders to Vance, Talks with Sadat, 28 July 1978, Middle East – Negotiations [7/78], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Memo, Situation Room to Aaron, Additional Information Items, 24 July 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-7-3-23-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²²⁰ Memo, Saunders to Vance, Talks with Sadat, 28 July 1978, Middle East – Negotiations [7/78], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79]

The proposal also included the customary demand for a complete withdrawal to the 1967 lines in the West Bank and Gaza and the dismantlement of all Israeli settlements.²²¹ Furthermore, Sadat offered to separate the question of security in the West Bank and Gaza from territory – much as Kissinger had suggested in Sinai – so that Israel could not use her legitimate security concerns to obtain political advantages.²²² Jerusalem, though, balked.

Carter's Dilemma

The choice facing Carter in light of the continued standoff was stark: whether to allow the process to peter out or to personally engage to attempt to salvage an agreement. The former option, while less risky in the short term, would allow the problem to fester. The latter option involved difficult decisions and a potentially heavy political cost for failure. The stakes were high, but so was the recompense.

An active presidential role would be a prerequisite for success, but no guarantee of it. The US would also have to put forward concrete proposals of its own that it could present to both parties, as Egypt had strongly been urging the Carter administration to do since it took office. America first explored this avenue during Vance's August trip to Israel, with the State department preparing proposals that were a 'genuine compromise' between

through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia, Quoted in Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 141.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Memo, Saunders to Vance, Talks with Sadat, 28 July 1978, Middle East – Negotiations [7/78], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Egyptian and Israeli positions.²²³ However, a US peace proposal alone would not assure progress, as Brzezinski warned Carter:

How are we prepared to deal with an Israeli rejection of our proposal? Do we have the political strength to manage a prolonged strain in US-Israeli relations? What kind of forces can we marshal and in what manner in order to prevail...I do not raise this issue lightly. It seems to me that if we go 'public' and then do not prevail, our Middle Eastern policy will be in shambles, and Sadat and others will be either repudiated or will turn in a radical direction. In other words, if we go 'public', we must prevail.²²⁴

That said, the differences between the two sides on Sinai were limited to the settlements, the airfields, and the extent of the demilitarisation of Sinai. The Palestinian issue, however, was more complicated, and jeopardised the chances of any deal being struck. In fact, the hurdles seemed so high that Begin began to actively contemplate another interim withdrawal as an alternative objective, suggesting 'permanent partial peace' as a *quid pro quo* for a third limited withdrawal in Sinai.²²⁵ Begin's 'partial peace' would involve an end to war, free movement of people, and economic trade between Egypt and Israel.²²⁶ Sadat, though, was utterly uninterested in another provisional solution.

Trilateral talks had been planned for August at the Sinai field mission, with the participation of Vance and both Egyptian and Israeli foreign and defence ministers in

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, The Middle East, 18 July 1978, Middle East – Negotiations [7/78], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²²⁵ The interesting nomenclature reflected Begin's past opposition to interim agreements concluded under Labour, which he had thought of as giveaways. See Briefing Paper, Bowdler and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli developments No.538, August 18, 1978, Middle East 7-9/78, Box 51: National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: County File: Middle East 6/78 through Middle East 1/80 -1/81: Collection 6, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²²⁶ Ibid.

order to agree ‘principles and procedures for negotiating peace in the Middle East’.²²⁷ These talks were fortunately called off, as they would have replicated the structural deficiencies of the Leeds Castle summit. Any positions agreed by Dayan and Weizman could be rejected by the less accommodating Begin, while doctrinaire Egyptian ministers negotiating in the absence of the flexible Sadat risked no progress being made at all and the final nail being driven into the peace initiative’s coffin. Moreover, Vance did not enjoy sufficient status or political heft to force progress in the talks. The only advantage of a ministerial summit would be the reduced risk to the reputation of President Carter. But even that was of limited benefit, as failed talks would further sap the administration’s authority.

Carter, serendipitously, disregarded the cautious advice of his officials and decided to invite Begin and Sadat to Camp David to jointly negotiate the principles and procedures for peace in the Middle East. In handwritten letters to both leaders Carter outlined the importance of the summit and counselled discretion and prudence, arguing it ‘imperative that every effort be made to capitalise on this unprecedented opportunity – to conclude a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel and to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive and permanent peace agreement for the entire region’.²²⁸ At Camp David the US would be, as Sadat had constantly demanded, a full partner in the talks.

²²⁷ Memo, Saunders to Vance, Key Papers for Your Middle East Trip, 28 July 1978, Middle East – Negotiations [7/78], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²²⁸ Letter, Carter to Sadat, 3 August 1978, Sadat, Anwar al, Box 109, ___ through SALT treaties, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

This was a terribly risky move for Carter, and a step that displayed the political courage of the American leader. For Sadat the invitation to the summit was manna from heaven; it was a final chance to salvage his peace initiative and his presidency, which he had been contemplating resigning.²²⁹ Camp David would be an all or nothing endeavour: a breakthrough would be made, or the chance for peace between Egypt and Israel would be veritably lost, and the ominous prospect of war would again re-emerge.

²²⁹ Weizman, *The Battle*, 316.

Chapter Six: Negotiating Peace

Sadat and Begin arrived in Maryland on 5 September in an atmosphere fraught with strain. Sadat was deeply frustrated with Israel, and was being strongly pressured by his officials into hard-line policies. Political differences with Begin were now coloured by personal animosity after several months of mutual public recrimination. Begin's disposition was equally dour; before leaving Israel again precluded publicly a return to the 1967 borders and the withdrawal of the military from the West Bank and Gaza,¹ though his senior ministers were more willing to compromise. Crucially, the Israeli delegation arrived empowered by cabinet to offer and accept new positions and policies, so that negotiations at the summit would not be hamstrung by the claim that the Israelis could not go beyond what cabinet had pre-approved.

Of the three leaders at Camp David, Begin was in the strongest position. As Brzezinski advised Carter, 'Sadat cannot afford a failure and he knows it; both Sadat and Begin think that you cannot afford failure; but Begin probably believes that a failure at Camp David will hurt you and Sadat, but not him. He may even want to see Sadat discredited and you weakened, thus leaving him with the tolerable status quo instead of pressures to change his life-long beliefs concerning Judea and Samaria'.²

¹ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 218.

² Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Strategy for Camp David, Middle East – Negotiations [7/29/78-9/6/78], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Carter therefore had to convince Begin ‘that failure at Camp David will have directly adverse consequences for...bilateral relations and in terms of Soviet influence in the region’.³ Failure brought about by Israeli intransigence would result in a public break with the administration as well as a refusal to defend Israel either at the UN or Geneva.⁴ To succeed Carter had to ensure that Begin overcame his aversion to broad principles – which were Sadat’s priorities – rather than focus on his predilection: procedural arrangements.⁵ Carter needed to avoid being ‘diverted from the central issues either by Begin’s legalisms or Sadat’s imprecision’.⁶ The US needed to obtain Israeli concessions that would go some way towards satisfying Egypt, while at the same time persuading Sadat to accept less than a blanket commitment to full withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza and self-determination for the districts’ inhabitants. The carrot for both Egypt and Israel would not only be diplomatic success, but also generous financial and military aid provisions.⁷ Strict control and discipline would have to be maintained by the Americans over the two visiting delegations, as well as their respective leaders. Sadat, given his penchant for surprise moves made without prior consultation, would have to be kept on a tight leash and firmly warned that failure of the talks would result in the end of the ‘special US-Egyptian relationship’ as well as strengthening of Soviet influence in the region.⁸ This was just as well as, according to Kamel, Sadat had been planning on

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

dramatically returning to Egypt within forty-eight hours if the Israelis did not satisfy his demands.⁹

Because of the miasma between Begin and Sadat, it was expected that the most crucial meetings would be with Carter, where each leader could be coaxed into more flexible fallback positions. This process was planned for the first three days of Camp David, with major decisions expected to be made by Sunday, the fifth day of the summit.¹⁰ The absolute minimum the US expected from Sadat was agreement to a long-term Israeli security presence in the West Bank and Gaza, deferring the question of borders and sovereignty over the Palestinian territories until the end of the five-year interim period, and a stated willingness to negotiate on behalf of the inhabitants of the territories if Jordan refused to participate in the process.¹¹ Sadat was also expected to restate his previous commitment to a peaceful resolution of differences with Israel, as well as to renew the expiring UNEF Sinai mandate in October.¹² American expectations of Sadat were very likely to be met, unless Sadat adopted wholesale his foreign ministry's Arabist position. In fact, in the run up to the summit another risk seemed likely: if Sadat were to accept US proposals too quickly, it could seem as though America were colluding with him. It was thus suggested that Carter 'suggest discreetly to Sadat that he not rush to accept any suggestion (America) put forward publicly'.¹³

⁹ Kamel, *Camp David Accords*, 286.

¹⁰ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Strategy for Camp David, Middle East – Negotiations [7/29/78-9/6/78], Box 13: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – [10/78-7/79] through Middle East – Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

The minimum the US expected of Begin, on the other hand, was much more difficult to achieve. It included the acceptance that Resolution 242 applied to the West Bank, flexibility on the future of Israeli settlements and military bases in Sinai, as well as modification of his autonomy proposal to include ‘acceptance of the principle of withdrawal; a moratorium on organised settlement activities’, ‘a visible termination of the military occupation at the outset of the five-year period’, and finally ‘general self-government for the Palestinians’.¹⁴ These *minimum* expectations went well beyond Begin’s most generous previous offers.

While the differences between the two sides going into the summit were stark, they were at least well defined. This was to prove a tremendous help to all parties throughout the conference. Remarkably, after thirteen days of tension and against all odds, an agreement finally emerged on 17 September. The summit had begun with a cantankerous Sadat, inflamed by the previous months of stalemate and his regional isolation, setting out his foreign ministry’s maximalist Arab position, which provoked Begin into a similarly belligerent stance. Sadat reiterated his diplomats’ demands for a full Israeli withdrawal – and the removal of all settlements – from all lands captured in 1967, only making allowances for slight alterations in the Green Line.¹⁵ Egypt and Jordan would supervise Gaza and the West Bank, respectively, during the five-year transitional period and Palestinians would exercise their ‘right to self-determination’ six months before the end of period.¹⁶ Israel would have to pay reparations for war damages and the exploitation of Sinai’s natural resources, accept the return of Palestinian refugees, sign the Nuclear Non-

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kamel, *Camp David Accords*, 386.

¹⁶ Ibid., 387.

Proliferation Treaty, accept the regulation of her arms purchases and manufacture, and refer all future disputes to the International Court of Justice.¹⁷ Clearly, this was not a realistic proposal. Fortunately, Sadat provided Carter with a roll of concessions that reflected his real and fallback positions, to be used by the American president at his discretion.¹⁸ They included Egyptian commitments to a full peace treaty, security guarantees for Israel, full diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations with Israel, an agreement not to re-divide Jerusalem, and controls on the return of Palestinian refugees.¹⁹ Two issues Sadat would not compromise on, however, were land and sovereignty.²⁰

Sadat's goal was to emerge from the summit with a framework for peace.²¹ Carter decided that the best way to achieve that was to separate the two leaders after the third day and act as a go-between for the rest of the summit. Twenty-three US drafts of an agreement were circulated to the Egyptian and Israeli delegations by the American team, and then repeatedly revised with agreed modifications. The talks neared breaking point at several instances, with Sadat at one stage packing his bags and instructing his delegation to prepare to depart, before being dissuaded by an eleventh hour personal intervention by Carter and the warning of the effect his withdrawal would have on prospects for peace and future relations with America.²²

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 341.

¹⁹ Quandt, *Camp David*, 221-222.

²⁰ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 328-329.

²¹ Ibid., 339.

²² Ibid., 392.

Begin, too faced tremendous difficulties and sustained pressure from both Carter – who stressed the ‘catastrophic’ impact on relations that the failure of the summit would provoke²³ – and Sadat, as well as his own lieutenants, before finally accepting the return to Egypt of Israel’s airfields in eastern Sinai – after the US offered to finance the construction of replacement facilities in the Negev²⁴ – and acquiescing in the prospect of the dismantlement of the thirteen Rafah settlements after support from Sharon and conditioned on Knesset approval of the matter in a free vote.²⁵ These concessions were particularly hot peppers in the Israeli political stew, and both Dayan and Weizman unsuccessfully and repeatedly pressed Sadat to show slight leeway on the settlements and the airfields. They even suggested that the US take over one of the airfields, with Dayan proposing abandoning the attempt for a treaty and focussing instead on a Sinai III agreement.²⁶ Sadat, though, steadfastly refused any compromise on the matter. Weizman’s proposals to attach the Rafah settlements to the Gaza district was similarly rebuffed.²⁷ Prospects for success seemed so bleak that by the 11th day even Carter instructed his officials to prepare a speech announcing the summit’s failure, before the breakthrough emerged on the 12th day.²⁸ Both Sadat and Begin were ultimately fêted by Carter, yet Sadat would face vicious Arab accusations of conceding too much and only striking a bilateral deal. So were these charges fair, and how did Sadat and Egypt fare in the final reckoning?

²³ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 173.

²⁴ Quandt, *Camp David*, 241.

²⁵ Weizman, *The Battle*, 370.

²⁶ Quandt, *Camp David*, 232, 242.

²⁷ Weizman, *The Battle*, 360.

²⁸ Carter, quoted in Camp David 25th Anniversary Forum, 17 September 2003, Camp David Accords 25th Anniversary, Box 8A, Camp David Accords through Carlucci, Frank C., Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

An Assessment of the Deal

Sadat obtained his main bilateral desiderata: complete return of Sinai, including the removal of all Israeli settlements and military bases, and the full restoration of Egyptian sovereignty. Sadat's opening offer remained his final offer, and though the price was high, it was ultimately, and very reluctantly, paid by Begin *in toto*. The significance of this achievement should not be underestimated: no Israeli cabinet since Sadat's accession to office had ever contemplated withdrawing completely from the Sinai.²⁹ The most generous Labour concept involved retaining a strip of land from Eilat to Sharm-el-Sheikh. The most munificent Likud proposal to date involved Israel absorbing the Rafah settlements and the airfields in eastern Sinai. When negotiations floundered earlier in 1978 pressure was heaped on Sadat to give in on the Rafah settlements, with no less a figure than the British prime minister arguing that Egypt ought not to let talks flounder over '2-3 kilometres of desert in the Middle East' and suggesting Sadat accept a change in the international borders in Israel's favour.³⁰ Begin himself declared early at Camp David that his 'right eye will fall out, (his) right hand will fall off before (he) ever agree(d) to the dismantlement of a single Jewish settlement'.³¹

Sadat thus managed to satiate the irredentist repining for the full recovery of Sinai that had possessed Egyptian politics and foreign policy over the previous decade. His strategy, premised on winning American approval of his positions and relying on her to

²⁹ Weizman, *The Battle*, 85.

³⁰ P Lever, Willie Morris' Valedictory Despatch, 17 April 1979, FCO 93/1925, National Archives, Kew.

³¹ Begin, quoted in Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 263.

deliver Israel, had succeeded, much to the dismay of the Israelis, as Ezer Weizman would lament:

Sadat had succeeded completely in winning Carter over to his side; in the event of a breakdown, our position would deteriorate progressively. Israel had managed to survive thirty years without a single day of peace – but I doubted whether we would be able to survive without the political, military, and economic support of the United States. ‘This is going to end with us clearing out of here,’ I said. ‘ But Sadat will remain – and that’s the worst thing of all.’³²

This, therefore, was a substantial victory, and all the concessions Sadat offered must be viewed in light of this central accomplishment. Claims that Israel would have removed the Sinai settlements and airfields anyway are wholly tendentious, unsubstantiated, and, in the final analysis, wrong.³³

That is not to say that Egypt succeeded in achieving all her bilateral goals: to secure her strategic aims several tactical retreats were accommodated. The compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice was dropped, and Egypt accepted the Israeli position that the straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba were both international waterways – a refutation of Egypt’s previous position that they lay within her coastal zones – that should remain free for use by all nations for both navigation and over-flight.³⁴ Substantial demilitarisation of Sinai was also agreed, though Israel had to scale back her demands too.³⁵ Sinai would be split into three zones. Only UN forces and Egyptian policemen armed with light weapons would be allowed in the eastern zone adjacent to the border with Israel. Four thousand border guards armed with light weapons would be allowed in

³² Weizman, *The Battle*, 367.

³³ For example, Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace*, 285.

³⁴ Briefing Paper, Camp David: Comparison, Sadat (Anwar) Communications, 1/77-11/77, Box 35: Plains File: Subject File, Public Papers Synopsis for 1977 through SALT II Senate Update, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

³⁵ Weizman, *The Battle*, 374.

the central zone. A mechanised infantry division along with its military installations and field fortifications would be stationed in the western zone.³⁶ This meant up to 22 000 men, 230 tanks, 480 armoured personnel carriers, 126 artillery pieces, 126 anti-aircraft guns, and individual SAM missiles would be deployed in western Sinai along the passes – Sinai's natural focal line of defence – and south to Sharm al-Sheikh.³⁷ It is instructive to note that the force limits agreed at Camp David were substantially higher than the solitary infantry division Egypt stationed in Sinai prior to the Six-Day war.³⁸ Moreover, after the construction of tunnels underneath the Suez Canal Egypt could easily and swiftly mobilise its army in the Sinai if the need arose.³⁹ In any case the demilitarised zones would serve a useful role in embedding the peace treaty within Egypt's bureaucratic machinery, as it precluded – or at least severely complicated – a successor to Sadat adopting an aggressive military deployment in Sinai that could lead to war in a similar manner to May 1967.

Sadat was also forced into concessions on the swiftness of normalisation; he agreed the establishment of relations with Israel after the interim – rather than the final – withdrawal. Relations would encompass both diplomatic and economic ties, as well as freedom of movement for both countries' citizens.⁴⁰ This was a key point as the interim withdrawal to the El Arish – Ras Mohamed line would occur nine months after the

³⁶ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 336.

³⁷ Ali, *Muhariboon*, 355.

³⁸ Ibid; Ahmed Fakhri, "Sadat and the Transformation of Egyptian National Security," in *Sadat and His Legacy: Egypt and the World, 1977-1997*, ed. Jon B. Alterman (Washington DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), 66.

³⁹ Ali, *Muhariboon*, 355.

⁴⁰ Briefing Paper, Camp David: Comparison, Sadat (Anwar) Communications, 1/77-11/77, Box 35: Plains File: Subject File, Public Papers Synopsis for 1977 through SALT II Senate Update, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

initialling of a peace treaty, while the final withdrawal would take place three years after a treaty's signature. Thus Israel would enjoy the fruits of peace for twenty-seven months before returning eastern Sinai, during which Egypt would demonstrate her goodwill and enact the provisions of the treaty. The timing of the interim and final withdrawals also involved Israeli concessions, as she originally proposed completing the interim withdrawal after three years, and the final withdrawal after five years.⁴¹ In any case, as relations were to be established with Jerusalem come what may, it made little difference to Egypt whether they were established 24 months earlier or later.

With respect to the autonomy framework governing the Palestinian territories, however, Sadat failed to obtain a specific reference in the final documents to the principle of inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war,⁴² the right to self-determination, or secure agreement on the eventual removal of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.⁴³ Instead the nature of the withdrawal, the location of boundaries, as well as the final status of the districts were all left to be negotiated during the interim period.⁴⁴ The agreed language on Jerusalem was also dropped after Begin and Dayan threatened to torpedo the agreement over the issue, and the matter was postponed to the final negotiations.⁴⁵ On refugees Camp David only promised that Egypt and Israel would work together to agree

⁴¹ Interview with Ezer Weizman, 3 March 1997, *BBC: The Fifty Years' War: Israel and the Arabs*, GB 165-0346, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford.

⁴² Though the formulation 'inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war' was included in the Accords as part of the preamble of resolution 242, despite Begin fighting hard to exclude it. He had declared to Carter that 'Israel cannot agree under any circumstances to a document which includes this phrase, and I will not sign it'. See Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 386.

⁴³ Briefing Paper, Camp David: Comparison, Sadat (Anwar) Communications, 1/77-11/77, Box 35: Plains File: Subject File, Public Papers Synopsis for 1977 through SALT II Senate Update, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Quandt, *Camp David*, 252.

procedures for a just resolution of the problem.⁴⁶ Both sides agreed to disagree on other issues, acknowledging the other's position and relying on anodyne prose to dull their differences. Carter, for example, wrote letters to both Sadat and Begin outlining each party's viewpoint on sovereignty in the West Bank and Gaza, with Carter and Sadat stating they believed – and Begin 'understood but did not agree' – that sovereignty in the territories 'resides in the people of the West Bank and Gaza who must participate in determining the final status of these areas'.⁴⁷

Therefore, unlike with Sinai, Sadat did not evidently secure most of his primary demands regarding the Palestinian territories, *scilicet* the recognition of the Palestinian people, their right to self-determination, the right of Palestinian refugees to return, and the removal of Israeli settlements. That is not to say that Sadat did not obtain notable, even breathtaking, Israeli concessions. Begin *was* forced to recognise the 'legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements', a remarkable statement for a Herut leader to make. Begin was also pressured into accepting 242 in its entirety, in both the preamble and the text of the Camp David Accords. The accords also declared the West Bank and Gaza areas of 'indeterminate status' whose future may not be resolved by Israel alone but only with the agreement of Egypt, Jordan, and the elected representatives of the territories – who during the interim period 'shall decide how they shall govern

⁴⁶ Briefing Paper, Camp David: Comparison, Sadat (Anwar) Communications, 1/77-11/77, Box 35: Plains File: Subject File, Public Papers Synopsis for 1977 through SALT II Senate Update, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁴⁷ Letter, Carter to Sadat, Middle East – Negotiations [9/7/78-12/78], Box 14: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – Negotiations: [9/78-12/78] through Southern Africa – [5/77-5/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

themselves, consistent with the provisions of the agreement'.⁴⁸ Abba Eban believed such language made the accords 'the most renunciatory document that any Jewish leader has ever signed in relation to any part of the Land of Israel', and that 'in a discussion in which sanity had even a marginal status it would be hard to see the Camp David proposal as anything but a Palestinian Charter'.⁴⁹

Moreover, the Accords as initially agreed by Sadat and Carter included an Israeli undertaking to halt settlement construction in the Palestinian territories for the duration of the autonomy negotiations, a substantial concession that was later retracted by Begin and replaced with a pledge to only suspend settlement during the three months allotted to negotiating a peace treaty with Egypt.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Eban still saw Camp David as 'more favourable to the Palestinian nation than the Balfour Declaration was to the idea of a Jewish National Home'.⁵¹

And while the two Camp David frameworks were legally separate, they were politically linked: they were negotiated together, they both shared the same legal basis – resolution

⁴⁸ Eban, *Personal Witness*, 591.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 592, 600.

⁵⁰ Begin and Carter had agreed at Camp David on the evening of 16 September – and in the presence of Vance, Aharon Barak, and Dayan – that Begin would commit in a letter to the US president that 'after the signing of this framework and during the negotiations, no new Israeli settlements will be established in this area. The issue of future Israeli settlements will be decided and agreed among the negotiating parties'. The following morning, after Sadat agreed to the Accords on the basis of that commitment Barak brought Carter a new proposed text from Begin, linking the settlement freeze to the treaty – rather than the autonomy – negotiations, which was refused by the American President. Carter later accepted that there was a misunderstanding, and that Begin did not intend to deceive him. Aharon Barak confirms this version of events. See Memo, Jimmy Carter, Settlements in West Bank and Gaza 9/20/78 [No. 1], Box 102, Staff Offices: Office of Staff Secretary: Handwriting File: 9/20/79 [No. 1] through [9/23/78 – Not Submitted], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Camp David 25th Anniversary Forum, 17 September 2003, Camp David Accords 25th Anniversary, Box 8A, Camp David Accords through Carlucci, Frank C., Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Vance, *Hard Choices*, 225.

⁵¹ Eban, *Personal Witness*, 600.

242 – and they were both guaranteed by the United States.⁵² Sadat neither pursued nor concluded a separate deal at Camp David; the bulk of the summit was devoted to the Palestinian territories, not bilateral issues. Even senior Israeli observers such as Rabin describe ‘any attempt to view (the peace treaty) as an entirely independent affair is a gross distortion’.⁵³

Finally, it must be acknowledged that at Camp David the negotiating leverage Sadat could deploy on behalf of the Palestinians was patently limited. Consequently, in agreeing the principles Sadat did not disregard or forego a better option. He obtained the best deal on offer. And considering Begin’s ideological intransigence and obsession with Judea and Samaria, the deal Sadat obtained was indeed far-reaching and progressive.

These points were manifestly lost on Arab leaders, both moderate and radical, who violently attacked the Camp David framework, a stance that baffled Eban, who thought ‘the opposition of Jordan and the PLO to the Camp David agreement was especially ironic, since it gave the impression that Sadat had secured Egyptian interests while abandoning the Palestinian cause. Any objective reading of the Palestinian section of the Camp David agreement would refute this impression. Sadat had obtained the adherence of Menachem Begin to formulations that constituted a breakthrough similar to the Balfour Declaration in Jewish history’.⁵⁴

⁵² Boutros-Ghali, *Egypt's Road to Jerusalem*, 196.

⁵³ Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs*, 328.

⁵⁴ Eban, *Personal Witness*, 591.

This also begged the question: what had the other Arab parties hoped to accomplish with Israel? Hussein, who attacked the Egyptian president for ‘weakening the Arab cause’, had ineffectually held talks with his western neighbour for over a decade with nothing to show for it.⁵⁵ He would eventually conclude a peace treaty with Israel on terms far less favourable than those Sadat secured. Assad’s hard-line stance since 1973 secured nought for Syria besides the desolate town of Kuneitra, and would sustain a similar record of failure until the Syrian president’s death. Even if the Geneva conference – the Arabs’ charmed panacea – had been held it is very difficult to see how more could have been secured from Israel. As Sadat would ask Kamil before the foreign minister’s resignation at Camp David:

How can there be a separate agreement, when I am committed in the process of self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza during the five-year transitional period and a solution to the Palestinian question in all its aspects? And what sense is there in keeping Sinai under Israeli domination until a solution is reached to the Palestinian problem so that Israel may cover it with new settlements with every day that passes? Wouldn’t that be foolish?⁵⁶

Indeed, as Brzezinski would emphasise to Hussein, ‘trying to solve all difference at once is, in fact, to solve nothing for a long time, or ever’.⁵⁷ Unlike the other Arab leaders, Sadat did not allow the ‘best to be the enemy of the better’.⁵⁸ What these Arab leaders seemed keenest on, however, was that Sadat achieve what they would: nothing.

⁵⁵ Memo, The Situation Room to Brzezinski, Evening Notes, 19 September 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-7-8-48-3, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁵⁶ Kamil, *Camp David Accords*, 367.

⁵⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with King Hussein, March 18, 1979, Brzezinski, Christopher, US Officials, Hussein, Hassan, Jordanian Officials, 18 March 1979, Memcons: Brzezinski, 3-6/79, Box 33, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁵⁸ Sam Lewis, quoted in Camp David 25th Anniversary Forum, 17 September 2003, Camp David Accords 25th Anniversary, Box 8A, Camp David Accords through Carlucci, Frank C., Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

The Reaction to the Accords

Sadat's immediate post-Camp David concerns were to build up moderate Arab support for the Accords to counter Syrian-led attacks in the Arab world. Syria was supported by the Soviets, who responded to the accords by recognising the PLO as the sole rightful representative of the Palestinians and backing Syrian attempts to fashion a radical coalition to oppose Sadat.⁵⁹ At the opening of an 'Arab Steadfastness Front' summit, Assad accused Sadat of signing a separate peace, abandoning Jerusalem, Palestine, and negotiating in Jordan's name.⁶⁰ Naturally, the Syrian president made no mention of the fact that his army had wiped out the PLO in Lebanon or he privately opposed the creation of a Palestinian state.⁶¹ Hussein tacitly positioned Jordan alongside Syria. Egyptian tensions with Libya also escalated and military conflict seemed again likely to break out after border skirmishes between the two neighbours in July.⁶² Even Sadat's usual fellow travellers – Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Oman – remained silent this time, as did Sadat's wealthy backers in the Gulf.⁶³ Hassan notably refused to bless the Accords when Sadat visited him in Morocco on the way home from Camp David.

⁵⁹ Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, 106-107.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Memo, Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli developments No. 567, 22 September 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-17 B-13-72-4-7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶¹ Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President's Second Meeting with King Hussein of Jordan, Carter, US Officials, Hussein, Jordanian Officials, 18 June 1980, Serial Xs – [5/80-6/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶² Memo, Bureau of Intelligence and Research Analysis, 26 September 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-17 B-13-72-13-7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶³ Memo, Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli developments No. 567, 22 September 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-17 B-13-72-4-7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Domestically, however, the agreement proved hugely popular with a substantial majority of Egyptians. Sadat was welcomed by hundreds of thousands of cheering Egyptians on his return to Cairo.⁶⁴ The military, which had witnessed Sadat secure through talks what it had been incapable of restoring through force of arms, was also supportive.⁶⁵ Sadat nevertheless embarked on a facelift of his regime, replacing the Minister of Defence Gamasy with Kamal Hassan Ali, previously head of intelligence. Sadat appointed Mustapha Khalil as both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, thereby allowing Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Boutros-Ghali to serve as acting foreign minister. Khalil was a moderate and diligent technocrat. He held a doctorate in engineering from the United States and was a former professor at Cairo University. He had been appointed to a wide array of ministerial posts since the mid-1950s, and had most recently been First Secretary of the ASU, where he supervised the dismantling of Egypt's single party system.⁶⁶ Most importantly, he strongly supported Sadat's peace initiative, and had requested to be allowed to accompany the president on his trip to Jerusalem as a mark of personal support. Khalil also supported Sadat's turn to the West, having personally signed a memorandum to the president in 1971 protesting the Treaty of Friendship concluded with the Soviets. Khalil had a reputation for honesty, probity, and professionalism, which he would apply to the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations in the months to come.

⁶⁴ Memo, Bowdler and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments, 25 September 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-17 B-13-72-7-4, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶⁵ Memo, The Situation Room to Brzezinski, Evening Notes, 19 September 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-7-8-48-3, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia. Shawkat, director of military intelligence, further reaffirmed the military's positive reaction to the Camp David Accords in conversations with the US defence attaché. See Memo, Saunders to Vance, Analysis of /Arab-Israeli developments No. 567, 22 September 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-17 B-13-72-4-7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶⁶ Dr Mustapha Khalil, 1978, FCO 93/1429, National Archives, Kew

The simultaneous dismissal of so many senior figures by Sadat was seen as a power play by Hosni Mubarak, who had been appointed Vice President in April 1975 and who now positioned himself as Sadat's unrivalled heir and confidante, a station he maintained by fully supporting all Sadat's policies and offering complete personal loyalty to him, unlike his erstwhile rivals who had underestimated the president's 'sensitivity to criticism'.⁶⁷ Indeed, by declining Sadat's offer to form a government after Camp David Mubarak astutely positioned himself as a national figure above the fray of domestic politics in advance of the upcoming treaty negotiations.

Bargaining at Blair House

Those talks began briskly at Blair House in Washington on 12 October, and lasted for two months before concluding on 13 November. They were conducted by the Israeli and Egyptian foreign and defence ministers, with active American support led by Cyrus Vance. Israel pushed for three main pledges: an explicit statement of the precedence of the treaty over any conflicting commitments, the promotion of Egyptian normalisation, and an assurance that the bilateral peace treaty would be wholly independent of the autonomy framework and negotiations.⁶⁸ While Israel was prepared to make goodwill gestures in the territories, such as amnesty for some prisoners and the removal of military

⁶⁷ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Information Items, 16 November 1978, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-8-5-28-7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶⁸ Memo, Vance to Carter, 12 October 1978, State Department Evening Reports 10/78, Box 39: Plains File: Subject File, State Department Evening Reports 8/78 through State Department Evening Reports 9/79, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Memorandum for the Record, Summary of President's Meeting with the Israeli Officials, October 17, 1978, 2:00-3:15 p.m., Oval Office, Serial Xs – [8/78-1/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

commands from civilian areas, she would not allow the two negotiations to be substantively linked.⁶⁹ Egypt had the exact opposite preferences: she was reluctant to acknowledge that the peace treaty with Israel would supersede all past or future commitments and wished to link bilateral negotiations to Palestinian autonomy.⁷⁰ She also pushed for a series of Israeli confidence building measures to create a positive atmosphere for talks. These included, among others, freezing the building of new settlements in the territories during the transitional period, announcing Israel's readiness to deal with any Palestinian group that accepted resolution 242, allowing complete freedom of movement for Palestinians in the territories, lifting the ban on political gatherings, and allowing some Palestinian refugees to return to the West Bank and Gaza.⁷¹

These preferences reflected the pressure on Egypt in the face of vehement Arab attacks on her policy. She aimed to underscore that she had neither concluded a separate deal nor turned her back on the Arab world. The treaty negotiations were also a chance for Egyptian officials, who were shut out of the negotiating and drafting at Camp David, to retract some of what they considered Sadat's more egregious concessions. Thus Boutros-

⁶⁹ Memorandum for the Record, Summary of President's Meeting with the Israeli Officials, October 17, 1978, 2:00-3:15 p.m., Oval Office, Serial Xs – [8/78-1/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷⁰ Memo, Christopher to Carter, 24 October 1978, State Department Evening Reports 10/78, Box 39: Plains File: Subject File, State Department Evening Reports 8/78 through State Department Evening Reports 9/79, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷¹ Memorandum for the Record, Summary of President's Meeting with the Egyptian Officials, October 17, 1978, 3:50-5:10 p.m., Oval Office, Serial Xs – [8/78-1/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Egypt Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Egyptian Position in the Negotiations Concerning the Establishment of Transitional Arrangements for the West Bank and Gaza, 1979-1980* (Cairo: State Information Service, 1981), 21.

Ghali proposed linking the gradual establishment of diplomatic relations to stages of Israel's withdrawals.⁷² Dayan, however, insisting on the 'immediate' establishment of full diplomatic relations after the interim withdrawal, and was supported by President Carter given that this had already been agreed at Camp David.⁷³ The Egyptians also objected to the Israeli refusal to sanction Egyptian air defences in Sinai,⁷⁴ and attempted to insert language stating that the military restrictions in Sinai would not remain in perpetuity.⁷⁵ Weizman and Barak eventually agreed to recommend to cabinet the inclusion of future provisions for amending some security restrictions by mutual agreement.⁷⁶

The Israeli delegation, however, continued to balk at Egyptian attempts to insert references in the bilateral treaty to target dates for interim administration and elections in the West Bank and Gaza, and to match them up with the dates of Israel's withdrawal from Sinai.⁷⁷ This explained the Egyptian insistence that autonomy talks be completed within nine months, and the concomitant Israeli insistence on a one year target date, as Cairo sought to have the Israeli interim withdrawal and the establishment of diplomatic relations coincide with progress for the Palestinians, a correlation the Israelis explicitly

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Memorandum for the Record, Summary of President's Meeting with the Egyptian Officials, October 17, 1978, 3:50-5:10 p.m., Oval Office, Serial Xs – [8/78-1/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 208, 242.

⁷⁴ Memo, Vance to Carter, 25 October 1978, State Department Evening Reports 10/78, Box 39: Plains File: Subject File, State Department Evening Reports 8/78 through State Department Evening Reports 9/79, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷⁵ Memo, Christopher to Carter, 24 October 1978, State Department Evening Reports 10/78, Box 39: Plains File: Subject File, State Department Evening Reports 8/78 through State Department Evening Reports 9/79, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷⁶ Memo, Vance to Carter, 31 October 1978, State Department Evening Reports 10/78, Box 39: Plains File: Subject File, State Department Evening Reports 8/78 through State Department Evening Reports 9/79, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

sought to avoid.⁷⁸ Nonetheless after the personal involvement of Carter, the seventh US draft treaty was finally accepted by both delegations, and the negotiators returned home to report on the agreed document.⁷⁹

But while Israel expressed her readiness to sign the provisional treaty as it stood – though not a side letter specifying a date for elections in the Palestinian territories – Sadat was still unsatisfied with the formulations on the ‘linkage’ issue as well as the priority accorded the peace treaty over Egypt’s other treaty commitments, the main remaining impediments to a bilateral peace agreement.⁸⁰ Sadat wanted to condition the exchange of ambassadors with Israel on the holding of elections in the Palestinian territories.⁸¹ He also wished to renegotiate article six of the draft treaty, which provided for the prioritisation of the peace treaty with Israel over all previous and future obligations, and which was the target of severe Arab criticism.⁸² The Egyptian president’s dissatisfaction with the provisional treaty as drafted by Boutros-Ghali and Kamal Hassan Ali led him to replace them as negotiators with Mustapha Khalil.⁸³ By then, however, the draft treaty had been published in both Israeli and Egyptian newspapers, which further complicated changing the agreed text.⁸⁴ As a sop to right-wing pressure, the Israeli negotiating team was also

⁷⁸ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 242.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁸⁰ Memo, Vance to Carter, 20 November 1978, State Department Evening Reports 11/78, Box 39: Plains File: Subject File, State Department Evening Reports 8/78 through State Department Evening Reports 9/79, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸¹ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Secretary Vance’s Middle East Strategy Paper, Serial Xs – [1/79-2/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸² Boutros-Ghali, however, argued that even as it stood article six would not affect Egypt’s commitments under the Arab Collective Security Pact. See Boutros-Ghali, *Egypt’s Road to Jerusalem*, 176.

⁸³ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Secretary Vance’s Middle East Strategy Paper, Serial Xs – [1/79-2/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸⁴ Boutros-Ghali, *Egypt’s Road to Jerusalem*, 176.

stripped of its authority, with cabinet henceforth ruling on every draft of every clause.⁸⁵ Begin had been blasted by his own party for his concessions at Camp David, and as a result was experiencing a ‘strong case of buyer’s remorse’.⁸⁶ Consequently, he became even more unyielding than usual, and wanted to solidify the impression of a purely bilateral deal that Sadat, after the Arab summit in Baghdad, was equally keen to dispel.⁸⁷

The Baghdad summit, held from 2-5 November, charged Egypt with ‘violat(ing) the rights of the Palestinian people’ and disregarding the Algiers and Rabat summit resolutions.⁸⁸ It was a total victory for the radical regimes, and brandished both a carrot and a stick: if Egypt were to abandon peace talks and renounce Camp David then the Arab states would offer it generous subsidies. But if Egypt signed the peace treaty with Israel then she would be expelled from the League and the headquarters relocated from Cairo. Though Sadat refused to even consider the remarkable aid offer of \$50 billion over ten years – declining to meet an Arab League delegation which came to Cairo to communicate the offer – the threat of ostracism did focus minds in Cairo on extracting more concessions from Israel.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 234.

⁸⁶ Sam Lewis, US Ambassador to Israel, quoted in Camp David 25th Anniversary Forum, 17 September 2003, Camp David Accords 25th Anniversary, Box 8A, Camp David Accords through Carlucci, Frank C., Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸⁷ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Initial Reaction to the Latest Middle East Difficulty, 30 November 1978, Middle East – Negotiations [9/7/78-12/78], Box 14: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – Negotiations: [9/78-12/78] through Southern Africa – [5/77-5/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁸⁸ Resolutions of the Ninth Arab Summit Conference, Baghdad, 2-5 November 1978, FCO 8/3290, National Archives, Kew.

⁸⁹ Heikal, *Secret Channels*, 283.

In light of the deadlock Vance visited the region in December to push for a deal to finalise the treaty before 17 December as agreed in the Camp David Accords.⁹⁰ Vance successfully persuaded Sadat to make use of interpretive notes rather than modify the treaty text so as to set out Egypt's reading that the peace treaty would not preclude the honouring of her collective Arab defence commitments, and to use a side letter to state a target date for elections in the West Bank and Gaza.⁹¹ This however, upset the Israelis, who felt the suggested interpretive notes for the disputed articles 'annulled their value and changed their meaning'.⁹²

In fairness to Begin, it was not reasonable to expect him to accept the Egyptian proposal that the implementation of the bilateral treaty remain conditional on autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza. No such conditionality was agreed at Camp David, which set out the principles upon which a bilateral peace was to be premised.⁹³ If Sadat would only accept a peace treaty on such a basis he should have stated his requirements at Camp David, not afterwards. That is not to say that Egypt should not have attempted to include language in the peace treaty to substantiate her claim not to have agreed a separate peace, but this was a far less ambitious aim than formally linking the two negotiation tracks.

⁹⁰ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Strategy for the Vance Trip to the Middle East, 6 December 1978, Middle East – Negotiations [9/7/78-12/78], Box 14: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – Negotiations: [9/78-12/78] through Southern Africa – [5/77-5/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 250-251.

⁹³ Memo, Vance to Carter, Strategy for the Middle East Negotiations, Serial Xs – [1/79-2/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Moreover, Sadat's stance on the bilateral negotiations to finalise the treaty reflected far less urgency than was expected or required. Rather than hasten to secure a deal to return Sinai, Sadat instead announced that negotiations ranked only second or third in his list of national priorities!⁹⁴ This was reflected in fact that he delegated the negotiation of the treaty to his officials. The reason for this was two-fold: Sadat thought the treaty was more or less settled and hence saw no urgency in prioritising the resolution of the outstanding differences. He was reluctant to engage in the process and to personally absorb further political costs, rather than deflect some onto his officials. He was also chastened by events elsewhere in the region, specifically the aftermath of the Baghdad summit as well as the crumbling Pahlavi dynasty.⁹⁵ Signs of renewed radical strength and concomitant reduced American influence were also evident further afield, with the Soviets invading Afghanistan at the outset of 1979. Thus in their Christmas Eve meeting in Brussels Khalil pressed Dayan for more linkage to the autonomy talks in order to make the treaty more appealing to the radical Arab states, as well as further Israeli compromises on the issues of military restrictions in Sinai and priority of obligations.⁹⁶

Sadat was also under renewed pressure from his lieutenants to react to fresh Israeli provocations, such as the expansion of settlements in the West Bank announced by Begin.⁹⁷ As Khalil would tell Carter, Sadat's 'desire for peace (is) consistent, but we

⁹⁴ Memo, Bowdler and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments, 5 January 1979, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-4-16-6-9-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁹⁵ Unfortunately, events in Iran also led to further complications in the treaty negotiations, as Iran was Israel's traditional oil supplier and the Israelis wanted to include provisions in the treaty guaranteeing the option of importing oil from the Sinai wells.

⁹⁶ Ali, *Muhariboon*, 188.

⁹⁷ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 235.

cannot isolate ourselves from the Arab world'.⁹⁸ Khalil argued that regional stability relied more than ever on a fair settlement with Israel, which necessitated greater satisfaction of Arab claims.⁹⁹ Both Jordan and Saudi Arabia had noted the radical shift in the region, and chose to bend with the prevailing regional winds. Hussein, in particular, embraced the radical consensus at Baghdad for reasons of both policy and profit. Hussein thought the autonomy framework for the West Bank and Gaza 'inadequate' and Jordanian participation 'foolish and dangerous'.¹⁰⁰ His alternative to the autonomy framework was the resurrection of his United Arab Federation proposal.¹⁰¹ Hussein's ideological purity was benevolently strengthened, however, by the \$1.2 billion annual subsidy pledged to Jordan at the Baghdad summit.¹⁰²

Israel was also impacted by the regional events, especially the toppling of her long-standing ally, the Shah of Iran, in January. This was reflected in both the increased Israeli emphasis on ironclad legal commitments in the treaty to ensure its continued application under Sadat's successors, as well as forceful arguments for guaranteed access to Egyptian oil in Sinai to replace lost Iranian supplies.¹⁰³ Regional events also further reinforced Begin's belief that, unlike Sadat and Carter, he alone could afford for negotiations to fail, and accordingly he continued to drive a hard bargain. Moreover, the longer talks dragged

⁹⁸ Khalil, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, Vance, Khalil, Dayan, Brzezinski, 25 February 1979, Serial Xs – [1/79-2/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Memo, Jordan: Views on Peace Process, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-25-115-8-1-8, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Memo, SCC Meeting on Iran, 20 February 1979, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-24-102-3-3-6, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

on, the closer it got to American presidential elections, and the greater Israel's leverage on the Carter administration.

Camp David, Again

This was the backdrop to the second Camp David talks, held in Washington from 21–25 February between Khalil, Dayan, and Vance in order to broker a compromise. The fact that the talks were held at the ministerial level did not augur well for their prospects of success. As Sadat did not attend, Begin also stayed away, and continued to refuse to delegate negotiating authority to Dayan. The absence of Sadat also resulted in a lack of flexibility in Egypt's proposals. Khalil brought with him a set of improbable demands that he urged Dayan to accede to in order to create 'a good atmosphere' in the West Bank and Gaza. These included allowing political activities in the territories, releasing political prisoners, granting inhabitants greater freedom of movement, allowing the return of some 1967 refugees to reunite families, and moving military headquarters away from civilian areas.¹⁰⁴ Khalil also again proposed 'Gaza-first', whereby autonomy would be applied to Gaza before the West Bank, which was designed to deflect Arab attacks and allow Egypt to claim she had secured an arrangement for the Palestinian territory she lost in 1967, thereby fulfilling her responsibilities to 'The Cause'.¹⁰⁵ Khalil even demanded that Egypt have the right to send her police into Gaza, which was predictably refused.¹⁰⁶ Such

¹⁰⁴ Letter, Khalil to Vance, 23 February 1979, Middle East – President's and Brzezinski's Trips: [2/27/79-3/15/79], Box 14: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – Negotiations: [9/78-12/78] through Southern Africa – [5/77-5/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 262.

requests seemed to epitomise the Egyptian stance at this stage of the negotiations: petty and quibbling. Khalil refused to agree the exchange of ambassadors – even in return for an early withdrawal from El Arish, arguing that Egypt was not committed to exchange envoys under the Camp David Accords.¹⁰⁷ Instead, Khalil now wanted to condition the exchange of ambassadors on the establishment of *full* autonomy in the Palestinian territories.¹⁰⁸ Dayan thought ‘Khalil was making a conscious effort to torpedo the negotiations and prevent the conclusion of a peace treaty’.¹⁰⁹ Instead of making progress, Dayan thought the ‘gap now wider’ than before.¹¹⁰ After several days of talks both parties were forcefully told they were ‘running out of time’: regional turmoil was risking Camp David’s signature achievement, and a peace treaty had to be concluded as soon as possible.¹¹¹

By the end of February the prospects seemed ominous for the peace treaty. Ironically this had happened despite almost all the main elements of the treaty being settled. The disputed points were linkage to the autonomy talks, priority of obligations, and the timing of the exchange of ambassadors. Egypt proposed a target date of December 1979 for concluding talks on the West Bank and Gaza, which Israel again rejected out of hand.¹¹² Cairo also wanted to attach an interpretive note to article six of the treaty. The note would

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 263.

¹⁰⁸ Ali, *Muhariboon*, 202.

¹⁰⁹ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 263.

¹¹⁰ Dayan, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, Vance, Khalil, Dayan, Brzezinski, 25 February 1979, Serial Xs – [1/79-2/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹¹ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹¹² Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Overview Paper, 28 February 1979, Serial Xs – [1/79-2/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

articulate a link between bilateral peace and Palestinian autonomy.¹¹³ Finally, Egyptian diplomats continued to attempt to link any exchange of ambassadors to progress in the West Bank and Gaza.

America, while faulting both sides, surprisingly laid most of the blame on the doorstep of Israel, a demonstration of Sadat's influence within the Carter administration. Dayan had accused the US of adopting the Egyptian position on article six, prompting Carter to retort that Dayan's 'version of history is not compatible' with his.¹¹⁴ As for Israel's concern over the exchange of ambassadors, Carter thought it exaggerated, as even after envoys were exchanged they could always be withdrawn at a later date.¹¹⁵ Israel also again demanded more financial support, requesting an increase in annual military aid from \$1 to \$1.5 billion, a 'positive response' to her ten-year procurement plan designed to significantly expand the size of her military, as well as \$3 billion in special assistance to finance the withdrawal from Sinai.¹¹⁶ These were ambitious demands, to say the least, especially during a time of economic turmoil in the United States caused by the second oil shock.

The US administration duly began to peruse other means of progress. It was clear at this point that the principal leaders had to be involved. The administration had invited Begin

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Dayan, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, Vance, Khalil, Dayan, Brzezinski, 25 February 1979, Serial Xs – [1/79-2/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Memo, Vance to Carter, Strategy for the Middle East Negotiations, Serial Xs – [1/79-2/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

to join Khalil, his nominal equivalent, at Camp David, an invitation the Israeli cabinet naturally declined.¹¹⁷ Begin did, however visit Washington at the start of March to discuss a solution to the impasse.

Begin Back in Washington

Begin's attitude in his talks with Carter was indicative of a *Masada* mentality. He painted a bleak picture of Soviet expansion and Islamic radicalism sweeping the region, presenting Israel as the only stable US ally in the Middle East, and therefore worthy of Carter's support. Begin also offered the preposterous suggestion that rather than return two Sinai airbases to Egypt as agreed in the bilateral talks, they should be given to America instead, thereby negating the need for the US to supply Saudi Arabia with F-15s! Israel was generously 'prepared to give (the US) that base, but Sadat is apparently not'.¹¹⁸ The reason for such altruism was that 'Israel can do whatever is necessary to prevent Saudi Arabia from being taken over by communism'.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, whereas previously Israel demanded to be armed by the US in order to defend herself, Begin maintained 'from now on we will contend that Israel should be in order to defend the interests of the free world'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Begin, not unreasonably, thought it below his rank to negotiate with an appointed prime minister. See Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 266.

¹¹⁸ Begin, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, US Delegation, Begin, Israel Officials, 2 March 1979, Serial Xs – [1/79-2/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹¹⁹ Begin, quoted in *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

As for the negotiations with Egypt, Begin described them as being ‘ in a state of deep crisis’ as a result of Egypt’s attempt to insert interpretive notes.¹²¹ Begin’s casuistry is epitomised by the following exchange with the American president:

Begin: First the good news. The government of Israel has accepted the American proposal on article 4 (the Prime Minister reads the text of the interpretative note to article 4).

Carter: That is the text Israel wanted, and now Egypt has accepted it.¹²²

Begin then proceeded to the notes Egypt was proposing to attach to article six. The Egyptian notes assigned no priority to the peace treaty with Israel over other foreign policy commitments and stated that the treaty was concluded ‘in the context of a comprehensive peace settlement’, which, Begin claimed, could allow Egypt to abandon some of her commitments if a comprehensive settlement did not eventually materialise.¹²³ Begin announced that as a cabinet decision had already been taken, Israel ‘will not sign any so-called peace treaty unless article six stands as it is. There can be no interpretation. This is the heart of the peace treaty. We cannot be derelict in our duty’.¹²⁴

On this point the Israeli stance was fair. It was not reasonable to allow the Egyptians any wiggle-room on their peace commitments in the context of a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai. It was also fair for the Israelis to insist that their treaty with Egypt supersede Cairo’s other commitments which overtly conflicted with peace with Jerusalem, such the 1950 Arab League defence pact, the 1962 alliance with Iraq and Syria aimed at ‘liberating Palestine’, or the 1966 defence treaty with Syria which was

¹²¹ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

invoked in both the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars.¹²⁵ Israel deserved assurance that her treaty would be legally inviolable. However, as Brzezinski pointed out, the language in the maximal Israeli text meant ‘that Egypt is not signing a treaty with Israel, but is also explicitly disavowing its political and military relations with other Arabs’, and that asking Sadat to ‘acknowledge this publicly is too much’.¹²⁶ Begin, however was undeterred, arguing that though he wanted ‘Sadat to have a good standing in the Arab world, (Israelis) cannot sacrifice ourselves on the altar of Sadat’s prestige in the Arab world’.¹²⁷

In addition, Begin objected to the proposed letter on the West Bank and Gaza for ‘deviating’ from Camp David by distinguishing between the West Bank and Gaza in the ‘Gaza-first’ scheme, and also by allowing Egypt to assume Jordan’s role in the West Bank should Hussein choose not to partake in the autonomy talks.¹²⁸ Begin contended that if the king shunned negotiations Israel ‘had the right to say that until Jordan joins there would be no such talks’, leading to the following exchange:¹²⁹

Carter: You talk of Egypt intervening in Judea and Samaria, but we agreed at Camp David that Sadat would negotiate if Jordan did not join the talks. This was discussed by us. You never objected to Sadat representing Arab interests.

Begin: I never agreed. I only said Israel was ready to negotiate with Egypt alone, if Jordan does not join. This was to show our good faith.

Carter: I agree. What is the difference?

Begin: We did not agree that Egypt will replace Jordan. Egypt cannot make peace for Jordan.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Brzezinski, quoted in Ibid.

¹²⁷ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Here Begin was manipulating and misleading, agreeing in good faith at Camp David to Egypt's assumption of the Jordanian role yet arguing *ex post facto* that his acceptance was not enshrined in the treaty itself, but in an accompanying letter. Had he been unwilling for Egypt to assume the Arab role then he ought not to have agreed to such an eventuality being referred to in the official letters of Camp David. While some of his objections to Egypt's proposals were valid, if ungenerous to Sadat, this one was not. Nor was his rejection of Sadat's proposal to station Egyptian liaison officers in the Palestinian territories because Camp David said 'there should be one liaison officer from each state, not only an Egyptian liaison officer, but also an Israeli liaison officer'.¹³¹ It beggared belief that Begin saw a need for Israeli liaison officers in a territory she controlled. But Begin was in the habit of submitting to his own caprice, offering such gems of wisdom to Carter as:

it would be a peril to the free world if there were a Palestinian state that became a Soviet base in this area. The PLO sent arms to Khomeini. There would be Soviet generals in Bethlehem. Does this free world need a Soviet base in Judea and Samaria?¹³²

Begin also adamantly the 'Gaza-first' proposal. Carter pointed out that Sadat suggested 'Gaza-first' only to 'help to break the present deadlock', and that Sadat wanted any agreement struck to be valid in both territories, but to only apply it first in Gaza.¹³³ Begin, however, would only agree to Gaza-first 'if Egypt drops all interest in the question of autonomy in Judea and Samaria', an extraordinary proposition.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹³² Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹³³ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

¹³⁴ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

Begin's other objections were more reasonable. Israel would not accept a one-year target date for establishing autonomy, as Begin had never agreed to it at Camp David.¹³⁵ As for linking the exchange of ambassadors to autonomy talks, Begin insisted that Sadat had already agreed the envoys' arrangements at Camp David. If Sadat reopened 'the annex dealing with the exchange of ambassadors, (Israel) will also reopen the question of the timing of withdrawal, and (Israel) may change the time for the interim withdrawal from nine to eighteen months or the time for the final withdrawal from three to six years'.¹³⁶ On both of these points Israel's demands were credible and convincing, arguing that Egypt ought to respect her commitments at Camp David, and not attempt to finagle additional concessions at this late date. Begin, however, did not rigidly apply such principles to himself. He threatened to not relinquish the Sinai oil wells unless Egypt agreed, and America guaranteed, to supply Israel with 3.5 million tonnes of oil per annum.¹³⁷ This was because 'Camp David was signed when the Shah' still ruled Iran.¹³⁸ Evidently, it was incumbent upon Sadat to make up Israel's Iranian losses.

Further inconsistencies were manifest. When offered the opportunity by Carter to pursue additional talks with Sadat on Palestinian autonomy before concluding the bilateral treaty, the obstreperous Begin refused as Israel 'was not committed to do this by Camp David' and 'we should not start with the autonomy' talks.¹³⁹ But as Carter pointed out in repartee, 'Camp David says nothing about the sequence' in which talks should be

¹³⁵ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹³⁶ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹³⁷ Begin, quoted in Ibid. This figure was more than double the 1.6 million tonnes annual oil output of the Sinai wells Israel controlled, and greater than the wells' maximum output of 2.5 million tonnes.

¹³⁸ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

¹³⁹ Begin, quoted in Ibid.

pursued, and beginning with the Palestinians ‘might go a long way to removing obstacles to the peace treaty’ as well as ‘help overcome the linkage problem’.¹⁴⁰

Carter was by this point contemplating a trip of his own to the Middle East in order to hammer out a deal. Sadat, too, was planning a voyage of his own: a visit to the US the following week in order to denounce Begin in Congress and to the American media, a visit the administration asked Sadat to defer.¹⁴¹ To justify the risks of going to Cairo and Jerusalem, however, Carter attempted to obtain Begin’s prior agreement to revised notes on article six, the wording of an accompanying letter dealing with the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the suspension of settlement activity in the territories until the targeted date for the completion of the autonomy talks on the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁴² In return Carter would offer the prospect of an expanded security relationship, as well as the possibility of a full mutual defence treaty in the ‘course of implementation of the Camp David Accords’.¹⁴³

In their meeting on 4 March Carter did make important inroads with Begin, using new American proposals to clear the remaining hurdles to an agreement. Cyrus Vance presented to Begin new language on article six that dropped the phrases ‘comprehensive peace’ and ‘in the context of the Camp David frameworks’ that Begin had flagged, and

¹⁴⁰ Carter, quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 281.

¹⁴² Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Middle East Scenario, 3 March 1979, Middle East – President’s and Brzezinski’s Trips: [2/27/79-3/15/79], Box 14: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – Negotiations: [9/78-12/78] through Southern Africa – [5/77-5/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

Begin agreed to recommend it to cabinet.¹⁴⁴ Begin also responded more positively to the suggested American compromise on the question of a date for the West Bank and Gaza elections, with a one-year deadline now referring to the completion of negotiations rather than the holding of the elections. As for the question of oil, the US guaranteed to supply Israel's oil needs if Egypt refused to sell oil from Sinai, thereby partially satisfying Israel's demands.¹⁴⁵ The prime minister did not agree definitively to all these proposals, but promised to recommend it to cabinet, which in due course accepted the new language.¹⁴⁶

Thus the way was clear for Carter to attempt another audacious gamble: an eleventh hour personal journey through the diplomatic minefield of the Middle East in order to salvage his greatest foreign policy achievement. Brzezinski was sent ahead to Cairo to brief Sadat on the latest treaty proposals and encourage the Egyptian president to abjure confrontation with Begin.¹⁴⁷ Sadat accepted Carter's strategy, and promised 'to give the President items with which to hammer at Begin'.¹⁴⁸

Carter in the Middle East

¹⁴⁴ Begin initially tried to avoid pronouncing on the issue, and only did after Carter pressured him to respond immediately. See Memorandum of Conversation, Carter, US Delegation, Begin, Israel Officials, 4 March 1979, Serial Xs – [1/79-2/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 245.

¹⁴⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 283.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

On 8 March Carter arrived in Cairo, and met that evening, and again the following day, with Sadat and his advisers to review the outstanding issues. Sadat – against the advice of his doctrinaire officials – approved the latest US draft proposals.¹⁴⁹ Carter promised Sadat that he would represent both American and Egyptian interests in Jerusalem, an arrangement Sadat accepted.¹⁵⁰ On 10 March Carter again met privately with Sadat, and the latter signalled his readiness to again visit Jerusalem or host Begin in Cairo in the event a deal was struck, before the US delegation departed for Israel.¹⁵¹ That evening Begin hosted Carter for dinner in his private home, following which the two leaders held private discussions. The talks were again fractious, with Begin informing a surprised Carter that before he could initial any agreement both cabinet and the Knesset would each have to hold a full debate and approve the peace treaty, prompting Carter to challenge Begin on his desire to actually facilitate rather than impede a deal.¹⁵²

On the morning of 11 March the substantive meetings with the Israelis began. The US delegation met with Begin as well as the entire Israeli cabinet defence committee to present the latest proposals. Begin, a cock crowing upon his own dunghill, again rejected the notes to article six, the inclusion of language on Gaza-first in the letter dealing with the Palestinian territories, as well as the inclusion of Egyptian liaison officers.¹⁵³ Carter

¹⁴⁹ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 417.

¹⁵⁰ Memorandum of Conversations, Carter and US Officials in Egypt and Israel, 8-13 March 1979, Middle East – President's and Brzezinski's Trips: [2/27/79-3/15/79], Box 14: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – Negotiations: [9/78-12/78] through Southern Africa – [5/77-5/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁵¹ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 419.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 421.

¹⁵³ Memorandum of Conversations, Carter and US Officials in Egypt and Israel, 8-13 March 1979, Middle East – President's and Brzezinski's Trips: [2/27/79-3/15/79], Box 14: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – Negotiations: [9/78-12/78] through Southern Africa – [5/77-5/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

pushed forcefully for liaison officers, describing the issue as ‘crucial’ and stating that Begin’s ‘response is not adequate’, as ‘unless negotiating teams have access (to Gaza), I do not feel I have fulfilled my obligations’.¹⁵⁴ The fraying personal relationship between the two men was increasingly evident, with Begin constantly interrupting the president, who in turn demanded the prime minister ‘let me finish’!¹⁵⁵

The meeting adjourned for lunch, and resumed with Carter asking the Israelis to develop alternative language on article six, and requesting that cabinet come to a decision on the proposed accelerated withdrawal from Sinai in exchange for Sadat agreeing an early exchange of ambassadors.¹⁵⁶ By the third and final afternoon session Carter had ‘clearly impacted’ the cabinet defence committee with his stern articulation of American national interests and what was at stake in the talks, and Begin agreed to convene the full cabinet that evening to pronounce on all outstanding issues.¹⁵⁷

The sides reconvened the following morning in the presence of the full cabinet. Begin proceeded to explain the cabinet’s decision, which included elimination of the reference to ‘comprehensive peace’ in the note to article six, refusal of the language on Gaza-first and Egyptian liaison officers’, and insistence on an Egyptian oil guarantee.¹⁵⁸ Carter, in turn, rejected the Israeli demand on oil and asked the cabinet to reconsider its decision. Begin agreed to further cabinet consideration, but only after a few days!

¹⁵⁴ Carter, quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

By that evening it seemed that Carter's mission had failed, and the prospects for peace lay in tatters. Preparations were being made to return directly to the US the following morning. Dayan, after securing Begin's permission, visited Vance at the King David Hotel to propose new ideas to break the deadlock. Israel would accept a US guarantee on oil and a quicker withdrawal to the interim line in return for dropping the idea of 'Gaza-first' as well as Egyptian liaison officers.¹⁵⁹ She would be satisfied with a twenty year US guarantee of her oil needs, as well as a clause in the treaty stating that Israel 'had the right to buy oil directly from Egypt'.¹⁶⁰ Dayan urged Vance to convince the Egyptians to present their Gaza proposals in the autonomy talks instead.¹⁶¹

Dayan's creativity successfully unravelled the deadlock. The following morning, after a private meeting with Begin and another with Dayan, Carter returned to Cairo to meet with Sadat, Mubarak, and Khalil at the airport. Carter presented the results of his talks with the 'unpleasant' Begin, declaring that his 'assignment has been carried out 'satisfactorily'.¹⁶² Compromise language on several of the articles had been agreed. The final version of article six now stated that the 'Parties undertake to fulfil in good faith their obligations under this Treaty, without regard to action or inaction of any other party and independently of any instrument external to this Treaty' and that 'in the event of a conflict between the obligations of the Parties under the present Treaty and any of their other obligations, the obligations under this Treaty will be binding and implemented',

¹⁵⁹ Quandt, *Camp David*, 310.

¹⁶⁰ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 276.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Carter, quoted in Memorandum of Conversations, Carter and US Officials in Egypt and Israel, 8-13 March 1979, Middle East – President's and Brzezinski's Trips: [2/27/79-3/15/79], Box 14: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – Negotiations: [9/78-12/78] through Southern Africa – [5/77-5/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

with an agreed minute 'that there is no assertion that this Treaty prevails over other Treaties or agreements or that other Treaties or agreements prevail over this Treaty'.¹⁶³ On the question of Egyptian liaison officers Israel had agreed to free movement of Egyptians in Israel and the Palestinian territories if Egypt would allow Israeli citizens reciprocal free access to Egypt.¹⁶⁴ Liaison offices would thus be unnecessary, as Egypt would have its own consulate in Gaza. The option of Gaza-first, too, would have to be scrapped. Israel also agreed to an expedited withdrawal from El Arish within two months of signing the peace treaty in return for the opening of borders and exchange of ambassadors one month after the completion of the interim withdrawal, the same proposal that she had rejected in October.¹⁶⁵

However, despite Carter's Panglossian assessment of the results, it was clear that the Israelis had held the line on all their demands, with the only satisfaction for Egypt being on the question of oil supplies. Carter, like Kissinger before him, had not achieved significant Israeli concessions despite piling on the pressure in Jerusalem. Khalil realised this and asked Carter to attempt to obtain more concessions from Israel. Carter, however, signalled that it was the end of the road, stating that 'for the last 18 months I, the president of the most powerful nation on earth, have acted the postman. I am not a proud

¹⁶³ Egypt Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Treaty of Peace between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Israel, 26 March 1979," http://www.mfa.gov.eg/MFA_Portal/en-GB/Foreign_Policy/Treaties/Treaty+of+Peace+between+the+Arab+Republic+of+Egypt+and+the+State+of+Israel+26+March+1979.htm.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 278.

man – I have done the best I could – but I cannot go back to try to change the language’.¹⁶⁶

Sadat, as ever, showed more flexibility than his lieutenants, and even offered to build a pipeline to Eilat if the Israelis wanted it.¹⁶⁷ He further agreed to Carter’s request to invite Yigael Yadin to Egypt after the signing of the treaty as a goodwill gesture, as well as to open Egypt’s frontiers with Israel after the return of El Arish in return for a series of Israeli unilateral gestures in the Palestinian territories.¹⁶⁸ With regards to linkage to the autonomy talks, Sadat agreed that the talks would begin within a month of the ratification of the peace treaty, and that the ‘goal’ would be to complete the negotiations within a year and hold elections ‘as expeditiously as possible after agreement has been reached between the parties’, with the self-governing authority being established one month after the elections.¹⁶⁹ This compromise was much closer to the Israeli position than the Egyptian one, and mercifully so. Tying the withdrawal from Sinai too closely to the Autonomy negotiations would mean the return of Egyptian territory would to some extent rely on outside Arab parties, and in effect undo the efforts Egypt had made to escape such a situation at Geneva eighteen months earlier.

¹⁶⁶ Memorandum of Conversations, Carter and US Officials in Egypt and Israel, 8-13 March 1979, Middle East – President’s and Brzezinski’s Trips: [2/27/79-3/15/79], Box 14: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – Negotiations: [9/78-12/78] through Southern Africa – [5/77-5/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁶⁷ Letter, Carter to Begin, 13 March 1979, Middle East – President’s and Brzezinski’s Trips: [2/27/79-3/15/79], Box 14: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Geographic File: Middle East – Negotiations: [9/78-12/78] through Southern Africa – [5/77-5/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt: Attached Letters," <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/peace%20process/guide%20to%20the%20peace%20process/israel-egypt%20peace%20treaty%20-%20letters>.

Lobbying in Arabia

All that now remained was the Israeli cabinet's official stamp of approval. In the interim Carter despatched Brzezinski to Saudi Arabia and Jordan in order to convince the two nations to back the peace treaty. In Riyadh Brzezinski argued forcefully for support of the treaty, as it was 'the cornerstone for a comprehensive settlement'.¹⁷⁰ Criticism of the treaty for not achieving more for the other Arab states was foolhardy. As Brzezinski argued in Riyadh, he 'now learned with some pain that even getting two parties together at this stage is extremely difficult. To try to add other parties would guarantee failure and a continuation of the status quo'.¹⁷¹

The treaty was crucial as it established both the principle and the precedent of a full Israeli withdrawal and the dismantlement of settlements in occupied Arab land – both of which Jerusalem had resisted with gusto. Brzezinski maintained the peace treaty and the autonomy talks 'opens the door of redressing justice for the Palestinians and creating new conditions for giving the Palestinians their legitimate rights'.¹⁷² The American delegation also underlined Sadat's efforts to obtain as much as he could for the Palestinians, telling Crown Prince Fahd that 'if Sadat wanted only a bilateral settlement, he could have had

¹⁷⁰ Brzezinski, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with Prince Saud in Riyadh, Brzezinski, US Delegation, Saud al Faysal, Turki al-Faisal, Pharaon, 17 March 1979, Serial Xs – [1/79-2/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁷¹ Brzezinski, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷² Brzezinski, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with Crown Prince Fahd, March 17, 1979, Brzezinski, Christopher, US Officials, Fahd Al Saud, Abdullah Al Saud, Sultan Al Saud, Saud al Faisal Al Saud, Saudi Officials, 17 March 1979, Memcons: Brzezinski, 3-6/79, Box 33, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

that long ago, but he held out and now he has a strong commitment that negotiations (on the Palestinian territories) will begin one month after the treaty is ratified'.¹⁷³

Brzezinski also warned Riyadh that attacking the deal would not only damage Sadat, but also US interests and the Saudi relationship with America. The Saudis, however, would not express any backing for Sadat, and admitted that if the bilateral peace treaty was ratified Saudi Arabia would support the transfer of the Arab League headquarters from Cairo, suspension of Egyptian membership in the organisation, and the boycott of Egyptian companies and institutions dealing with Israel.¹⁷⁴ Saudi Arabia did, however, promise not terminate her bilateral aid programmes with Cairo.¹⁷⁵

In Amman Brzezinski encountered an angry Hussein, who was far from pleased to see Sadat succeed in his initiative, and who presented a distinctly subjective Hashemite view of the recent history of the region. Among a farrago of complaints and cant, Hussein criticised Sadat for not consulting him prior to the Yom Kippur war,¹⁷⁶ neglecting of course to elaborate that in September 1973 he had briefed Golda Meir in person on the Arab war plans he surreptitiously obtained.¹⁷⁷ Hussein then faulted Sadat for visiting Jerusalem, where his grandfather had 'died because he would not compromise', again ignoring that Abdullah had been killed precisely because of his eagerness to compromise

¹⁷³ Christopher, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Prince Saud, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Princes Fahd and Sultan, quoted in Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Hussein, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with King Hussein, March 18, 1979, Brzezinski, Christopher, US Officials, Hussein, Hassan, Jordanian Officials, 18 March 1979, Memcons: Brzezinski, 3-6/79, Box 33, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁷⁷ Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 361.

with Israel.¹⁷⁸ In declaring that Sadat had ‘derailed’ the ‘real peace process’ at Geneva, Hussein patently failed to consider what could have been accomplished in a multilateral framework.¹⁷⁹ As Carter would explain to him in person:

It is very difficult for us when others say that this (bilateral) avenue should not be pursued and there is a better one – such as the UN, or Geneva, where both the PLO and Israel would be represented. We went down that road. But the Arab nations could not agree on how to negotiate, or on the role of the PLO and the Palestinians. We tried it with determination, and even got a US-Soviet agreement. But we couldn’t get Syrian or PLO agreement. The alternative was a surprise, but (I) was grateful for it: Sadat broke the logjam.¹⁸⁰

Indeed, Hussein unwittingly acknowledged his greatest failing himself, explaining that ‘what we wanted to know...was the final object. Perhaps if we knew that, we could work it out’.¹⁸¹ This was the traditional Arab demand that Israel agree to a complete withdrawal from Arab territories *before* negotiations even began. By neither participating in the Autonomy talks nor encouraging Palestinian participation, Carter argued that Hussein was actually relieving pressure on Israel.¹⁸² As for Hussein’s charge that Egypt had abandoned her prior commitments, such as self-determination for the Palestinians and a solution for Jerusalem, Carter thought the Egyptians ‘did not abandon it’ but ‘rather they went round it’, and clarified that the agreement being negotiated on autonomy was an

¹⁷⁸ Hussein, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with King Hussein, March 18, 1979, Brzezinski, Christopher, US Officials, Hussein, Hassan, Jordanian Officials, 18 March 1979, Memcons: Brzezinski, 3-6/79, Box 33, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President’s First Meeting with King Hussein of Jordan, Carter, US Officials, Hussein, Jordanian Officials, 17 June 1980, Serial Xs – [5/80-6/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁸¹ Hussein, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with King Hussein, March 18, 1979, Brzezinski, Christopher, US Officials, Hussein, Hassan, Jordanian Officials, 18 March 1979, Memcons: Brzezinski, 3-6/79, Box 33, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁸² Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President’s First Meeting with King Hussein of Jordan, Carter, US Officials, Hussein, Jordanian Officials, 17 June 1980, Serial Xs – [5/80-6/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

interim one and would lead to later final status talks.¹⁸³ Hussein, though, was neither persuaded by Brzezinski nor Carter. As Sadat disdainfully muttered when informed of Hussein's stance, 'this is Hussein...this is Hussein'.¹⁸⁴

Sadat was also full of derision for the Al Sauds, recounting how when Mubarak briefed them on the peace treaty negotiations the ailing King Khalid demanded to know why Sadat was planning to visit Jerusalem, demonstrating that the senile Khalid was neither aware of current events nor the actual year.¹⁸⁵ Sadat's frustrations with the Saudis grew as they offered him nominal private backing that they refused to replicate in public.¹⁸⁶ As Sadat saw it, Saudi reticence was preventing other moderate Arab states from supporting him, since they toed the line from Riyadh. The Egyptian president, for example, was convinced that if Saudi Arabia told the Jordanians to enter the autonomy negotiations they would '100%' do so 'immediately', 'if only to guarantee their economic assistance'.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, Sadat considered Saudi financial support of Egypt too limited, which prompted him to often reject it, thereby undermining American efforts to mend fences between her two Arab allies.

¹⁸³ Carter, quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Sadat, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with President Sadat at Barrages, March 18, 1979, Brzezinski, Christopher, US Officials, Sadat, Khalil, 18 March 1979, Memcons: Brzezinski, 3-6/79, Box 33, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁸⁵ Sadat, quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President's Third Meeting with Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat, Carter, US Officials, Sadat, Egyptian Officials, 9 April 1980, Serial Xs – [4/15/80-4/30/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Sadat's anger, as was the case with the Soviets in earlier years, was again getting the better of his judgement. His 'with us or against us' attitude was myopic, and put America in the odd situation of requesting Saudi support for Egypt while Sadat blasted the kingdom in his speeches. Sadat, now a combustible mix of prickly sensitivity and chauvinistic conceit, dismissed his detractors as 'scarecrows' and pre-empted some of the Arab sanctions by declaring a 'freeze' in Egypt's activities in the Arab League.¹⁸⁸ The League headquarters was nonetheless relocated to Tunis, and other Arab institutions based in Egypt, such as the Arab Organisation for Industrialisation, were liquidated.¹⁸⁹ All Arab ambassadors – except for the Sudanese, Omani, and Somali envoys – quit Cairo, to be replaced by the Israeli ambassador in February 1980.¹⁹⁰

Sadat's reaction to Arab opposition to him was tainted with condescension and racism, as seen in his presumption that 'these 40 million people (in Egypt) are the dream of the Arab world. The others are Bedouins'.¹⁹¹ By attacking Arab countries Sadat played to nationalist Egyptian opinion but harmed his country's interests, most obviously by

¹⁸⁸ Sadat, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with President Sadat at Barrages, March 18, 1979, Brzezinski, Christopher, US Officials, Sadat, Khalil, 18 March 1979, Memcons: Brzezinski, 3-6/79, Box 33, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Memo, Bowdler and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments, 28 March 1979, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE 17-C-18-24-6-2, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁸⁹ Memo, Egypt Arms Industry, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-21-17-2-79-1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹⁰ Sudanese support could be explained by Numeiri's indebtedness to Egypt for her help in suppressing several coup attempts throughout the 1970s. Somali backing for Sadat can be explained by Egypt's military aid to the Somali government. See Memo, Situation Room to Brzezinski, Evening Notes, 8 December 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-4-6-38-9, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹¹ Sadat, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with President Sadat at Barrages, March 18, 1979, Brzezinski, Christopher, US Officials, Sadat, Khalil, 18 March 1979, Memcons: Brzezinski, 3-6/79, Box 33, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

alienating potential supporters.¹⁹² Yet Sadat curiously stated that ‘we are committed to defend Saudi Arabia and Yemen’ and asked the Americans to ‘tell them I am always ready to rescue them, whenever they ask’, a strangely odd statement to make when Egypt was in need of *Saudi* support, both diplomatic and financial.¹⁹³

Moreover, Sadat provocatively chose not only to attack his Arab detractors, referring to them as ‘sponsors of ignorance’, but also compared them negatively with the ‘honest and trustworthy’ Israelis, who were satisfactorily fulfilling their commitments to peace.¹⁹⁴ The establishment of relations with Israel on 25 January was followed by agreements on cultural relations, civilian aviation, and trade in March 1980.¹⁹⁵ He now proposed supplying Nile waters to Israel in return for flexibility in the autonomy talks.¹⁹⁶ After publicly suggesting granting the Americans a permanent military base in the Red Sea outpost of Berenice,¹⁹⁷ Sadat was beginning to get too far in front of his political constituency.¹⁹⁸ Sadat also redeployed military units to the Libyan border to intimidate

¹⁹² Gulf Cooperation, 21 May 1979, FCO 8/3290, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁹³ Sadat, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with President Sadat at Barrages, March 18, 1979, Brzezinski, Christopher, US Officials, Sadat, Khalil, 18 March 1979, Memcons: Brzezinski, 3-6/79, Box 33, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹⁴ Memo, The Situation Room to Brzezinski, Evening Notes, 28 January 1980, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-7-1-25-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹⁵ Memo, Linowitz to Carter, Progress in Egyptian-Israeli Normalisation Arrangements, 12 January 1981, Box 28: Plains File: Subject File, [Judicial Appointments], 1/81 through NSC Weekly Reports, 7-12/77, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹⁶ Boutros-Ghali, *Egypt's Road to Jerusalem*, 302.

¹⁹⁷ Memo, The Situation Room to Brzezinski, Evening Notes, 28 January 1980, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-7-1-25-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Memo, Ermarth to Brzezinski, Harold Brown's Middle East Trip, 16 April 1980, [Meetings – Vance/Brown/Brzezinski: 3/80 – 9/80], Box 24: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: [Meetings – Muskie/Brow/Brzezinski: 10/80-1/81] through [Meetings – PRC 55: 2/27/78], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹⁸ Sadat, after realising the opposition such a move would arouse, would not conclude a ‘formal agreement’ to create a US base, but instead offered a ‘personal promise’ and an exchange of letters with President Carter to consecrate the arrangement. See Memo, Shoemaker to Odom, Evening Report, 15

Qadhafi, despite being actively counselled by both his army and the US government not to order military action against Tripoli.¹⁹⁹

Sadat's vainglory extended to his requests of the Americans. He demanded hundreds of tanks, surface to air missiles, and military support for his allies in Africa.²⁰⁰ 'I', declared Sadat, 'seek to stop the game of the Soviets', and he then went on to outline the strategic threats he would next contend with in the Bab al-Mandeb straits, in Sudan, and in Ethiopia.²⁰¹ Egypt was given more US aid to compensate for the loss of Arab support,²⁰² including granting her foreign military sales financing to fund a multi-year military procurement programme, including \$1 billion worth of weapons in 1979 as part of the 'Peace Package' programme,²⁰³ as well as approval of a long-standing request for nuclear cooperation.²⁰⁴ This strengthened Sadat as he could take credit for a revitalised military as

October 1980, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-12-48-6-36-1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹⁹⁹ Telegram, Eilts to Vance, Sadat's Intentions vis-à-vis Libya, 15 May 1979, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-16-49-1-31-6, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰⁰ Sadat, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with President Sadat at Barrages, March 18, 1979, Brzezinski, Christopher, US Officials, Sadat, Khalil, 18 March 1979, Memcons: Brzezinski, 3-6/79, Box 33, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰¹ Sadat, quoted in Ibid.

²⁰² After the loss of her Arab backers in the Gulf, Egyptian dependence on the US intensified. Vice-President Mubarak, for example, farcically demanded of President Carter an extra 500 000 tonnes of wheat, 100 000 tonnes of maize, 20 000 tonnes of edible oils, 5 000 tonnes of frozen chickens, 40 000 tonnes of animal fat, 60 000 tonnes of rice, and 250 000 tonnes of iron! See Memorandum of Conversation, Mubarak Meeting, Carter, Vance, Brzezinski, US Delegation, Mubarak, Ghorbal, 17 September 1979, Serial Xs – [5/79-9/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰³ The US also agreed in principle to provide the Egyptians with advanced F-16 aircraft and M60A3 tanks to replace Egypt's obsolete Soviet weaponry, as well as to fund the Egyptians' obligations on a cash-flow basis. This allowed Egypt to pay her bills as they arose, rather than finance her military requests *in toto* at the outset. See Memoranda of Conversation, Policy Review Committee Meeting: Egyptian Military Supply Relationship, 20 September 1979, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-33-10-17-1-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰⁴ Memo, Justification for Presidential Determination to Authorise the Financing of the Sale of Sophisticated Weapons Systems to the Government of Egypt, Presidential Determinations, 6/79-6/80, Box 50, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential

well as an improved economy in the aftermath of the peace treaty, with economic growth topping eight percent in 1979 – the sixth year in a row where growth exceeded seven percent.²⁰⁵

His ego swollen by success, Sadat was losing touch with reality. Some of his private statements reflected that he did not fully comprehend or appreciate the scale of the challenge that remained in the autonomy talks. Sadat assertively affirmed that ‘whatever happens, I will fulfil (the accords) in Gaza’ and ‘will make it a model’, and ‘before one year things will come to shape’.²⁰⁶ Little did he know that progress would not be easily achieved, if at all. Having taken considerable personal and political risks to steer the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty to its conclusion, Carter now retreated from Arab-Israeli diplomacy in the run up to the presidential elections. He actively disengaged from the autonomy talks and duly appointed Robert Strauss, later replaced by Sol Linowitz, to oversee the negotiations.²⁰⁷

The Autonomy Talks

Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Memo, Kimmit to Brzezinski, Presidential Determination Authorising FMS Financing for Egypt, 2 August 1979, Presidential Determinations, 6/79-6/80, Box 50, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia; Memo, Brzezinski to Vance, Nuclear Cooperation Agreements with Egypt and Israel, 7 May 1979, Alpha Channel (Miscellaneous) – [5/79-8/79], Box 20; Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Alpha Channel (Miscellaneous) – [4/78-4/79] through Alpha Channel (Miscellaneous) – [11/80-12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰⁵ Memo, International Economic and Energy Weekly: Sadat’s Second Decade in Office, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-41-19-4-7-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰⁶ Sadat, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Meeting with President Sadat at Barrages, March 18, 1979, Brzezinski, Christopher, US Officials, Sadat, Khalil, 18 March 1979, Memcons: Brzezinski, 3-6/79, Box 33, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: Subject File: Collection 7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 438.

In the wake of the Arab sanctions, Cairo was having trouble persuading credible local Palestinian leaders to take part in the autonomy talks, as both PLO supporters and traditional leaders recused themselves.²⁰⁸ Begin too was in no rush to proceed, as he hoped the passage of time would increase pressure on Sadat to compromise. In fairness, Begin could not be forthcoming in the autonomy talks even if he wanted to. The dismantlement of the Sinai settlements and military bases cost Begin much of his political capital; granting serious concessions in the West Bank and Gaza would be career suicide. Accordingly, Begin's appointed Yosef Burg, leader of the National Religious Party and minister of interior, to head the Israeli autonomy talks delegation. Such a choice was rich in symbolism. As the National Religious Party was the group most attached to Judea and Samaria, progress in the negotiations was evidently neither to be encouraged nor welcomed.²⁰⁹ Begin was also still in convalescence after suffering a stroke in July, which further weakened his authority and allowed splits to emerge in his cabinet between moderates, including Ezer Weizman, and extremists headed by Ariel Sharon, who sought to expand settlements in the territories at any cost.²¹⁰

These divisions were inflamed after Moshe Dayan resigned the foreign ministry on 21 October in protest over Israeli conduct in the autonomy talks. Yitzhak Shamir, a hardliner who had notably abstained in the Knesset votes on both the Camp David Accords as well as the peace treaty, eventually replaced him. The Likud cabinet also changed government

²⁰⁸ Memo, Bowdler and Saunders to Vance, Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments, 16 May 1979, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-SAFE-17 C-19-32-3-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰⁹ Shlaim, *Iron Wall*, 381.

²¹⁰ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Assessments of Israeli Political developments, 26 November 1979, Serial Xs – [10/79-12/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

policy, so that at the end of the five-year interim period in the Palestinian territories the Israeli claim to sovereignty would no longer be held in abeyance.²¹¹ Ezer Weizman resigned on 28 May 1980, upset by the cabinet's approval of inflammatory settlements and other provocative policies.²¹² His defence portfolio was eventually given to the irascible Ariel Sharon, hardly an omen for peace. However, even if the cabinet were to be replaced with a Labour government that would be no panacea, as Shimon Peres declared that the Labour party was not committed to the autonomy negotiations.²¹³

The State department expected the Likud government to fall within eight months, and considered the May 1980 target date for concluding the autonomy talks beyond reach.²¹⁴ The Egyptian foreign ministry too thought the target increasingly ambitious, but attempted to forestall American attempts to prolong talks beyond the deadline in order to oblige Washington to pressure Jerusalem for concessions before May.²¹⁵ This, however, was almost impossible to do at the tail end of an administration that had already expended tremendous effort pressuring Israel. Judged against the hostage crisis in Iran and the war in Afghanistan, the autonomy talks were a much lower priority for US foreign policy. Carter did contemplate overtly backing Sadat, even at the cost of the

²¹¹ Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 305.

²¹² Weizman, *The Battle*, 383.

²¹³ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Assessments of Israeli Political developments, 26 November 1979, Serial Xs – [10/79-12/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Memo, Saunders to Vance, Strategies for Managing the Peace Process through 1980, 19 March 1980, Egypt, President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin, 4/80: Cables and Memos, 3/25/80 – 4/9/80, Box 4, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: VIP Visit File: Egypt through Germany: Collection 5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

collapse of the Begin government, but did not go through with it.²¹⁶ In any case, his attempts to pressure Israel to deliver on her commitments were being impaired by Sadat's *laissez-faire* attitude and refusal to be equally tough on Begin. On several issues, including settlements, Lebanon, and the autonomy negotiations, Jerusalem would complain that Washington was being harsher than Cairo.²¹⁷ Sadat confirmed that his strategy was to cultivate Begin; he was reluctant to press him hard until Israel completed its interim withdrawal in Sinai.²¹⁸

Another possibility was to settle the autonomy talks' 'heads of agreement', and then continue negotiations on unresolved issues later on. Egypt submitted such a draft on 4 May, but her demands were too extensive and ambitious.²¹⁹ Agreement with Israel would require that Egypt drop her insistence that all powers be transferred to the administrative authority, a compromise over the rights of Arab residents of East Jerusalem to vote in West Bank elections, agreement on Israeli settlements, as well as solutions to a laundry list of other controversies dogging the negotiations.²²⁰ But concessions were difficult for Egypt to make while she was subject to heavy Arab criticism. Sadat was already stridently fighting attempts to marginalise him in international fora such as the Non-

²¹⁶ Carter, quoted in Memoranda of Conversation, National Security Council Meeting, 19 March 1980, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-17-2-19-4-7, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²¹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Mubarak Meeting, Carter, Vance, Brzezinski, US Delegation, Mubarak, Ghorbal, 17 September 1979, Serial Xs – [5/79-9/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²¹⁸ W.R. Tomkys, Letter from President Sadat to the Prime Minister, 5 October 1979, FCO 93/2199, National Archives, Kew.

²¹⁹ See Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Egyptian Position in the Negotiations*, 67.

²²⁰ Memo, Aaron to Carter, Sadat Summit, 3 April 1977, Egypt, President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin, 4/80: Cables and Memos, 3/25/80 – 4/9/80, Box 4, National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material: VIP Visit File: Egypt through Germany: Collection 5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Aligned Movement, where a Syrio-Iraqi attempt to suspend Egypt's membership at a summit in Cuba was thwarted thanks to African backing, with Cairo instead put 'on probation' for 18 months.²²¹ Sadat himself chose to provocatively visit Haifa during the summit rather than face down his Arab detractors in person.²²² Egypt was less successful at securing political support at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, where her membership was suspended.²²³

A Final White House Intervention

This was the backdrop to Sadat and Begin's visit to the White House in April 1980, just before the May deadline for an autonomy agreement. It was a make or break meeting, with the Americans hoping to reach agreement with Egypt on several issues, and then deal with the Israelis from that basis. Sadat, in turn, again wanted to promote 'Gaza-first', as he felt that implementing an agreement in the West Bank would be more difficult, on account of the greater influence of Jordan and the PLO there.²²⁴

The first meeting between Egyptian and US officials was on 8 April, *sans* Sadat and Carter. Sol Linowitz argued forcefully that Egypt should drop her demand for a full transfer of powers to the proposed self-governing authority, and instead accept a list of 18

²²¹ Memo, Assessment of Member's Positions at the Havana Summit, 14 September 1979, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-24-58-9-2-1, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²²² Boutros-Ghali, *Egypt's Road to Jerusalem*, 266.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 216.

²²⁴ Sadat, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President's Second Meeting with Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat, Carter, US Officials, Sadat, Egyptian Officials, 8 April 1980, Serial Xs – [4/15/80-4/30/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

individual powers to be transferred.²²⁵ Some powers – such as the control of water resources – would remain shared and would be controlled through joint committees. Defence, security and foreign affairs would remain in Israeli hands. Both Osama El-Baz – the sharp, hard-bargaining, Harvard-educated lawyer and diplomat – and Boutros-Ghali objected to this and, in the absence of Sadat, brooked no compromise. The conversation retreated into a circular stalemate, with Linowitz querying why the Israelis would accept their disproportionate demands, and the Egyptians in return questioning why the Palestinians would accept autonomy ‘without maximum powers’.²²⁶

The talks continued the following day, with the Egyptians again putting forward ambitious drafts, which advanced the concept of a legislative rather than administrative authority, and which Israel would surely refuse.²²⁷ It was clear at Camp David that there was no suggestion that the Palestinians would gain legislative authority. El-Baz and Boutros-Ghali doubtless knew that, yet persisted nonetheless in their folly. This, combined with attempts to revise the agreement on the Palestinian territories’ defence and foreign affairs, testified to their efforts to change the negotiating basis of the talks *ex post facto*. Without the direct involvement of Sadat, his inflexible officials stonewalled as well as the Israeli negotiators.

²²⁵ Linowitz, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President’s First Meeting with Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat, Carter, US Officials, Sadat, Egyptian Officials, 8 April 1980, Serial Xs – [4/15/80-4/30/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²²⁶ Boutros-Ghali, quoted in *Ibid*.

²²⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President’s Third Meeting with Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat, Carter, US Officials, Sadat, Egyptian Officials, 9 April 1980, Serial Xs – [4/15/80-4/30/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Such attitudes on the Egyptian side contributed to missing the deadline. At Carter's meeting with Begin the following week, the gap between the parties was clearly evident. While Sadat foresaw an administrative council boasting several hundred members and legislative authority, Begin envisaged a limited administrative council, with one person in the council appointed to oversee each of the 18 functions.²²⁸ Begin feared a bad example could be set if larger numbers were appointed to the council. 'A large body has to be seen as a parliament', thought Burg, and a parliament could potentially declare a Palestinian state.²²⁹ Brzezinski, however, thought that by appointing several people to fulfil each function in a strictly administrative council, the Israelis would obtain the principle of a non-legislative body, while the Egyptians would be satisfied with the greater number of members. When Begin objected that the US was proposing an arbitrary number Carter incisively pointed out that any number agreed would be arbitrary.²³⁰

Another central point of disagreement was over the future of Israeli settlements in the territories. As autonomy would apply to the inhabitants – rather than the territory – of the West Bank and Gaza, settlers would remain under Israeli jurisdiction. Up to twenty percent of the West Bank would thus remain under Israeli jurisdiction, a situation Carter

²²⁸ Begin, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President's First Meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, Carter, US Officials, Begin, Israeli Officials, 15 April 1980, Serial Xs – [4/15/80-4/30/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Carter, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President's Second Meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, Carter, US Officials, Begin, Israeli Officials, 15 April 1980, Serial Xs – [4/15/80-4/30/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

termed ‘a subversion’ of Camp David.²³¹ A similar dispute simmered over the rights of Arabs in East Jerusalem to vote in the West Bank elections, with Begin describing the proposal as ‘impossible’ and claiming that ‘it means repartition’.²³² Begin also rejected the compromise proposal of absentee voting, as Begin felt ‘viscerally the right to vote leads to a divided Jerusalem’.²³³ This, Carter perspicaciously pointed out, did not square with Begin’s principle of jurisdiction applying to people rather than land.²³⁴ If autonomy only applied to people then the inhabitants of East Jerusalem – but not the territory comprising the city – could enjoy it, hence any fears about repartition would be misplaced. Begin, unsurprisingly, dismissed these fundamental inconsistencies in his policy.

Despite the large remaining hurdles Sadat was not averse to continuing the talks. In a letter to Begin Sadat agreed to negotiate so long as there were no more ‘Israeli *faits accomplis*’, a reference to the continued construction of new settlements and the controversial Jerusalem bill being considered by the Knesset.²³⁵ The Israeli cabinet, however, was irrevocably hawkish after the departures of Dayan and Weizman. It continued to establish new settlements in the Palestinian territories, and on 30 July

²³¹ Carter, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President’s First Meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, Carter, US Officials, Begin, Israeli Officials, 15 April 1980, Serial Xs – [4/15/80-4/30/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²³² Begin, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President’s Second Meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, Carter, US Officials, Begin, Israeli Officials, 15 April 1980, Serial Xs – [4/15/80-4/30/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²³³ Linowitz, quoted in Ibid.

²³⁴ Carter, quoted in Ibid.

²³⁵ Memo, Situation Room to Brzezinski, Evening Notes, 19 May 1980, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-1-15-4-23-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

officially annexed East Jerusalem. Sadat took the bait and duly suspended the sempiternal negotiations, a suspension that for all intents and purposes signalled the end of the road for the autonomy talks. By succumbing to Israeli provocation, Sadat managed to relieve the pressure on Begin by discontinuing talks, thereby allowing him to pose as the reasonable party.

Sadat also relieved Mustafa Khalil of the premiership, and appointed himself prime minister. The Egyptian president was now prepared to wait a year for the political environment to improve, a position he communicated to his American partners.²³⁶ He believed that the only way to break the deadlock would be another summit after the elections.²³⁷ He also remained disinclined to push the Israelis hard until they completed their final withdrawal from Sinai in April 1982.²³⁸ The Americans, too, agreed that there would be ‘little value in holding a tripartite summit in the remaining weeks’ of the administration, as ‘there is no likelihood of achieving the Israeli concessions that would be needed’.²³⁹ This was especially so as Begin was becoming increasingly ‘argumentative and abrasive’ in his communications with the Egyptian president, which again underscored the importance of a strong American interlocutor.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Memo, Atherton to Muskie, Meeting with Sadat, 29 July 1980, Serial Xs – [7/80-9/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²³⁷ Memo, Christopher to Carter, 16 August 1980, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-7-23-6-3-0, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²³⁸ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 443.

²³⁹ Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, Your Meeting with Israel Prime Minister Begin Thursday November 13, 12 November 1980, Serial Xs – [5/80-6/80], Box 37: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Serial Xs – [1/80] through Serial Xs – [10/80 – 12/80], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁴⁰ Memo, Christopher to Carter, 20 August 1980, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-128-15-8-1-5, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

In the meantime Sadat concerned himself with the tumultuous regional politics, which mercifully did not seem as ominous as a few months prior. Sadat's enemies were distracted to say the least. Syria was well and truly mired in the Lebanese civil war, while Iraq was ensconced in another intractable conflict after attacking Iran on 22 September 1980. Sadat urged American help for Khomeini in order to forestall an Iranian-Soviet alliance.²⁴¹ Sadat's unceasing thirst for a reckoning with Moscow and its allies in the region would finally be satisfied on 4 November, when the US electorate delivered a stunning victory for Ronald Reagan, the Republican candidate for the American presidency.

The End of two Presidencies, the End of an Era

Ronald Reagan's victory was a watershed moment in the Middle East as well as America. The new president was significantly more right wing than any of his immediate predecessors in the White House. His was a very different foreign policy perspective to Carter's, assigning much greater importance to confronting Soviet influence in the Middle East than to pressing Israel to confront the hard choices needed for peace. The Reagan administration viewed the world through the prism of the Cold War and acted accordingly. Sadat was delighted to once again have a Cold War president that eyed the Soviets' moves with the wariness born of ideological zeal, but the flipside of the coin was a president who would refuse to pressure Israel, seeing it as a regional anti-communist bulwark.

²⁴¹ Memo, Muskie to Carter, 15 October 1980, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library Declassified Document: NLC-7-23-8-2-9, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

Unlike Carter, who took an interest in the minutiae of the Arab-Israeli conflict and was willing to expend personal prestige and energy on the peace process, Reagan was perfectly happy to delegate the issue to his subordinates, who could hardly be said to have prioritised it, neglecting even to ‘appoint a special Middle East envoy since this would have the effect of falsely raising expectations’.²⁴² The new administration would henceforth consider the ‘Middle East issue as a regional one as contrasted with the narrower focus of an Arab/Israeli dispute or as a question of oil diplomacy’.²⁴³ This corresponded with the views of the president, who thought that ‘the paranoia of the Israelis results from the Arabs not recognising Israel’s right to exist’.²⁴⁴ As for the future of the Palestinians, as ‘they were of the same ethnicity as other peoples of the area’ Reagan would consider other means of resolving their status, including having the Arab states accept them instead.²⁴⁵ The new president was sceptical of the desire of ordinary Palestinians to decide their own future, noting that he ‘can understand why the PLO leaders would want a state they could lead, but what about the people themselves’?²⁴⁶

Thus Reagan’s election effectively ensured that the autonomy negotiations would not be successfully concluded. Though the talks restarted on 22 September, they were not seriously pursued. Had Jimmy Carter been re-elected, fulfilling the Camp David agreements would have been near the top of his administration’s foreign policy priorities.

²⁴² Haig, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Reagan, Haig, Allen, US Officials, Trudeau, Canadian Officials, Middle East, 10 March 1981, NSC Meeting on Pak/Sinai (2), Box 91/44, NSC: Near East and South Asia Affairs Directorate, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California.

²⁴³ Haig, quoted in Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Reagan, quoted in Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Reagan, quoted in Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Reagan, quoted in Ibid.

Indeed, Carter had pledged that ‘if he is re-elected, then one of his life’s’ major commitments will be to the completion of the peace process. He will stake his reputation as a leader and as a statesman on its conclusion.²⁴⁷

Other events confirmed the wasting away of the autonomy framework. Begin, revived by Reagan’s victory and faced with his own challenging election battle at the end of June 1980, took matters in his own hands by ordering a unilateral strike on Iraqi nuclear facilities on 7 June, three days after a summit meeting with Sadat at Sharm al-Sheikh. This opened Sadat to charges of collusion, though he knew nothing of the raid. A ‘very concerned and disturbed’ Sadat complained to the new administration about the ‘serious and undue escalation of tension’ by Begin.²⁴⁸ However, after the Likud won the 30 June elections, the writing was on the wall. Continued Israeli belligerency in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories further weakened Egyptian credibility and exposed Sadat to the accusation that the peace treaty had allowed Israel to unleash her might on her eastern Arab neighbours, a not unreasonable claim.²⁴⁹

On the other hand, the Reagan administration would back Sadat much more strongly in his disputes with Libya, unlike the Carter administration, which counselled caution. The Republicans were more than happy to cooperate with Sadat to ‘undermine’ Qadhafi as

²⁴⁷ Carter, quoted in Memorandum of Conversation, Summary of the President’s Meeting with Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, Carter, Brzezinski, Weizman, Evron, Mubarak, Ali, Ghorbal, 28 December 1979, Serial Xs – [10/79-12/79], Box 36: Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection: Subject File: Seignious, George M., II – [10/78] through Serial Xs – [10/79 – 12/79], Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁴⁸ Memo, Wendt to Haig, Israeli Strike on Iraqi Nuclear Facility: Message from President Sadat to President Reagan, 8 June 1981, Israeli Raid Crisis Cables, Box 91/44, NSC: Near East and South Asia Affairs Directorate, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California.

²⁴⁹ Eban, *Personal Witness*, 600.

well as ‘impose direct costs on Libya’ for its support of terror and alliance with Moscow.²⁵⁰ While the new administration did not yet deem Egypt’s army capable of advancing the thousand kilometres to Tripoli, it was prepared to help build up Egyptian military capabilities to handle the logistical challenge of a war deep inside Libya.²⁵¹ To that end the Reagan administration increased annual military aid to Egypt to a staggering \$1.3 billion – and on concessionary terms to boot – beginning in 1983.²⁵² This delighted Sadat, who relished indulging his hatred of the Soviets, as evidenced by his proclamations to the US that if the Soviets invaded Poland, he would react by attacking Libya.²⁵³ The Egyptian president also finally granted America temporary use of the military base at Berenice, the first time a Western country was given basing rights in Egypt since the 1950s.²⁵⁴

Sadat’s renewed focus on the Soviet threat, and the corresponding desuetude of the autonomy talks framework, meant that in many ways Egyptian foreign policy mirrored Israel’s in the first year of the Reagan administration. Extraordinarily, Egypt now hosted US forces, contemplated invading an Arab neighbour, and encouraged US support for Iran in its war with Arab Iraq. Egypt now hosted an Israeli ambassador, yet expelled the Soviet envoy along with six other Soviet diplomats in September 1981.²⁵⁵ Sadat had come

²⁵⁰ Briefing Memo, McFarlane to Haig, Sadat and the Libyan Threat, 28 July 1981, Libya, 81-84 (1/6), Box 2/90753, Fortier, Donald: Files, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Memorandum of Conversation, National Security Council Meeting: Gulf of Sidra Exercise; US Naval Presence in Indian Ocean; Security Assistance for Egypt, 31 July 1981, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California.

²⁵³ Briefing Memo, McFarlane to Haig, Sadat and the Libyan Threat, 28 July 1981, Libya, 81-84 (1/6), Box 2/90753, Fortier, Donald: Files, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California.

²⁵⁴ Memo, Sadat to Reagan, Egypt Grants US Temporary Military Facilities at Ras Banas, 31 July 1981, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California.

²⁵⁵ Ali, *Muhariboon*, 286, 298.

a long way from being an anti-British agitator and Nasser's yes-man. Unsurprisingly, he and Begin now had fewer cause for friction. After visiting Alexandria in August Begin wrote to Reagan celebrating his 'personal friendship' with Sadat, and the fact that he and Sadat held 'identical views on the international situation' and 'the danger of Soviet expansion'.²⁵⁶ This newfound fellowship, however, would not prove lasting. The rumblings of popular discontent in Egypt were steadily mounting, with Sadat growing increasingly isolated. In a final act of desperation, Sadat ordered the arrest of thousands of his domestic critics from all across the Egyptian political spectrum in September 1981. It was to prove inadequate. Sadat, the mercurial ex-assassin, was publicly gunned down the following month during a military parade celebrating the anniversary of his greatest moment of triumph, 6 October. The wheel had come full circle; the era of Sadat had come to an end.

²⁵⁶ Letter, Begin to Reagan, 31 August 1981, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California

Conclusion: Continuity and Change in Sadat's Foreign Policy, 1970-1981

An Egyptian joke told in the 1970s recounts how Anwar Sadat, while being chauffeured in the presidential limousine after his inauguration, arrived at a crossroads. 'Which way shall I go, sir', asked the chauffeur. 'What would Nasser have done', inquired Sadat? 'Nasser would signal left and then turn left', responded the driver. 'Well then, signal left and turn right'.

There is much truth behind the anecdote. There was a marked divergence between Sadat's foreign policy as initially declared and the one he would implement. In one of his first presidential appearances in parliament, Sadat affirmed 'my programme is Nasser's'.¹ Yet while lip service was 'paid to the shibboleths of Nasserite foreign policy: leadership of the Arab nation, anti-imperialism, identification with the Third World and its liberation movements, nonalignment', in reality Sadat systematically slaughtered Nasser's sacred cows in each of Egypt's three main foreign policy arenas.² The alliance with the Soviets was abruptly dismantled, and instead replaced with partnership with America. Leadership of the 'progressive' Arab regimes was abandoned for a strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia and the moderate states. Finally, the policy of confrontation with Israel was replaced with one of compromise, and ultimately peace.

Why and how did Sadat implement these changes? The main reason for Sadat's new approach was the onerous inheritance of Nasser's failed foreign policies. Sadat acceded

¹ Quoted in Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 36.

² Willie Morris, *The Foreign Policy of Sadat's Egypt*, 3 July 1976, FCO 93/851, National Archives, Kew.

to the helm of a nation traumatised by a bitter and humiliating defeat in 1967. Since the immediate aftermath of the Six-Day war Egypt had been wholly consumed by the desire to retrieve her Asian appendage. Nasser personally supervised the complete restructuring of the military and the launch of the War of Attrition. He repeatedly visited Moscow to lobby for more and more military aid, eventually culminating in the despatch of Soviet personnel to protect Egypt's airspace from Israel's deep penetration air raids.

The military reorganisation was matched by a new foreign policy that prioritised the recovery of Sinai. The Arab Cold War came to a humiliating end. The Egyptian armies in Yemen were recalled. The Khartoum Arab summit marked a new pragmatism and moderation in Egyptian foreign policy. Expediency would henceforth trump ideology. Nasser accepted resolution 242, despite its implicit recognition of Israel. He sanctioned Hussein's attempts to strike a deal in the US to return Arab territories lost in the war. Most notably, Nasser accepted the 1970 Rogers' initiative and halted the War of Attrition. These were all invaluable precedents that would help legitimatise Sadat's overtures to the West early in his presidency. They also beg the question: was there really a substantial change between the two presidents' foreign policies?

A Rolling Revolution

Clearly the disparity between Nasser's final years and Sadat's early foreign policy is much less marked than the difference between Nasser's foreign policy before and after 1967. Nevertheless, the differences between the two men were substantive. Perforce

Nasser changed Egyptian foreign policy *tactics*. Sadat's shift was *strategic*. He conceived of Egypt in alliance with the US rather than the USSR. Unlike Nasser, he did not pursue the leadership of the radical Arabs out of choice, not necessity. While Nasser accepted the Rogers' initiative because of superpower pressures forcing his hand, Sadat earnestly pursued such schemes unencumbered by Nasser's Arabist baggage. For example, only three months in office Sadat was stating to the American principal officer in Cairo – with distinct echoes of his 1977 peace initiative – that he was 'willing to go anyplace in the world if it would save one Egyptian casualty, wounded or killed. But we won't surrender our land or our dignity'.³ As such, Sadat derived benefit from *not* being the icon of the Arab masses, and he was in turn relieved of their hopes, expectations, and most importantly, political pressures. Under Sadat, the United Arab Republic could simply 'revert to being Egypt'.⁴

The real changes in Egypt's foreign policy, however, came not with Sadat's investiture, but over the course of his presidency. Sadat's early diplomatic overtures did not, as is commonly and wrongly understood, demonstrate notable flexibility, *quod erat demonstrandum*. His first initiatives repackaged Nasser's sweeping demands in a more structured manner, but they still yielded more heat than light. Diplomatic overtures were clumsily handled, as was the case with the Sadat initiative and the response to the Jarring Questionnaire in early 1971. Nor did Sadat yield many concessions, notably insisting on linking any provisional deal to a final settlement, thereby nullifying the value of an

³ Sadat, quoted in Telegram, Bergus to Rogers, Conversation with UAR President Anwar Sadat, 24 December 1970, Courtesy of The Digital National Security Archives, <http://www.sadat.umd.edu/archives/conversations.htm> (accessed 1 August 2010).

⁴ R.A. Beaumont, United Arab Republic: Annual Review for 1970, 25 January 1971, FCO 39/961, National Archives, Kew.

interim agreement. Hafiz Ismail declined Henry Kissinger's proposed interim schemes in 1973, and Sadat chose to go to war instead. For two weeks Sadat obdurately conditioned a ceasefire on explicit provisions for an Israeli withdrawal to the 'international' borders. Such obstinacy cost Egypt dear in war, and Sadat's failure to cash-in his military's early gains prompted the US to re-arm Israel, thus allowing her to turn the tide of war. Egypt ultimately accepted a ceasefire under conditions far less propitious than would have held had Sadat acquiesced in a truce ten days earlier. This diminished Egypt's military accomplishments, and turned a clear-cut victory into a draw. Nevertheless, even if the war had ended without an Israeli salient between Ismailia and Suez, Egypt would still have had to offer significant political inducements for Israel to return the rest of the Sinai peninsula, an area ten times greater than the bridgehead Egypt had secured in war. And in order for Israel's demands to be satisfied, Sadat would have had to substantially revise his offerings.

Sadat's evolution into a peacemaker may be better understood as a personal and political journey that lasted throughout his presidency. Two significant turning points can be detected, both precipitated by Americans. The first was on Henry Kissinger's arrival in Egypt in November 1973, when Sadat was persuaded to abandon Egypt's far-reaching demands and sign on to Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy that he had refused only a few months previously. The strategy led to successive interim agreement successes for Egypt and a disengagement deal for Syria too. The growing diplomatic momentum spurred by the withdrawals in Sinai, and the invaluable precedent created by the successful implementation of agreements between Israel and Egypt, were crucial to the

success of Camp David. No deals would have been possible if Sadat still insisted on *a priori* Israeli acceptance of the principle of withdrawing to the international borders. While Sadat never dropped his demands for Israel to eventually vacate all of Sinai, he no longer insisted on prior Israeli acceptance of them before striking provisional deals with Jerusalem.

The second significant evolution in Sadat's policy occurred in 1977, after his first meeting with Jimmy Carter in Washington. Heretofore Sadat insisted on the rigid formula bequeathed by Nasser whereby Egypt offered Israel a peace 'agreement' and non-belligerency rather than a peace treaty, thereby precluding official diplomatic relations, trade links, and any normalisation with Israel. Sadat had been willing to soften the harsh edges of this offer – for example by offering a more generous policy with regards to Israel's use of the Suez Canal, or a more explicit recognition of the Israeli state – but the underlying premises of the proposal had not changed since September 1970. Carter convinced Sadat to offer full peace as a *quid pro quo* for a full Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, an essential prerequisite to making the dismantlement of settlements and airfields in eastern Sinai more palatable to Israelis' sensitivities. By offering full peace Sadat scampered on to the moral, and more importantly, political high ground, allowing pressures to accumulate on Israel to make corresponding concessions for peace.

Fortune Favours the Brave

This accomplishment involved a certain element of luck. Carter's narrow electoral victory in 1976 was critical to changing the course of Middle Eastern diplomacy by emphasising final, rather than interim, agreements. Sadat's refusal to offer full peace – along with Israel's refusal to withdraw fully from Arab lands occupied in 1967 – had led Henry Kissinger to resolve to pursue a Sinai III agreement had Ford been returned to office. This would involve a withdrawal to the El Arish – Ras Mohamed line in Sinai in return for non-belligerency, and would temporarily avoid deadlock and resolve the dilemma of neither side accepting the other's final demands. Kissinger's solution, however, would have proven evanescent. Egypt would never be satisfied with anything less than the return of all of Sinai. Carter forced Sadat to swallow the difficult pill of full peace, and both later successfully compelled Begin, Dayan, and Weizman to accept to return Sinai before inertia, immobilism, and new settlements allowed Israel to fully absorb the peninsula in her corpus.

While Carter personally begot the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, the Likud's electoral triumph in 1977 was no less crucial to peace. Menachem Begin's incoming Likud government boasted a most inflexible programme as regards the Palestinian territories, and prompted a collective global groan of frustration in anticipation of a fatal blow to peace. But the flipside of Begin's obsession with Judea and Samaria was relative flexibility on Sinai. Likud, unlike Labour, would not insist on annexing a strip of land from Eilat to Sharm al-Sheikh, and instead prioritised the preservation of Israel's airfields in eastern Sinai and her settlement block in Rafah. Even those priorities, however, were abandoned in the face of Sadat's vehement refusal to

accept anything less than full sovereignty and the full return of all of Sinai. The fact that no Sinai settlements were affiliated to Likud undoubtedly made the decision to evacuate Sinai a bit more politically manageable than would have been the case under Labour.

Sadat's luck turned in 1980. Ronald Reagan's landslide victory in the US presidential elections heralded a renewed focus on the Cold War that mirrored Sadat's anti-Soviet mania. However, it also meant no more pressure on Israel, as she was again lauded as America's invaluable Cold War partner fighting Soviet allies such as Syria and the PLO. Carter had committed to Sadat that he would bring severe pressure to bear on Israel after re-election in order to ensure progress in the autonomy talks. It is almost certain that instead of disbanding, the autonomy negotiations would have been prioritised and Israel pressured to honour at least her own commitments that she made at Camp David regarding the Palestinian territories. The loss of Carter was magnified by the resignations *seriatim* of Moshe Dayan and Ezer Weizman, the two men most responsible for convincing Begin of the merits of a policy of engagement rather than confrontation. They were replaced by Yitzhak Shamir and Ariel Sharon, both of whom strove to enact more belligerent policies. Previous red lines would now be routinely violated. Israel arrogated private land in the West Bank to construct settlements. She destroyed Iraq's nuclear sites overnight. She mounted a full-scale invasion of Lebanon in support of her right-wing Maronite allies. The Likud's hawks would enjoy their moment in the sun.

An Idiosyncratic Approach to Policy

While it is clear that Sadat's foreign policy was not initially substantially different to Nasser's, it is indisputable that no other successor could have charted a path quite like Sadat. *Ab initio* he put his own distinctive stamp on foreign policy. His use of the prospect of an Arab confederation to eliminate his rivals in 1971, his instant expulsion of Soviet military advisers in 1972, and his astonishing blow to Israel on Yom Kippur in 1973 demonstrate unparalleled foreign policy decision-making and nimbleness. One British envoy described him as 'a man who never goes into a room without making sure that there are at least two ways out'.⁵ Success only bred Sadat's *chutzpah*: 1974 saw the first disengagement agreement, 1975 Sinai II, 1976 was a year of *shmita* and elections, 1977 witnessed the incredible journey to Jerusalem, 1978 the Camp David Accords, and 1979 the peace treaty. Such a track record of determined audacity and achievement is difficult to imagine under any other president. Even more impressive, all these policy decisions were made in pursuit of the same strategy: the return of Sinai and realignment with the West. Sadat would demonstrate tremendous tactical versatility and political agility in pursuit of his goals. Kissinger describes a strategist 'free of the obsession with detail by which mediocre leaders think they are mastering events, only to be engulfed by them'.⁶ Such liberated and unorthodox thinking stirred controversy within his regime and in the Arab world. His dogmatic officials were most unhappy with Sadat's repeated upsetting of their Arabist carts. A trail of foreign minister resignations littered Sadat's accomplishments. It was his manifest destiny to be opposed by purblind officials who 'operate the familiar', and his duty to 'transcend it'.⁷ Yet Sadat never reduced his asking

⁵ Willie Morris, Recent Political Developments in Egypt, 26 June 1978, FCO 93/1435, National Archives, Kew.

⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 638.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 445.

price and Egypt's *sine qua non*: the return of all of Sinai and the restoration of full Egyptian sovereignty.

His vehicle for ensuring the return of Sinai shared similar characteristics with his predecessor's policy: overt reliance on a superpower. Yet while Nasser tasked the Soviets with negotiating and delivering an agreement to return Sinai, Sadat refined the policy and instead charged the Americans with delivering Egypt's maximum programme. Sadat presciently anticipated regional and Cold War trends, and foresaw the fading and collapse of Soviet power the following decade. Accordingly, he strove to switch sides and bandwagon with the US, to his country's lasting benefit. After working hard to rebuild bridges with Washington during and after the Yom Kippur war, Sadat delegated to Henry Kissinger, and later Jimmy Carter, Cyrus Vance, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, the task of delivering Egypt's desiderata. Sadat convinced the US that she had to press Israel into granting Egypt's demands in order to preserve American interests, come what may. When one considers that the US and Egypt did not even have diplomatic relations when Nasser died, the scale and boldness of Sadat's vision becomes apparent:

Sadat had an uncanny psychological discernment. He handled each of the four American Presidents he knew with consummate skill. He treated Nixon as a great statesman, Ford as the living manifestation of good will, Carter as a missionary almost too decent for this world, and Reagan as the benevolent leader of a popular revolution, subtly appealing to each man's conception of himself and gaining the confidence of each. He worked at identifying Egypt's interest with America's own. He repeatedly challenged us to enter the negotiations not as mediator but as participant, or else he offered to accept what we put forward – an offer one could embrace only if one understood that it was part of a strategy, not an abdication.⁸

⁸ Ibid., 649.

The scale of Sadat's success was reflected in the tensions he provoked in the US-Israeli bilateral relationship. Ford and Kissinger, and later Carter too, would openly confront Israel – to her immense frustration – when she would not readily give way to Egyptian demands. Kissinger and his successor Secretaries of State flew to and fro between Egypt and Israel like postmen to achieve two agreements for Sadat. America repeatedly topped up Egypt's offers to Israel with billions in aid and arms. At Camp David and again during the climax of the treaty negotiations, Carter negotiated with the Israelis on behalf of Egypt. This did not, *pace* Kamel, reduce Egypt's negotiating leverage. Having the most powerful men in the world bargain on your behalf enhances the odds of success, not the reverse. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how the obstacles to the removal of the Sinai settlements and airfields could have ever been overcome in a strictly bilateral setting.

Another shared characteristic in Nasser and Sadat's foreign policies is the personalisation of state. Both men formulated and implemented foreign policy in their own personal capacities, with no institutional restrictions on their authority and no filters on the articulation of their private prejudices. Accordingly, Nasser's intense hostility to the United States damaged Egyptian interests. By the late 1950s Nasser's ability to play off the superpowers against one another dissipated as he moved ever closer to Moscow. Sadat's hatred of the USSR, and his 'obsessive belief that the Soviet Government is conspiring for his destruction', similarly hurt Egypt.⁹ By burning his bridges with the Soviets too soon after Yom Kippur Sadat foreclosed his military options. The halt in arms deliveries and embargo on spare parts grounded much of the Egyptian air force and

⁹ Willie Morris, Recent Political Developments in Egypt, 26 June 1978, FCO 93/1435, National Archives, Kew.

reduced Egyptian capabilities while the Israeli military was substantially strengthened. This in turn underscored the belief in Israel that Sadat would accept any deal, as he had 'no other option', which was a contributing factor to the failure of the first Sinai II negotiations. While Egypt's association with the Soviet Union would ultimately have had to be abandoned prior to consummating the partnership with the US, Sadat did so prematurely and in too vindictive a manner. He needlessly created an enemy, and a powerful one at that, by rubbing salt in Soviet wounds. When Assad followed in Sadat's footsteps and relied on Kissinger's good offices to negotiate and sign an agreement with Israel, he nonetheless maintained and sustained Syrian links with Moscow, and his military duly benefited. Indeed, Assad avoided a break with Moscow even while his army attacked Soviet allies in Lebanon.

Sadat's spiting of the Soviets also damaged Egypt's diplomacy. Without the Soviet Union as a potential rival, the United States did not have to bid as high for Egyptian support. The spike in American diplomacy in late 1974 when Brezhnev's visit to Egypt was announced demonstrates how Sadat could have leveraged a working relationship with Moscow into more American concessions. Instead, Sadat disrupted all of Ismail Fahmy's attempts to resuscitate the Soviet connection.

He would do the same to his officials' efforts to rebuild bridges with Arab states after Camp David. Sadat's capricious conceit mandated a pre-emptive break with all moderate Arab states, leaving Egypt almost completely alone in the Arab world, harking back to the situation in the aftermath of Syria's secession from the United Arab Republic in

1961.¹⁰ Sadat furiously attacked Saudi Arabia for not backing Camp David and his peace treaty with Israel, despite the fact that Riyadh was a long-standing political and financial supporter, and notwithstanding American pleas for composure. But Sadat would not be dissuaded; he garrulously cut off his nose to spite his face. Wiser counsel would have steadfastly worked to separate Saudi Arabia from Syria and Iraq through quiet contacts and public restraint, coolly disregarding propaganda attacks.

Such counsel appeared in the person of Hosni Mubarak, Sadat's chosen successor. Mubarak, a man of considered caution and cool thought, compensated for Sadat's personal and policy defects in the aftermath of the latter's assassination. While Mubarak could not hope to match Sadat's perspicacious strategic vision and political dexterity, he far outmatched his predecessor in tactical discipline and halcyon diplomacy. He would introduce change straw by straw, rather than dump whole bales on the camel's back. Mubarak quietly rebuilt Egypt's bridges with the Arab world throughout the 1980s. By 1989, Egypt had been readmitted to the Arab league, and the organisation returned to its original home in Cairo. Most impressively of all, Mubarak achieved this without dismantling the fundamental pillars of Sadat's foreign policy: peace with Israel and partnership with America. In fact, Mubarak's corrective policy quietly consolidated Sadat's achievements, embedding alliance with America within Egypt's bureaucratic systems and stitching the fabric of the peace treaty into the tapestry of the state, thereby proving that Egypt could simultaneously satisfy her national interests and fulfil her Arab vocation. He also dispensed with Sadat's imprudent excesses. He declined to participate

¹⁰ Kerr, *The Arab Cold War*, 28.

in the Reagan administration's military attacks on Libya, operations that Sadat would undoubtedly have partaken in. Mubarak did not throw Egypt's weight around the neighbourhood, or engage in mutual name-calling with his Arab peers. The leadership role Mubarak staked out for Egypt in the Gulf crisis of 1990, and the Arab-Israel peace negotiations of the 1990s, epitomised the balance that Mubarak would seek to strike. Providence proved merciful to Egypt: after the rollercoaster decade of Sadat, she could quietly reap the fruits of Sadat's foreign policy under Mubarak.

Thirty years on Egypt welcomed its fifth president into office. The current incumbent, Mohamed Morsy, could not be more different from his predecessors. Unlike Naguib, Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak, Morsy is both a civilian and an Islamist. Nonetheless, as telling proof of the secular success of Sadat's foreign policy, Morsy's Islamist government has been careful to preserve the treaty with Israel, which may perhaps be the greatest testament to the enduring legacy of Anwar Sadat: peace.

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