President Carter
and the
Egypt-Israeli Rapprochement

by

Bronwyn Stevens

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Department of International Relations
Research School of Pacific Studies
Australian National University
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This thesis is all my own work
Note

The Perfect Writer program used to produce this thesis regrettably has some annoying eccentricities that I have as yet been unable to rectify. For instance, when a footnote numeral appears at the top of a page, the footnote itself occasionally appears on the previous page. When the margins are reset, the footnote numeral is sometimes cramped up to the previous word. I apologise for these slight flaws in the presentation of the thesis.
Introduction

On 17 September 1978 Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David Accords; these provided frameworks within which a comprehensive peace and an Egypt-Israel treaty could be negotiated. The Accords were heralded as a breakthrough in the search for peace in the Middle East and a demonstration of the supreme power of the United States in the region. The crucial American role in negotiating these Accords was the culmination of a trend, exhibited as early as the Eisenhower administration, as the United States became the only power able to influence Israel. Such influence was best exerted directly by the President; the Camp David Accords were a direct consequence of the personal intervention of President Carter. Yet the Accords fell far short of the comprehensive peace the Carter administration originally sought and claimed to have achieved. Israel remains surrounded by hostile neighbours, involved in intermittent wars and in occupation of over one million unwilling Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza. The weaknesses of the Accords and the hostile reception they received among even 'moderate' Arab regimes reflects the limitations on US power to influence Israel or the Arabs.

Several accounts of the events leading to the Camp David Accords and the Egypt-Israel peace treaty were published soon after the
negotiations were completed. Since then, five of the participants (three on the American side and two from the Israeli) have published autobiographical accounts. By examining these five detailed accounts in conjunction with relevant primary sources, it is now possible to build up a more specific picture of the events which led up to the signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. Autobiography has limitations as an academic source; bias, selectivity, forgetfulness, portrayal of the author in the best light, placing events the author is involved in at centre stage and post-hoc rationalization may all be found. But by comparing five detailed accounts these weaknesses may be overcome. In this instance the autobiographies present different perspectives and interpretations of events, but few factual contradictions.

This sub-thesis will examine three themes highlighted during the arduous months of negotiation which preceded the signing of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. They are: the developing power of the United States in the region as the only nation capable of influencing Israel; the vital role of presidents and their advisers in exercising that power with particular reference to President Carter; and the limitations on the President's ability to influence either Israel or the Arabs.

In chapter 1 the historical background of the Arab-Israel conflict from 1948 to 1976 and rising American influence in the region will be examined, primarily through secondary sources. The following four chapters will explore in detail the events leading up to the Camp David
Accords and the Egypt-Israeli peace treaty through an examination of the autobiographies and other primary sources.
Chapter 1: The Growth of US influence in the Middle East 1948-1976

From its inception Israel has been at the centre of conflict in the Middle East. It was isolated economically and diplomatically. The displaced Palestinian refugees were a constant reminder of Arab humiliation. Egypt closed the Suez canal and the Gulf of Aqaba to Israel-bound ships and the new state was subject to cross-border harassment and verbal threats.

In late 1953 Israel proposed to divert water from the Jordan river for a hydro-electric scheme. The US was not a major power in the region at this time, but substantial aid, both public and private, did flow from it to the impecunious state. So, while Israel ignored United Nations condemnation, it desisted when the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, suspended some aid until the plan was dropped. For the first time the US demonstrated that it had the capacity to influence Israel, given sufficient determination.

The US wanted to ensure free passage through the oil rich, strategically located region and to prevent Soviet penetration. In

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1955, in an effort to end instability seen as beneficial to the Soviets, Dulles became the first in a line of US leaders to propose a plan to settle the Arab-Israeli dispute. The Dulles plan went the way of many subsequent plans: into oblivion. The US was not in a position to force a complex peace plan on an unwilling Israel.

War: 1956 and 1967

By 1956 the pan-Arab ideology of Nasser meant that he was seen as the greatest threat to Israel's security. Capitalising on British-French hostility towards Nasser over his nationalisation of the Suez canal, Israel launched a surprise attack on Egypt and quickly occupied the Gaza Strip and Sinai.

In reaction the Soviet Union proposed joint action with the US to remove the invaders and threatened to send its own volunteer forces to the region. The US warned that it would oppose any Soviet action but demanded immediate Israeli withdrawal, rejecting an Israeli proposal to exchange territory for security guarantees and fortified the demand by withholding aid. ² Israel withdrew, demonstrating the influence of a determined US.

² Lencowski, op.cit., p.433.
But this was the last time that the US would oppose Israel to the point of cutting off aid. Superpower rivalry intervened. As Nasser and other radical Arab states moved closer to the Soviet Union, the US moved closer to its one reliable regional ally. US public opinion came to identify the Arabs as pro-Soviet and the Israelis as pro-American, lending strength to the powerful Jewish American lobby.

Although the Suez war gave Israel respite from guerilla attacks and access to the Gulf of Aqaba, it was still isolated and surrounded by hostile powers. The spectre of Arab unity remained and the creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation as an umbrella body in 1964 added to the tension. After Dulles cut aid to the United Arab Republic, US influence in the region became limited to Israel and conservative Arab states while the Soviet Union gained influence among radical states.

In May 1967 Nasser remilitarised the Sinai, requested the UN Emergency forces to leave and closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Egyptians argued that these actions were a response to Israeli belligerency, but Israel saw them as a threat to its survival. Eshkol warned that Israel regarded interference with the free passage of its shipping as an attack entitling it to act in self-defence.

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Israel's relations with the US before the June war were good but, when Israel sought strong statements of support, President Johnson warned that the US would not support Israel if it started a war. Once the Israeli Cabinet concluded that the US would not take any action alone on Israel's behalf, it decided for war. The US had been unable to prevent Israel going to war, but the Johnson administration had not issued Israel with ultimatums or threatened to suspend aid.

Israel's rapid success in Sinai, Gaza, Jerusalem and on the Golan Heights, left it poised for a possible attack on Damascus. The Soviet Union warned that it would intervene if Israel advanced further; Johnson sent the Sixth Fleet towards Syria; another super-power confrontation seemed to be developing. The dangers of ignoring Egypt-Israeli disputes were again demonstrated.

Eshkol said that Israel would exchange territory for peace, but gradually Israel became determined not to relinquish the conquered territory; doing so after Suez had not brought security and 'some Israelis saw in the conquered territories a chance to achieve militarily important strategic depth'. Caught up in the Vietnam war, the US government was unprepared to take a strong stand and Israel had ignored its wishes. Israel would continue to ignore US requests it disapproved of unless they were made in very strong terms at strategic times.

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The humiliating Arab defeat, the occupied territories and Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem did not predispose the Arab states to recognize Israel. Arab Heads of State decided in Khartoum, in August 1967, to seek a political, not a military, solution; but there was to be no recognition of, nor negotiations or peace treaty with, Israel. Israel meanwhile began to consider which areas should be kept for strategic and religious reasons and which it was prepared to exchange for peace.

The so-called Oral law of return envisaged the retention of East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, Sharm-el-Sheikh and a corridor to Eliat.

United Nations Resolution 242

The UN General Assembly censured Israel for its virtual annexation of East Jerusalem on 4 July 1967. Members of the Security Council then sought a resolution which could reconcile the incompatible interests of the combatants. Israel wanted a full peace settlement before considering withdrawal; the Arab states insisted on withdrawal before negotiations; the US favoured the Israeli position and the Soviets the

5. R. Stookey, America and the Arab States, New York, 1975.
6. R. Gabby, 'Israel and the Middle East' in Ayoob, op.cit., p.49.
Arab one. Resolution 242, passed on 22 November 1967, was sufficiently ambiguous to be acceptable to all sides. It emphasised the inadmissibility of territorial acquisition through force; sought the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territory and an end to belligerency. It demanded respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of every state in the area; affirmed the necessity for freedom of navigation through international waters and for a solution to the refugee problem and requested the appointment of a special UN representative to promote agreement.\(^7\)

Egypt and Jordan accepted the resolution. Israel did so reluctantly, feeling that the pre-June 1967 boundaries were insecure and having already announced that Arab Jerusalem would remain under Israeli sovereignty. The Johnson administration, still preoccupied with the Vietnam, would not use its position to influence Israel to comply with Resolution 242.

The Rogers's Proposals

When Nixon became President, he announced that the US would launch a new initiative to be handled by Secretary of State Rogers. Henry

Kissinger, Nixon's National Security adviser, opposed the initiative at this stage; he believed:

given the influence and intransigence of the Soviets, the militance of Nasser, and the power of the fedayeen, I argued, the Middle East was not ready for a comprehensive American initiative. 8

After talks with the Soviet Union, Britain and France, held as the war of attrition began, Rogers presented his proposals. They were aimed at a final reciprocally binding accord between Egypt and Israel, to be negotiated by the UN envoy, Jarring. They proposed Israeli withdrawal, the ending of the state of war, secure and recognised borders at the internationally recognised boundary between Egypt and mandated Palestine, with demilitarised zones and effective guarantees of freedom of navigation in the Straits of Tiran. Israeli ships were to be allowed to use the Suez Canal and there was to be a fair settlement of the refugee problem. 9

Kissinger strongly opposed the Rogers plan and Nixon 'hedged his bets' by making his reservations known to Jewish community leaders. 10 The Rogers plan was angrily rejected by the Israeli Cabinet, denounced by Nasser and opposed by the Soviet Union.

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10. Kissinger, op.cit., p.372
Israeli-US relations became strained over the Rogers plan, but when the Soviets agreed to Nasser's request for missile defences, Nixon decided to send advanced aircraft to Israel. In June 1970, Rogers asked both countries to accept a ceasefire in the escalating 'war of attrition' and peace talks. The promise of arms supplies and public commitments were used as means of persuading Israel to accept. On 22 July Nasser accepted Rogers's ceasefire unconditionally. Nixon asked Israel to do the same. After an initial series of sweeping demands, Israel accepted the promise of advanced weapons and agreed. However, a controversial breach of the ceasefire by Egypt allowed Israel to refuse to renew the Jarring talks and Nixon to justify further arms shipments to Israel. Nixon was coming to see the Middle East crisis as a global conflict between the Soviet proxy, Egypt, and the US proxy, Israel.

During 1971 Rogers tried to reopen the Jarring talks, but Israel refused to consider withdrawal to the 1967 boundaries. Then the new president of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, proposed that, if Israel withdrew in stages, Egypt would 'give Israel all the guarantees she asked for'. Rogers supported an interim settlement; but the proposal foundered when Egypt wanted it linked to a timetable for future withdrawals and Israel would only consider it in isolation. Sadat actively cooperated with Rogers and his negotiators, foreshadowing his later entry into the US camp; but he became disillusioned at their failure to win concessions from Israel.

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Sadat Changes Direction

At the May summit in Moscow the US and the Soviet Union released a non-committal communique outlining principles for solving the Arab-Israeli dispute. These included the need for a general agreement reached in steps and the possibilities of border changes by mutual agreement. Sadat was alarmed at the thought of delay or border changes, fearing they indicated a softening of Soviet support for the Arab cause. 'It was a violent shock to us because we lagged at least twenty steps behind Israel.'

Sadat looked with increasing disfavour on the Soviet Union as it had not provided him with weapons to match Israel's and he thought that Soviet leaders wanted him replaced by the pro-communist Sabri. He had been told through back-channels from the White House that the US would seek a settlement more actively if the Soviet presence was removed from Egypt. In July Sadat expelled the Soviet military advisers and later wrote that their presence had prevented Egypt going to war because permission had to be given by Moscow for the use by the Soviet advisers

of advanced equipment. 13

Nixon acknowledged the expulsion and promised to concentrate on the Middle East after the election and the Vietnam negotiations were complete. 14 When the Egyptian national security adviser, Hafez Ismail, met Nixon in Washington in February 1972, Nixon suggested dual track negotiations, with open talks with the State Department and secret talks with Kissinger. Nixon warned that the US could pressure Israel but not impose a settlement on it. Ismail was told that nothing could be done until after the Israeli election and that Egypt would have to decide what it was prepared to give up in exchange for withdrawal. But then the Egyptians discovered that the US was planning to sell advanced aircraft to Israel. This was seen as a turning point on the path to war. Sadat said in early April:

Every door I have opened has been slammed in my face by Israel— with American blessing...Everything is now being mobilised for the resumption of battle. 15

Kissinger did not believe that war was imminent, despite Soviet and Jordanian warnings, because he did not imagine that Egypt would embark on a war it must lose. He ignored hints from the Saudi petroleum minister that the oil weapon might be used. The US veto of a Security


Council resolution demanding Israel withdrawal showed that Kissinger, now Secretary of State, had failed to comprehend the gravity of the situation.

The 1973 War

Faced by an energy crisis and dangers of superpower confrontation, the US was forced to act. Kissinger hoped to remain aloof. Expecting Israel to push the Arabs back quickly, he proposed a ceasefire on the 5 October lines. When Israel lost ground, he proposed a ceasefire in place. Initially he delayed meeting Israeli arms requests, not wanting either side to humiliate the other and inhibit negotiations. By 12 October Israel was willing to accept a ceasefire but Egypt, now getting weapons from the Soviet Union, was not.

When Nixon ordered a direct airlift of arms to Israel and ignored an appeal to stop from King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, the Arab oil ministers announced a cut in oil production of 5% a month until Israel withdrew from occupied territories. Nixon asked Congress for $2.2 billion for arms for Israel and the oil embargo was escalated.

With vital US interests at stake, Kissinger flew to Moscow where Resolution 338 was devised; it called for a ceasefire in position, implementation of SCR 242, and negotiations, under the joint
chairmanship of the US and the Soviets, at a peace conference at Geneva. Israel accepted the ceasefire under US pressure, and Dayan later complained that the US had deprived Israel of the fruits of victory.\textsuperscript{16} When Israel broke the ceasefire and the US refused joint participation with the Soviets in policing it, the Soviet Union prepared to send its own force to Sinai. Kissinger placed the US forces, including the SAC, on alert.\textsuperscript{17} Nixon warned Meir that the US would not allow Israel to destroy the Third Army and Kissinger threatened that the US would supply it by helicopter if Israel did not allow a supply road in.\textsuperscript{18} Only after the Security Council passed Resolutions 339 and 340, calling again for a ceasefire and the despatch of UN observers to the area, did Israel accept the ceasefire and the tension lessen.

\textsuperscript{16} Sheehan, op.cit., pp.36-37.
\textsuperscript{17} Stookey, op.cit., p.252
The US had received a dramatic lesson in the dangers of ignoring the Middle East conflict. A confrontation with the Soviet Union had occurred; its NATO allies had refused to let the US airlift overfly their territory and were dissatisfied with the diversion of NATO weapons to supply Israel; the oil embargo was costing 500,000 jobs and $106 billion in production.

Despite the success of the Israeli counter-offensive, the October war was seen as a victory for the Arabs. Secrecy had been maintained; the oil weapon had been used effectively; Israeli soldiers had been forced to retreat. As Colonel Qadafi telegrammed Sadat: 'For the moment it is enough that Israeli soldiers should flee before the Egyptian soldier.'

Although the initial Israeli shock led to a demand that the occupied territory be retained for protection, mature strategy indicated the need for accommodation with Egypt, the most populous Arab state and the only one which had indicated a willingness to negotiate.

Egypt’s willingness to negotiate, and perception of the importance of the US role, was signalled by Sadat’s open message to Nixon, stating that Egypt had fought to liberate the territories occupied by Israel.

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and secure Palestinian rights. Egypt continued its commitment to UN SCR 242 and was willing to attend an international peace conference. Kissinger overlooked the significance of the speech as the first public appeal for US aid and the first agreement to attend a peace conference from a frontline state.

After the ceasefire both Prime Minister Meir and Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy went to Washington, indicating again the pivotal US role. Fahmy proposed an extensive plan that included reopening the Suez canal; Meir wanted a more limited arrangement before Israel would consider returning to the 22 October lines stipulated in SCR 338.

Kissinger, now willingly taking the role he had so sedulously avoided, persuaded Sadat to accept a six point proposal in the hope of gaining more substantial withdrawals than those of the 22 October ceasefire lines. A ceasefire was signed by Generals Gamasy and Yariv who began to discuss the extent of Israeli withdrawal. Although seen as a triumph for Kissinger and to Egypt’s advantage, some Egyptians criticised Sadat for appealing to the US, for outlining peace terms on 16 October and for agreeing to a ceasefire.

22. Fraser, op.cit., p.130
The US was now in a dominant position in the Middle East. Israel had been forced to call on it for urgent re-supply of equipment. Sadat was clearly indicating his opinion that: 'no one else except the United States can play this role, namely that of mediator...'.

The Geneva Conference

Kissinger now sought to convene the Geneva conference envisaged in the Soviet-US negotiations that had led to SCR 338. Egypt and Jordan agreed to attend, but Syria refused until a disengagement was negotiated on the Syrian front and Israel refused to attend with Syria until a prisoner-of-war list was provided. Faced with Watergate and Faisal's promise to lift the oil embargo once the first stage of disengagement was reached, Nixon and Kissinger were both keen to start the conference. Kissinger began a frantic shuttle to get the two countries to participate. Syria refused, and Israel announced it would not if eventual Palestinian participation was to be discussed. The furious Americans began to exert pressure. Nixon told the Israeli ambassador that 'if this demand on their behalf brings another war, they go it alone' and he sent a personal message to Meir warning that:

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... if Israel now fails to take a favourable decision to participate in the conference on the basis of the letter we have worked out, this will not be understood... and I will not be able to justify the support which I have consistently rendered to your government. 25

But both Nixon and Kissinger were wary of exerting too much pressure, having no wish to add the pro-Israel lobby to those already criticising Nixon. During the October war the Israeli ambassador had explicitly threatened to mobilise the Zionist lobby and its Congress sympathisers against the administration.26 Kissinger decided not to insist on the wording about eventual Palestinian participation and Sadat eventually concurred.27 Thus the core of the Middle East dispute was removed from the Geneva Conference.

Kissinger has been accused of short-sightedness for this concession, but Israel’s determination to resist a move that it saw as a threat to its existence could have forced another crisis on the Nixon administration and prevented the convening of the Geneva conference. An Israeli election was imminent and Meir could not afford to give any indication of weakness to the uneasy Israeli electorate. The limit of US influence over Israel was again apparent.

The Geneva conference held its first and only meeting on 21 December

25. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, op.cit., p.759.
27. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, op.cit., p.770.
1973, under the auspices of the UN and under the joint chairmanship of the US and the Soviet Union. The Foreign Ministers of Israel, Jordan and Egypt set out their positions. An Egypt-Israeli negotiating team was authorised and the conference adjourned. Nothing concrete was accomplished, but Kissinger was satisfied that an internationally recognised framework for the bilateral negotiations he intended to foster had been created. While opening the conference, Kissinger had said: 'Our final objective is the implementation in all its parts of Resolution 242. This goal has the full support of the United States'.

Israel, unwilling to make the substantial withdrawals demanded by SCR 242, regarded the Geneva conference as a lurking danger; the US used its menace to extract other concessions from an unwilling Israel.

Sinai 1.

In December Israel’s Labour government was re-elected with a reduced majority and on 4 January Defence Minister Moshe Dayan returned to Washington proposing a five zone disengagement on the Suez front, with UN forces providing a central buffer between two limited force zones. Kissinger took the proposal to Sadat who was unwilling to accept force limitations on his own territory and could not agree to unilaterally

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renounce belligerency without isolating himself from the Arab world. He asked Kissinger to stay in the Middle East until an agreement was reached, so that neither the radical Arab states nor the Soviets could torpedo negotiations.29

The Israeli Cabinet now proposed a less generous withdrawal, suggesting the already public Dayan proposal as a fallback position. But in Cairo Kissinger wasted little time on the Israeli Cabinet plan. Discussion centred on the difficulty Sadat would have in accepting force limitations on his own territory and guaranteeing non-belligerency. Sadat agreed to give a secret commitment to the US on arms limitations; Israel agreed to waive the demand for non-belligerency and passage for Israeli ships through the canal as long as cargoes bound for Israel were allowed. The first Sinai agreement was signed on 18 January 1974. Both Meir and Sadat expressed appreciation for the role of Kissinger and Nixon. But the Soviets were extremely critical at being manoeuvred out of the negotiations.

The US had secretly promised Israel that the completion of disengagement agreements were to take precedence over new steps at Geneva, that the UN forces could not be withdrawn without the consent of both parties, that the US regarded Bab al Mandab as an international waterway and that the US would be responsive to Israel’s defence needs

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30. Quandt, op.cit.,p.228
on a long-term basis.  

Sinai I provided for an Israeli withdrawal of 15 to 20 miles from the east bank of the canal, with only limited Egyptian forces in this area. The agreement yielded little territory to Egypt, but it did gain both sides of the canal, enabling it to be reopened to provide revenue. Sadat could also claim that he had broken the status quo and that Israel had withdrawn. Israel had gained important concessions from the US and had UN forces between it and Egypt.

The Geneva Conference and the Sinai I agreement set the pattern for future US intervention in the Middle East. Israel was pressured into making concessions, but limits were set on what it would be asked to accept. Israel refused to negotiate with the PLO or consider a Palestinian state in the occupied territories. Unable to move the Israelis on this issue, Kissinger allowed the whole Palestinian question to be shelved despite his stated adherence to SCR 242 and the insistence of radical and conservative Arab leaders that a just settlement must be found. Failure to address this issue undermined a broad American-sponsored settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute. To gain disengagement on both fronts, enabling the oil embargo to be lifted while avoiding a dispute with the pro-Israeli lobby, inducements were offered to Israel. By abandoning the Soviet Union, appealing to the US and showing willingness to negotiate, Egypt came to be accepted as another cornerstone in the US’s Middle East strategy for whom concessions should be sought.
Towards Sinai II

Kissinger continued to try for a series of agreements between Israel and its neighbours that would defuse the Arab-Israeli conflict. He wanted to show support for the pro-Western Hussein, but the Israelis intractably refused to concede any of the Jordan valley for security and religious reasons. Then Hussein accepted the declaration of Arab heads of state at Rabat on:

the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent authority under the leadership of the PLO in its capacity as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. 31

Movement on the West Bank no longer seemed feasible, so Kissinger sought further progress on the Egypt-Israeli front. But Yitzak Rabin had now replaced Meir as Prime Minister; his position was insecure and he had to balance the conflicting views of Defence Minister Peres and Foreign Minister Allon.

Sadat was still willing to negotiate but, in view of the criticism he had received of Sinai I, he needed substantial concessions. In December 1974 Allon proposed a small Israeli withdrawal in return for

31. Fraser, op.cit., p.136.
an Egyptian commitment to non-belligerency. Sadat could not accept a
proposal that left Israel in occupation of the Mitla and Giddi passes
and the oilfields. Nor could he commit Egypt to non-belligerency
without incurring hostility from other Arab leaders.

In March 1975 Rabin presented a proposal to Kissinger demanding
Egyptian agreement to the termination of the use of force before Israel
would discuss withdrawal. When Sadat rejected this, Israel offered to
withdraw half way out of the passes while keeping electronic monitoring
stations on the high ground, and out of the oil fields while retaining
control of the access roads. 32 Sadat reaffirmed his refusal. Despite a
message from Ford to Rabin warning that:

If Israel were not more flexible, the United States would
dramatically reassess its policy in the Middle East -
including our policy towards Israel, 33

the Israelis refused to change their position.

A reassessment of US policy began. Rabin was advised to defer his
proposed visit; weapon sales were delayed; the administration
considered pursuing a full settlement at Geneva. The spectre of the
Rogers plan rose before the Israeli government. Pro-Israeli bodies
lobbied the press and Congress. The Senate, already demanding a greater
say in foreign policy, was receptive. On 24 May seventy-six senators

32. Sheehan, op.cit., pp.156-157
33. Sheehan, op.cit., p.159
signed a letter demanding that Ford endorse Israel's demand for defensible frontiers and economic and military assistance.  

The limitations on the power of the US President and his aides to influence Israel were once again demonstrated. Ford and Kissinger decided to abandon more comprehensive solutions and seek further Israeli withdrawal in Sinai. On 11 June Rabin arrived and despite the Senators' letter Ford and Kissinger warned that Israel could not count on substantial new aid until a further Sinai settlement was negotiated and that the Geneva conference would be reconvened if Israel did not negotiate more generously. Rabin's initial agreement was rejected by the Cabinet, but ultimately it agreed to withdrawal beyond the passes in exchange for an Egyptian statement renouncing military solutions and massive US aid. Faced with US pressure and warnings of economic disaster without US aid, 'they simply caved in'.

Israel was to withdraw to a new line east of the passes which were to be surrendered to the UN. The oil fields were returned to Egypt. Israel kept its monitoring post at Umm Khisheib inside the Giddi pass. Inside the passes were surveillance stations manned by US civilian technicians. Egypt agreed that conflict in the Middle East should be settled peacefully, and publicly declared that non-military cargoes

34. Sheehan, op.cit., p.125.
35. Quandt, op.cit.,p. 272
36. Golan, op.cit., p.246
could pass through the re-opened canal. Limited force zones were established. Extensive US commitments were made secretly to Israel: to develop a contingency plan to supply Israel in emergencies, to prevent consideration of proposals detrimental to Israel, to maintain Israel's defensive strength by supplying advanced equipment such as the F16, and to consider the supply of Pershing missiles with conventional warheads. The US also agreed not to negotiate with the PLO until it accepted SCR 242 and to coordinate its position at the Geneva Conference with that of Israel. 37

Israel initially had some success in defying the Ford administration. Ford and Kissinger did not want to confront the Israeli lobby or the Senate; they therefore took up the less alarming option of a Sinai withdrawal and persuaded Israel to accept. Israel capitulated in return for substantial US commitments.

The Sinai II agreement was a further departure from the traditional Arab refusal to negotiate with Israel. Egypt was committed to a peaceful settlement. The agreement however was subjected to extensive criticism. Assad and Hussein accused Sadat of ignoring the Arab cause and only considering Egypt. Iraq, Libya, South Yemen and the PLO formed a rejectionist front, attacking not only the agreement but also the concept of any settlement with Israel. In Egypt some critics saw Sinai II as an infringement of Egyptian sovereignty, inhibiting further

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37 These agreements were soon published. Text in Sheehan, op.cit., pp.253-257
military action, abandoning the Palestinians and rejecting the Arab-Socialist connection in favour of the Western Alliance.38

Egypt had regained the oil fields and their much needed revenues but Israel still held nine-tenths of the Sinai, most of the Golan Heights, the West Bank of the Jordan and the Gaza Strip. More than a million Palestinians were under Israeli occupation. Sinai II, won by exhaustive effort, provided some gains for Egypt and Israel but no solution to the Arab-Israeli crisis.

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38. Shoukri, op.cit., pp.188-189
Chapter 2: Quest for a Comprehensive Peace

Carter took office sharing the attitudes of many Americans towards Israel. He supported the American commitment to Israel's security, believing that Jews who survived the Holocaust deserved their own nation. But Carter also had a strong commitment to human rights and believed that US foreign policy was too cynical. This led him to deviate from previous Presidential attitudes to the Palestinians because he believed it was:

imperative that the United States work to obtain for these people the right to vote, the right to assemble and debate......the right to own property without fear of it being confiscated, and the right to be free of military rule.

Carter was rapidly made aware of the centrality of the Palestinian question to the Arab-Israeli confrontation through a series of meetings with Arab leaders in the early months of his Presidency. His Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, in talks throughout the Middle East in February

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3. Carter, op.cit., p.277
1977, found Arab leaders united on the necessity for obtaining self-determination for the Palestinians. These contacts signified the high priority given to the continuing Arab-Israeli confrontation which Carter feared could erupt into another war, threatening a further superpower confrontation and another oil embargo. It was soon clear that the US under Carter would continue to be the influential great power in the Middle East.

Sadat and Assad had called for a Palestinian delegation at any Geneva conference and the creation of a Palestinian state. The Egyptian economy, however, was in a critical condition. Following riots over increased food prices in Cairo and Alexandria in January 1977, Sadat reinstated subsidies and re-imposed political restrictions. With a military budget taking over twenty-five percent of Egypt's Gross National Product and further oil finds in the Israeli-held Sinai, Sadat concluded that Egypt needed a peace settlement for its economic wellbeing and his own survival.

In his February 1977 visit to the Middle East, UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim was unsuccessful in overcoming obstacles to reconvening the Geneva Conference. On his visit Vance sought to overcome the

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impasse. Sadat suggested linking Palestinians to a Jordanian delegation for peace talks and indicated that Egypt was trying to persuade the PLO to change its position towards Israel. Vance found Rabin demanding a full peace with normal relations in return for territorial concessions, but not offering withdrawal to the May 1967 boundaries. The Arabs opposed, in varying degrees, a full peace but insisted on total withdrawal. The Saudis told Vance the United States should exert pressure on Israel.

By March 1977 the Carter regime had formulated the principles on which its Middle East policy would be based. It would aim for a comprehensive settlement, with a 'full peace in every sense with relations of all kinds between the parties' and withdrawal from occupied territories in accordance with SCR 242 which 'does apply on all fronts where territories were occupied in the 1967 war'. Further, 'the solution of the Palestinian problem has to be an integral part of any solution to the Middle East problem overall.' Carter stated publicly that 'there has to be a home provided for the Palestinian

11. New York Times, 19-3-77, p.8
refugees'. Carter recognised the power he had to influence events but had not yet realised its limits.

Sadat visited Washington in April 1977, but he was not prepared to give Carter a commitment to a full peace, pointing out that diplomatic relations did not guarantee peace and claiming that after the years of bloodshed and bitterness no Arab would accept such a peace. But Carter and Sadat developed an excellent rapport. Sadat trusted Carter. Carter believed Sadat really wanted peace and was willing to take repeated political risks to ensure negotiations progressed. Sadat was persuaded by Carter to accept minor changes to the May 1967 borders, to acknowledge that Egypt would negotiate directly with Israel and to consider commercial and diplomatic relations five years after a peace agreement was signed. Sadat then reiterated that the Palestinian problem was at the heart of the Middle East crisis.

During April and May Carter met King Hussein of Jordan and Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia in Washington. Both emphasised the centrality of the Palestinian problem to the Arab-Israeli confrontation. Fahd agreed to try to get PLO acceptance of SCR 242. Carter also met Assad of Syria in Switzerland.

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During the early months of the Carter administration US-Israeli relations deteriorated. In February the US protested that Israeli oil drilling in the Sinai was illegal, prevented the sale of Israeli assembled planes with American engines to Ecuador and cancelled the sale of concussion bombs to Israel.\textsuperscript{16} When Rabin visited the United States in March, he opposed any PLO or Palestinian representation at Geneva and was not prepared to make any offers to Sadat.\textsuperscript{17} Shortly afterwards Carter again stated that there should be a Palestinian homeland. In May the administration failed to include Israel on a list of nations eligible to purchase advanced US weapons. This decision provoked a strong protest from Israel's Foreign Minister Allon, American Jewish groups and Congressional supporters of Israel. Carter was forced to announce that the United States had a special security responsibility to Israel and it would be able to buy and co-produce advanced weaponry.\textsuperscript{18}

The President had lost his first serious clash with the powerful Israel lobby but he persevered with the administration's stated policy on a peace settlement. He tried, with some success, to gain Congressional support for it, pointing out the advantage to Israel of

\footnotesize{
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{17.} Carter, op.cit.,pp.279,280
  \item \textbf{19.} Carter, op.cit.,pp.288-289.
\end{itemize}
}
direct negotiations with Arab states at Geneva.  

Likud Victory; Begin visits Washington

The May election in Israel brought the right wing Likud coalition to power. Begin's election shocked Carter and American Jews. His hardline policies had once included claiming Jordan for the Jewish state and opposing the Sinai II agreement. Begin had however told the Herut Party conference that 'the Likud Government will undertake peace initiatives', and assured Moshe Dayan that the West Bank would not be annexed while peace negotiations were in progress. The first Likud Cabinet meeting discussed returning most of the Sinai to Egypt. Israel would retain a strip of territory running from Sharm el Sheikh to El Arish containing the Rafah settlements, the Etam and Etzion airfields and which could protect shipping along the Gulf. While the Likud Government was prepared to return more of the Sinai than its Labour predecessors, it was not prepared to relinquish sovereignty over what

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20. Carter, op.cit., p.284
23. Dayan, op.cit., p.12
Begin called the 'liberated territories of Samaria, Judea and Gaza'.

In July Begin went to Washington to discuss the prospects for peace. Carter criticised the Begin Government's policy of increasing the number of settlements on the West Bank, claiming they were in violation of international law and a serious obstacle to peace. Carter told Begin that he wished to reconvene the Geneva Conference as quickly as possible and put forward a five point plan for a comprehensive peace based on SCR 242. The plan included a broad definition of peace, Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories and the creation of a Palestinian entity. Begin immediately rejected the last point.

Begin declared that Israel would take part in a Geneva Conference in accordance with SCR 338 with accredited representatives of Israel, Syria and Jordan without preconditions. After a joint opening session three treaties would be negotiated in three separate sub-committees. Israel was prepared to withdraw substantially from Sinai and from part of the Golan Heights, but not from Judea, Samaria or Gaza for both historic and security reasons. Jordan could be given some share in administering these territories. Jerusalem would remain unified under

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25. ibid., pp.290-291.
26. SCR 338 subsumed SCR 242, but Israel preferred it because it spoke of direct negotiations between the parties.
27. Dayan, op.cit., pp.19-21
Israeli rule, with each religion controlling its shrines.27

The positions outlined at this meeting illustrated the major division which was to continue between Carter and Likud over the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. However Begin had presented proposals for withdrawal and the American reaction was relief that he was not as extreme as had been feared. This moderate image was slightly punctured at a press conference at which 'he made no effort to conceal his adamantine obduracy' over the West Bank, Gaza and Palestinian self-determination.28 This intransigent image was reinforced when he approved three previously illegal West Bank settlements immediately after his return to Israel.

A Geneva Conference or comprehensive settlement appeared remote, as Begin's proposals were clearly unacceptable to any Arab nation. In August Vance again tried to bring the parties nearer together. The Begin Government accepted that the basis for negotiations would be SCRs 242 and 338 and the goal would be normal relations, but rejected proposals that Israel withdraw on all fronts and for the establishment of a Palestinian entity.29

Vance found Sadat slightly more pliant. Sadat reiterated his belief that the Palestinians were at the core of the Middle East conflict and should be represented at any peace conference. He suggested a

29. Dayan, op.cit.,pp.21,22
pre-Geneva conference of Foreign Ministers who would be in New York for
the opening of the United Nations General Assembly in September and
indicated his willingness to recognise Israel and sign a peace treaty
with it. This was a breakthrough as he had previously rejected
immediate recognition of Israel. But while Sadat was prepared to
compromise, Assad quickly indicated that he would not participate in
any conference unless the PLO was invited. Israel, however, would not
participate if the PLO did.

Sadat desperately needed some progress towards a peace settlement.
His popularity was declining as the economy deteriorated and his regime
took repressive measures to prevent public protest. As Vance returned
almost empty handed to the United States, Egypt accused Israel of
deliberately obstructing a Geneva Conference by provoking the PLO to
take a hard line while the Egyptians were trying to persuade them to
accept SCR 242. Egypt, Syria and Jordan indicated that they would
sign peace treaties with Israel as part of an overall Middle East
settlement. Jordan as well as Egypt would consider entering diplomatic
relations with Israel. Begin and Dayan reiterated that Israel would
not return to its 1967 boundaries, consider the creation of a

30. The Times, 3-8-1977, p.1
31. The Times, 4-8-1977, p.4
Palestinian state or treat with the PLO. Begin was angered at Vance's statement that he would talk to PLO representatives if they accepted SCR 242. He lectured Vance on the US promise not to negotiate with the PLO, referred to its covenant and questioned the morality of the US position.  

While the Carter Administration sought PLO recognition of SCR 242 throughout 1977, the PLO Executive Committee tried to find:

a compromise which would be acceptable to its opponents without jeopardising fundamental principles and unity of the Palestinian Liberation Movement.

Including the PLO

In response to questions from Waldheim and Vance, the PLO explained its attitude to a Geneva Conference at the end of February 1977. SCRs 242 and 338 were rejected as a basis of negotiations because they referred to refugees. The PLO should be invited to attend the Conference as an independent delegation; it should attend from the start and participate in all its activities. Palestine should be a

34. Vance, op.cit., p.189.

35. B. Male, 'The Egypt-Israeli Rapprochment', *Australian Outlook*, Vol.33, No.1, April, 1979, p.47

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separate item on the agenda. An invitation would be accepted on the basis of UN General Assembly Resolution 3236. The great powers must give guarantees for the establishment of a Palestinian state.\(^{36}\)

Vance, with Carter’s approval, had been seeking to circumvent Kissinger’s commitment that the United States would not talk to the PLO until it recognized SCR 242. He suggested that the PLO recognize the resolution with the caveat that it failed to make adequate reference to the Palestinians or their right to a homeland.\(^{37}\) In March the PLO Central Council decided still to negotiate only on UNR 3236 which ‘reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian People to self-determination, national independence’ and repatriation’ and asserted that ‘the Palestinian People are a principal party in the establishment of a just and durable peace in the Middle East’.\(^{38}\) The stand was reaffirmed in August 1977. The Central Committee dismissed SCR 242 ‘for ignoring the national rights of our people and treating the Palestinian Question as a refugee problem’.\(^{39}\)

On 13 September Carter stated that Palestinians would have to be at Geneva for the Palestinian question to be solved, but that all parties

\(^{36}\) H. Cobban, The Palestinian Liberation Organization, Cambridge, 1984, p.84

\(^{37}\) Vance, op.cit., p.188.


\(^{39}\) New York Times, 27-7-1977, p.3
would have to adhere to SCRs 242 and 338. At the PLO Central Council of 20 September Arafat and others wished to give some recognition to 'a major American step towards the Palestinians' but hardliners defeated such proposals, citing the American failure to curb Israel in Lebanon. A few days later Carter did restrain Israel, warning them secretly that 'unless they terminated their military operations we would halt all military aid to Israel'. The Israelis began to withdraw the next day.

While the United States was seeking an acceptable formula for including the Palestinians, secret negotiations were taking place elsewhere. Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan held clandestine meetings with Hussein in London on 22 and 23 August. Hussein stated that he accepted the decision of the Rabat conference which 'cancelled his mandate to speak for the Palestinians' and claimed that to accept back part of the West Bank would be regarded as treachery.

Sadat was growing impatient with the continued failure to reconvene the Geneva Conference. The Syrians had rejected his proposed New York Conference; the Israelis were announcing a huge increase in the number of West Bank settlements; the PLO rejected SCR 242 as a basis for

41. Cobban, op.cit., pp.89,90
42. Brzezinski, op.cit., p.107.
43. Dayan, op.cit., pp.35-37
negotiations in an aggressive statement in mid August.44 Sadat felt impelled to seek other ways of achieving progress. His Deputy Premier Tuhami was sent to Morocco for a second meeting with Dayan on 16 September. Tuhami suggested that peace proposals be developed by both sides but insisted that Israel must be prepared to withdraw from all occupied territory. It was agreed that peace documents would be drawn up, exchanged and shown to the United States in preparation for another meeting in Morocco.45

Proximity Talks and the 'Joint Statement'

Dayan then went to the United States to participate in proximity talks involving Foreign Ministers in New York for the opening of the UN General Assembly. It was hoped that these could pave the way for a Geneva Conference. Carter, Mondale and Vance criticised Israel's obduracy, settlements policy and refusal to allow Palestinian participation at a Geneva Conference.46 Dayan reiterated that Israel

44. The statement attacked Zionist and American manoeuvres and warned cowards and those co-operating with Israel that armed struggle would escalate. New York Times, 27-8-1977, p.3

45. Dayan, op.cit., pp.44-53

46. Carter, op.cit., p.292; Dayan, op.cit., pp.57,58
would make a substantial withdrawal in Sinai, would not allow Jordanian sovereignty or a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza, but would consider some form of administrative autonomy. There had been changes in the Israeli position. They were prepared to allow Palestinians in the Jordanian delegation; but as this was unacceptable to both the PLO and Jordan it made no genuine concession to the Carter administration's demands for Palestinian representation at Geneva. Dayan had also rejected a US draft working paper which accepted a Syrian-Soviet proposal for a joint Arab delegation.

After consultations with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, Carter agreed to a joint US-Soviet statement issued on 1 October. It proposed the reconvening of the Geneva Conference, stating that a just and lasting settlement should be achieved as soon as possible, encompassing all parties and issues, including the legitimate rights of the Palestinians; Israeli withdrawal; and the establishment of full normal relations between the parties. The only way to achieve a fundamental solution was negotiation within the framework of the Geneva Conference which should be resumed no later than December 1977.

The Central Committee of Fatah noted that this was the first time the

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47. Dayan, op.cit., pp.57,58.


49. Joint United States-Soviet Text, tabled before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Middle East Strategic Problems, 3 October 1977, pp.2,3.
United States had openly recognised the existence of the Palestinian people and that the reference to 'legitimate rights' reflected a better understanding of the Palestinian cause. The Central Committee of the PLO finally approved this statement on 14 December; but by then the peace process had taken another turn. Syria opposed the statement because it referred to 'withdrawal from territories', not from 'all territories' occupied in 1967.

Sadat was alarmed at the possible Soviet reinvovlement in the negotiations and feared the US might persuade Israel to accept the Soviet-Syrian proposal for a joint Arab delegation to the Geneva Conference. Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy brought Carter a letter from Sadat, asking that nothing be done to prevent Egypt and Israel negotiating directly with US mediation. Sadat feared that such excessive demands would emerge from a delegation which included Syria that no agreement could ever be reached. The Israeli Cabinet violently objected to the joint statement. Opposition also came from the Congress.

Carter was perturbed by the hostile reception given to the joint statement and issued another with Dayan entitled 'Suggestions for the Resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference' on 5 October. It provided

50. Cobban, op.cit., p.90
51. Carter, op.cit., p.294
52. Dayan, op.cit., pp.65-67; Carter, op.cit., p.293
that the Arabs be represented by a United Arab delegation including the Palestinian Arabs. After the opening session the conference would split into three working groups, but West Bank and Gaza issues could be discussed in a working party consisting of Israel, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Arabs. The agreed basis for negotiations would be SCRs 242 and 338.\textsuperscript{53} This document was a concession from the Israelis because it committed them to discussing West Bank issues with Palestinian Arabs, but it was viewed as an American retreat and an act of bad faith by some of the Arabs involved in the proximity talks as it made no mention of a Palestinian entity.

Despite the Dayan-Carter paper there were still extensive differences between the American and Israeli positions and even more between Israel and the Arabs. The New York talks had failed to bring the Geneva Conference appreciably closer. Israel still refused to withdraw or stop Jewish settlements on the West Bank. Dayan stated that the Israelis would walk out if the PLO attended or there were negotiations for a Palestinian state, and that no substantive border talks would be held with a united Arab delegation. The Arab states, with the possible exception of Egypt, were still insisting on a PLO presence at Geneva.\textsuperscript{54} Carter began to fear that the whole negotiating process was breaking down. Assad was refusing to go to Geneva 'on any reasonable terms'. Jordan would only go with general Arab approval. Saudi Arabia still

\textsuperscript{53} Dayan, op.cit.,pp.70,71.

\textsuperscript{54} The Times, 10-10-1977
insisted that the Palestinian issue was the top priority. Carter was also facing serious concern in the American Jewish Community and Congress.\textsuperscript{55} He decided to appeal to Sadat for help and wrote to him:

\begin{quote}
I was deeply impressed and grateful for your promise to me that, at a crucial moment, I could count on your support when obstacles arose in our common search for peace in the Middle East. We have reached such a moment and I need your help.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Sadat Goes to Jerusalem}

Sadat too was concerned about the stagnation of the negotiations. With its economy still deteriorating, Egypt needed a settlement. But both Syria and Jordan were demanding full Israeli withdrawal which they were clearly not going to get. After receiving Carter's letter Sadat concluded:

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\textsuperscript{55} Carter, op.cit., p.295

\textsuperscript{56} Carter, op.cit., p.295
...that we were about to be caught up in a terrible vicious circle precisely like the one we'd lived through over the last thirty years. And the root cause was that very psychological barrier... We were about to be caught up in ...formal procedures and moved away from matters of substance.57

Sadat decided a dramatic move was required to break the impasse. While groping for an appropriate move, he was visited by an envoy of Assad who 'reiterated the same words that had for years dominated the Arab world', that the United States did not want to solve the problem and couldn't if it wished.58 On 4 November Sadat again called for preparatory peace talks to get a Geneva Conference convened but there was no response.59

Assured in the secret talks with Tuhami that Israel was prepared to make extensive concessions to Egypt, Sadat now decided to launch his dramatic peace initiative. He announced on 9 November that he was prepared to go to speak to the Knesset itself.60 The initial Israeli reaction was sceptical, but Begin invited him to address the Knesset. Sadat arrived on 19 November.

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57. Sadat, op.cit., p.302
58. ibid., p.305
60. The Times, 10-11-1977
61. The Times, 11-11-1977
Sadat told the Knesset that Egypt would not make a separate peace treaty; he insisted that Israel must withdraw from all occupied territory and that the Palestinian problem was the crux of the issue and could only be solved if Israel negotiated with the Palestinians. He listed five principles on which an agreement should be based: the termination of the occupation; the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination and their own state; the right of all countries in the region to live in peace within secure, guaranteed borders; the commitment of all countries to solve disputes by peaceful means; and the termination of the existing state of belligerency in the area. This strong statement was offset by his presence in Jerusalem and by his comment: 'We welcome you to live among us and will accept any guarantees you wish'.

Begin's reply gave little hope that Israel would easily accede to those demands. He stated that no subject should be non-negotiable, but he pointed out that all creeds had access to their holy places since 1967 and 'we can guarantee it will be so forever', implying that Israel had no intention of giving up East Jerusalem. He said Israel would take part in a Geneva Conference with any Arab State. Negotiations would be held on the basis of SCR 242 and 338. The peace had to be complete, but Israel would be willing to hold prior talks with Egypt.

62. The Times, 21-11-1977
63. Dayan, op.cit., p.302
Sadat was vilified in the Arab world for going to Jerusalem. He was accused of breaking Arab solidarity, sabotaging the Geneva Conference and planning to negotiate a separate peace. Although this was the ultimate result of his visit, he had hoped it would lead to a much more generous response from Israel which would have enabled at least Jordan to join the negotiations and could have resulted in a reconvened Geneva Conference and a comprehensive peace. In his memoirs he wrote of needing to overcome the psychological barrier responsible for Israel quibbling over trivia.\footnote{64}{Sadat, op.cit., p.302} In announcing his willingness to go to Jerusalem he said he would agree to Israeli demands for the Geneva Conference 'because when I get to Geneva neither Israel nor the world will be able to stop me from demanding the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to establish a separate homeland'.\footnote{65}{The Times, 5-11-1977} Sadat had hoped to overcome the procedural wrangling and intransigence displayed by Israel, Syria and the PLO. 'I will lead the way and they will come puffing behind me', he asserted.\footnote{66}{Weizman, op.cit., p.71}

Despite the failure of Israel or the other Arabs to follow his lead, Sadat tried for over a year to induce the Israelis to make concessions to the Palestinians. Sadat's hopes that his visit would result in the convening of the Geneva Conference were quickly shattered. Begin had

\footnote{64}{Sadat, op.cit., p.302}
\footnote{65}{The Times, 5-11-1977}
\footnote{66}{Weizman, op.cit., p.71}
made no generous offer and the Arab states quickly united in malediction of Sadat. On 22 November Assad and Arafat jointly condemned Sadat's visit, calling on 'the great Egyptian people and its intrepid army...to resist this treason to the Arab Nation'. Sadat retaliated by closing the PLO office and radio station in Cairo. On 2 December 1977 a Tripoli summit among Libya, Syria, Algeria, Iraq, South Yemen and the PLO constituted themselves into the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front and called for a freeze of diplomatic relations with Egypt; Sadat broke off diplomatic relations with them.

Many Israelis experienced mixed feelings about Sadat's visit. It led to 'a deep personal crisis' for Begin who wished to be the provider of peace but was unwilling to depart from his vision of a greater Israel; while he had no ties with Sinai, he would not part with the West Bank or Gaza. Defence Minister Weizman feared that Israel would be 'besmirched in the eyes of her friends if it did not respond adequately' and that Sadat 'had laid siege to the sympathies of the United States' and was costing Israel its position as the 'cosseted Godchild of the Western world'. Sadat's visit exposed deep divisions in Israeli society.

The Carter administration initially feared that Sadat's Jerusalem

67. Cobban, op.cit., p.93
68. New York Times, 6-12-1977
69. Weizman, op.cit., pp.18,71
odyssey would result in a separate peace which would delay a Geneva Conference indefinitely and push the United States out of the peace process. However it rallied to assist Sadat; Vance sought approval from world leaders while Carter announced support for Sadat's mission. Sadat's journey to Jerusalem appeared to have thrust the United States from centre stage but over the ensuing months it became apparent that US participation was still essential if any concrete results were to be achieved.

70. The Age, 19-11-1977, p.21

71. The Age, 7-12-1977; The New York Times, 7-12-1977
Chapter 3: From Jerusalem to Camp David

Following Sadat's visit several attempts to negotiate concrete agreements failed because Sadat sought an almost complete Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land in return for recognition and security guarantees. The Begin Government, elected on a platform of Greater Israel, wanted agreement with Egypt but was determined to retain control of the Biblical lands of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. The Americans were soon back in the centre of negotiations as the Israelis and Egyptians failed to reach agreement.

Moderate Arab states had not joined the 'Steadfastness Front' in condemning Sadat's visit to Jerusalem nor did they publicly support it. Vance was unable to produce such support during his visit in mid-December. Hussein, unable to effect a reconciliation between Egypt and Syria,\(^1\) was unwilling to risk his throne by offering support alone. Assad rejected any involvement in Sadat's peace initiative, telling Vance that it had wrecked all efforts towards a comprehensive settlement.\(^2\) Nor was Saudi Arabia prepared to endorse the initiative publicly. Sadat asked Vance to ensure that Begin agreed to withdraw to

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1. *The Times*, 8-12-1977, p.6
2. *The Times*, 14-12-1977, p.6
virtually the 1967 borders and deal with the Palestinians fairly so that Jordan and Syria could be brought into the negotiations. Begin was not interested in the Cairo Conference becoming the final step towards a Geneva Conference. ³

In the face of such negative responses the Cairo Conference was downgraded from a meeting of foreign ministers to one of senior officials. It opened on 14 December with delegates from Egypt, Israel, the United Nations and the United States. Egypt demanded that Israel return to its pre-1967 borders and allow the establishment of a Palestinian state; Israel refused. 'No agreement was reached on a single issue.' ⁴

Begin's Sinai and Autonomy Plans

The preeminent position of the United States was demonstrated when Begin took a plan for West Bank autonomy to Carter in Washington before presenting it to the Israeli Cabinet. This plan would grant Palestinian Arab residents some local authority and abolish the Israeli military government. He also proposed an Israel-Egypt peace treaty which

provided for a staged withdrawal from most of Sinai. Buffer and
demilitarised zones and limited force areas would protect Israel. The
two Sinai military airfields and the settlements would remain under
Israel's control. Carter thought the West Bank proposal unacceptable
but the Sinai offer more forthcoming. He failed to make his
reservations about the autonomy plan clear to Begin, a fact which was
continually resurrected in later negotiations.

On 22 December Begin's proposals were approved by Cabinet in a seven
hour meeting, with Jewish settlers from the West Bank demonstrating
outside. The plan was accepted overwhelmingly by the Knesset on 28
December, despite some criticism of an 'excessively generous' opening
position. The plan however was likely to be seen as unacceptable, not
excessively generous, by Sadat who told Defence Minister Weizman in
Cairo on 20 December that Israel must withdraw fully from the Sinai and
find a solution to the Palestinian problem.

On Christmas Day Begin presented his proposals to Sadat in Ismailia
'in tedious detail'. Sadat rejected both, demanding a full Israeli
withdrawal and the establishment of a Palestinian entity. The two
could not even agree on the wording of a joint statement for the press,

8. Weizman, op.cit., p.132
but did however agree to establish two committees, one political and one military, to negotiate detailed proposals for the Cairo Conference which would then be upgraded to foreign minister level. The fruitless Ismailia summit was denounced by the Palestinians and Syrians while Pravda asserted that the use of the Geneva Conference as a screen, to cover separate deals would not be tolerated.

Carter met Sadat briefly at Aswan following Carter's comment that he would prefer 'a Palestinian entity linked to Jordan and Israel'. 'This,' claimed Sadat, 'is making my job difficult.' Substantial agreement was reached and Carter listed three principles which could provide the basis of an Egypt-Israeli agreement. A true peace would entail normal relations, not just non-belligerency. Israel must withdraw from territories occupied in 1967 to secure recognised borders. The legitimate rights of the Palestinians to participate in the determination of their own future must be recognised. This statement was greeted with approval by the Egyptians, derision by the Palestinians and unease by the Israelis. Begin rejected self-determination as tantamount to a Palestinian state which would be

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a Soviet-controlled PLO base. After the failure of the Ismailia Conference it became clear that Egypt was demanding more for a treaty than Israel was prepared to give. The Egyptian press castigated Begin and provoked reciprocal hostility and distrust in Israel. Sadat's insistence that the Israeli settlements be removed was met by a threat from Begin to withdraw his peace proposals. 'The Israelis do not burn settlements,' he asserted. Sharon proposed to create new settlements in Sinai to divert hostility from the existing ones. The hastily planned settlements, often an old bus and a rusting water derrick, were shown around the world and led to virulent Egyptian hostility and American criticism. Carter claimed with exasperation: 'Whenever we seemed to be having some success with the Arabs, Begin would proclaim the establishment of another group of settlements.' It was not only in the Sinai but on the West Bank that the Begin Government's settlement policies were to prove an obstacle to peace.

14. The Age, 10-1-1978, p.7
Failure of the Political and Military Committees

In this atmosphere of escalating hostility the Political Committee met in Jerusalem on 15 January. A dispute arose over the agenda before the meeting even began and Vance was forced to mediate. The Egyptians demanded a specific Israeli commitment to withdraw from Sinai, Golan, the West Bank and Gaza. Israel was only prepared to state that Israel would withdraw from territories occupied in the recent conflict and grant administrative autonomy to the Palestinians. Vance prepared several draft statements of intent but none were acceptable. Before this issue was resolved, the Egyptian delegation was ordered home by Sadat who stated:

Mr Karmel was returning because it had become apparent from the declarations of the Prime Minister of Israel and its foreign minister that Israel insists on presenting partial solutions that cannot lead to the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the area.

17. Atherton’s Evidence before US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Middle East Peace Process, 28-6-1978, p.4
18. Dayan, op.cit., p.112
19. The Age, 20-1-1978, p.7; Weizman claims that Begin insulted the fiftyish Karmel at the welcoming dinner by addressing him as ‘my young friend’ and delivering a pedantic Jewish history lecture before outlining an uncompromising Israeli position after they had agreed not to make public political speeches. See Weizman, op.cit., pp.193-195.
The Military Committee met in Cairo both before and after the Political Committee fiasco. At its first meeting Weizman found the atmosphere embittered by the 'dummy settlements being created in the Sinai'. Sadat warned that his people would never consent to a solution that offered less than the return of the whole Sinai to Egyptian sovereignty 'including your settlements and airfields. It would be the seed of the next war'. The Military Committee adjourned deadlocked. General Gamasy, however, had shown willingness to patiently pursue peace and the meeting did not end in hostility.

Following the failure of these direct talks, the United States again took a prominent role. While Ambassador Atherton shuttled between Egypt and Israel to achieve agreement on the statement of intent, Sadat flew to Washington to seek American leverage against what he saw as Israel's failure to 'respond adequately to his peace initiative'. He told Carter that he had been completely disillusioned with Begin's ridiculous position at Ismailia and his rejection of the moderates' advice while accepting Sharon's proposals to increase the settlements. 21

Carter found Sadat flexible on most issues other than allowing Israeli settlements to remain in Sinai. He supported most of Sadat's claims and issued a statement reiterating the points he had made at

Aswan. He asserted that SCR 242 covered all fronts, requiring Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and that no just and lasting settlement was possible without a solution to the Palestinian problem. He reaffirmed the traditional US position that Israeli settlements in occupied territories were contrary to international law and an obstacle to peace. After Sadat's departure Carter tried to avoid a clash with the American Jewish community by claiming that the Israeli Government's obdurate rejection of the applicability of SCR 242 to the West Bank and Gaza and the settlements prevented Hussein from joining the peace talks. Many American Jewish leaders were also critical of Begin's policies.

Sadat's visit to the United States successfully gained more understanding from American public opinion for the Arab cause and emboldened Carter to take a stronger stand against Israel.

US-Israeli Relations Deteriorate

The alarmed Israelis chose not to respond to the President's

23. Carter, op.cit., p.308; Dayan, op.cit., p.116
statement. They did react sharply though to a statement by Vance on 10 February which reiterated that the Sinai settlements were illegal and asked that 'a homeland for the Palestinians linked to Jordan should be created'. The Israeli Cabinet's strongly critical reply claimed Vance's statement contradicted Carter's reception of Begin's plans in December, that the settlements were legal and that the plan for a Palestinian entity 'would lead to the establishment of a terrorist ruled Palestinian state which would put Israel's existence in mortal danger.'

Incensed, Carter reaffirmed his administration's opposition to Israel's settlements in occupied territory. On the same day the administration announced plans to sell advanced aircraft to Egypt, Israel and Saudi Arabia. Relations between Israel and the United States plummeted as Israel tried to rally its supporters in the United States, particularly in Congress, to block the aircraft sales to Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Dayan visited the United States in February. While Sadat feared the power of the Israel lobby and Carter tried to gain its support, Dayan was alarmed to find the press and American-Jewish organisations [


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critical of the Begin Government for inflexibility, following a mistaken settlements policy and failing to reciprocate Sadat's gesture. They subjected him to hostile questioning and Dayan was provoked into berating 'Zionists who dwelt comfortably within the United States'. Dayan spoke 'bitterly at press conferences and on national television against the American claim that Israel's settlements were illegal and an obstacle to peace'.

Carter pointed out to Dayan the importance of Israel making some declaration of intent to withdraw from the West Bank to encourage Hussein to join the peace process before Sadat was forced to recant. He wanted a five year interim period after which the Palestinians could choose a link with Israel or Jordan or to continue the interim arrangement. Dayan informed Carter that the Israeli Government did not agree that SCR 242 applied to all fronts and would refuse to give a commitment to withdraw prior to peace negotiations. This statement resulted in yet another dispute between Israel and the United States which became public in early March when Begin informed the United States that his Government did not:

accept the American view that a key United Nations Security Council Resolution obligates Israel to withdraw occupation

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29. Dayan, op.cit., p.118
30. The Age, 5-2-1978, p.11.
31. Dayan, op.cit., pp.119,120
forces from at least part of the West Bank and Gaza. 32

After a fruitless resumption of the Military Committee talks in Cairo, Defence Minister Weizman discussed Israel's military requirements with Defense Secretary Harold Brown in Washington. Like Dayan he encountered an atmosphere of hostility from the press. Brown was non-committal on the arms requests, but warned that Israel's credibility had been eroded by the settlements issue and implied that Begin was an obstacle to peace, a position also put by Carter.33 Jewish leaders were also critical, warning that the settlements policy 'could spark off a wave of anti-Semitism'. Congressional supporters of Israel like Senator Jackson tore their hair in despair as:

We were depicted as a rabble of tricksters and scoundrels, petty hucksters from the international flea market, the direct descendants of Shylock.34

Weizman, who had strongly opposed the current settlements policy in Cabinet and whose views were publicly known, finally threatened to resign if work on yet another West Bank settlement was not halted immediately. 35

34. Weizman, op.cit., p.250
35. Weizman, op.cit., p.250
Israel Invades Lebanon

On 11 March a Palestinian guerilla group hijacked a bus on the main coastal road to Tel Aviv. Thirty-five Israelis were killed in the subsequent shootout and in retaliation Israel launched a large scale invasion to wipe out the Palestinian bases in Southern Lebanon. Carter strongly condemned the PLO raid, but he also considered the Israeli invasion "a terrible overreaction" and was particularly disturbed at the use of American cluster bombs contrary to agreement.\textsuperscript{36} He demanded that Israel withdraw from Lebanon.

Sadat strongly condemned the invasion. Egypt, however, took no action that would jeopardise the peace process. Sadat was criticised by Arab states for his failure to support a fellow member of the Arab League, but he had been clashing with the PLO himself. Their vitriolic abuse and calls for his overthrow had been followed by the murder of his journalist friend Sibai.\textsuperscript{37}

Relations between Israel and the United States deteriorated still further when Carter sponsored a motion in the Security Council calling for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon and authorising a peace keeping

\textsuperscript{36} Carter, op.cit., pp.310,311.

\textsuperscript{37} The Age, 16-3-1978

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force. The motion was pushed through quickly despite protests by
Israel's ambassador Dinitz, leading to an Israeli complaint that:

The American behaviour was unprecedented and brutal. They
brushed off requests from a friendly head of government like
so many flies. 38

On 21 March Begin met Carter in Washington. The atmosphere, cooled by
Israel's settlement policy and invasion of Lebanon, became glacial
after Begin had stated his position which was dubbed 'Begin's six
noes': not to withdraw politically or militarily from any part of the
West Bank or grant Palestinians real authority; not to stop the
construction or expansion of settlements; not to withdraw Israeli
settlers from the Sinai or acknowledge that SCR 242 applied to the West
Bank or Gaza. Begin protested that this was an entirely negative
presentation of Israel's attitude, but did not deny its accuracy. 39
Carter contrasted this attitude with concessions Sadat had been
prepared to make: not to oppose an Israeli military presence on the
West Bank or demand an independent Palestinian state, to accept some
border modifications, and to defer sovereignty claims for five years. 40
Begin's visit had left the two countries divided on what Vance called
'absolutely fundamental differences over Israel's refusal to withdraw

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38. Newsweek, 20-3-1978, p.33
40. ibid.,
from occupied Arab land'.

The contradictory reactions of Jewish Americans towards the dispute paralleled an apparent decline in national consensus in Israel itself where Begin's policies were provoking substantial opposition. The 'Peace Now' Movement quickly gathered adherents and thirty-five thousand supporters demonstrated in Tel Aviv under the slogan: 'Peace is preferable to an enlarged Israel'. The right wing Gush Emunim, orthodox Jews dedicated to Greater Israel, held counter-demonstrations, accusing Begin of treachery for proposing to return Sinai to Egypt. While American Jews were critical of Carter, many also questioned Begin's wisdom in expanding Jewish settlements on the West Bank 'while Sadat was achieving such public relations triumphs with his peace initiatives'. Strong opposition was expressed towards Begin's policies in Congress. In the talks between Begin and Carter both had:

vied with one another in threatening to employ what each viewed as his secret weapon: Congress, the Senate, the American Jewish Community.

After Begin had left, Carter continued attempts to maintain support for his policies. He told a group of Congressional leaders: 'The Peace

41. Newsweek, 3-4-1978, p.6.

42. Newsweek, 20-3-1978, p.33.

43. Weizman, op.cit., p.286

44. The Age, 25-3-1978.
Talks are over and I need your help'. The press began to speculate on whether the President of the United States had the power to compel or induce either Egypt or Israel to compromise.

But the peace talks had not come to a complete standstill. Weizman was invited to Cairo for talks with Sadat and General Gamasy. The protracted peace negotiations were also provoking opposition in Egypt. Sadat was being increasingly restrained by members of the Foreign Office reluctant to see Egypt's links with the Arab world jeopardised. The Israeli Cabinet, too, was divided; Weizman, known to advocate concessions, felt he was becoming an object of suspicion and decided to take Attorney-General Aharon Barak with him as a witness. In Egypt they found substantial support for negotiations and some resentment over the toll taken on Egypt by the Arab-Israeli wars. One Egyptian politician told Weizman: 'we are sick of being the bloodbank of the Arab world'. But no agreement could be reached as Egypt still wanted a statement of Israel's intention to withdraw from occupied Arab territory and to give the Palestinians some say in determining their own future which was not acceptable to Israel. Cairo radio announced the talks had failed and Egyptian officials were now convinced that an

44. Creighton Burns in The Age, 25-3-1978.
47. ibid., p.295
48. ibid., pp.295-302
agreement could not be reached while Begin was Prime Minister. This sentiment was echoed by members of the Carter administration and Congress.

While the continuing failure of the peace talks indicated the finite nature of US influence, the continual appeals to it by both parties showed it still played a crucial role. Dayan returned to Washington on 26 April, indicating the need Israel felt to heal the rift between the two countries, but still only on its terms. He reiterated that Israel could not withdraw from the West Bank nor confine its soldiers to limited positions. Israel wanted to discuss concrete proposals for a treaty with Egypt, not declarations of principle. The question of sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza should be considered at the end of the five year transitional period. Vance gave Dayan two questions the US Government wanted answered: Was Israel prepared to give an undertaking that sovereignty would be decided after five years? If so, how would the decision be taken? Dayan said they would have to be discussed by Cabinet. Begin reiterated this in a brief meeting with Carter.

49. Newsweek, 10-4-1978, p.15

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50. Dayan, op.cit., p.129-133.

Israel's Answers

After agonizing over Vance's questions for several weeks the Israeli Cabinet finally provided answers that were vague and non-committal, reflecting the divisions in the Cabinet. While stressing the necessity to continue the peace process, the statement continued that:

The Government of Israel agreed that five years after the application of administrative autonomy in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, the nature of future relations between the parties would be considered and agreed upon at the suggestion of any of the parties. The parties will conduct negotiations between them with the participation of representatives of Judea, Samaria and Gaza as elected under the administrative autonomy plan.

Splits in the Israeli Cabinet began to surface during the formulation of these replies. Begin, depressed and in poor health, indicated that he might resign if they were not supported. This would have forced the whole government to resign. The four DMC ministers did not support the answers but it was with Defence Minister Weizman that an open dispute erupted. Weizman asserted that 'this approach would bring disaster' and that he would have to prepare the army for another war. Speculation grew that Weizman would be forced to resign.

The Carter administration was no more impressed with the Israeli responses than Weizman, but it issued a more temperate rebuke,

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52. Dayan, op.cit., p.137

53. Newsweek, 3-7-1978, pp.17,18.
regretting their inadequacy. More disturbing to many Israelis was the condemnation of Senator Jacob Javits, a Republican from New York and one of Israel's firmest supporters in Congress. He publicly disagreed with an Israeli Government for the first time in twenty years, declaring 'that the US Government was entitled to a more positive reply' and 'that Israel was sending the wrong signals at the wrong time'.

The answers were also unsatisfactory to Sadat who was experiencing increasing domestic opposition to both his financial policies and his peace negotiations. The upsurge of Islamic fundamentalism edged closer to Egypt, heightening tension, and senior military leaders were now expressing reservations about continuing the negotiations. A message from Egypt via the Israeli military mission stated:

You have left the Palestinians nothing to hope for. We are extremely disappointed in Israel's replies to the United States.

With the peace process again halted, Vice President Mondale visited both Egypt and Israel. He was given an Egyptian peace plan which called on Israel to remove its troops and settlements from all occupied land including East Jerusalem. Egypt and Jordan would supervise the

54. The Times, 22-6-1978, p.7
55. Newsweek, 3-7-1978, pp.17,18.
56. Weizman, op.cit., p.312.
territories in consultation with the elected representatives of the Palestinians until a final settlement was achieved. Arrangements would be made to ensure Israel’s security. This plan was rejected as completely unacceptable by Israel’s Cabinet, but it decided to send Dayan to London for direct talks with Egypt’s Foreign Minister, to be chaired by Vance.

Leeds Castle

Just before the Conference, Sadat talked in Austria with Chancellor Kreisky, Willie Brandt and Shimon Peres (now Israeli opposition leader). They issued a communique which, Sadat said, would be an acceptable basis for negotiations. It suggested that: Israel and Egypt should resume negotiations; peace should be based on normal friendly relations between Middle East states; Israel should withdraw to secure boundaries as stipulated by UN Security Council resolutions; and Palestinians were to participate in the peace process.  

Weizman was then invited to Austria for talks, ostensibly with General Gamasy, but also with Sadat himself, leading to speculation


58. International Herald Tribune, 10-7-1978
that Sadat was trying to isolate Begin politically. Sadat warned Weizman that time was running out. The mandate for the United Nations peace keeping force in Sinai expired in October and he was considering resigning if no progress had been made by then. He requested a gesture of conciliation from Israel such as returning the town of El Arish to Egypt. Such were the tensions in the Israeli Cabinet that Weizman was reprimanded for talking to Sadat, rather than Gamassy. Cabinet resolved that ministers could only have contacts with their opposite number.

The Leeds Castle Conference, convened by the Americans to consider the transitional arrangements and final status of the West Bank and Gaza, opened on 18 July. No great hopes were held for an agreement. The Egyptians presented in detail the plan whose outlines Begin had already rejected. It provided for Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza; a five year transitional period during which Egypt and Jordan respectively would participate with elected Palestinians in the supervision of the territories, after which the Palestinian people would be able to determine their own future. Mutual security arrangements would be devised. The Israelis resubmitted their autonomy plan, rejected by the Egyptians as inadequate and too vague about the sovereignty decision. The Egyptians also wanted Palestinian

60. The Times, 18-7-1978
61. Dayan, op.cit., p.141
refugees to have either the right to return to their homeland or compensation. 62

Vance summed up the points on which both sides agreed. The present military government should be abolished; there should be a five year transition period during which elected Palestinian Arabs should run their own affairs; Jordan and Egypt, as well as Israel and the Palestinians, should have a role during the transition; and special security arrangements were needed to protect Israel. 63 Substantial differences remained. The Israelis insisted that they wanted 'coexistence but neither settlers nor troops withdrawn' while the Egyptians (supported by the US delegation, according to Dayan) 'proposed arrangements which would lead to eventual Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian self-determination'. 64

The Americans, consulting separately with the Egyptians and the Israelis, offered substantial security guarantees to the Israelis should they withdraw. Dayan stated that there was no means of security he would exchange for the territories and formulated a three point 62. Dayan, op.cit., pp.142,145.

63. Vance's evidence before the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations, Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, August 4,1978, pp.55,56.
64. Dayan, op.cit., pp.145,146.
65. Dayan and Begin constantly disagreed about the amount of freedom a negotiator should have. Begin believed that he should give prior consent to proposals while Dayan felt he could not negotiate in such a straitjacket.
statement of position for Vance which was later accepted by his government. Israel would not accept a peace treaty based on withdrawal to the pre-June 1967 lines with Arab sovereignty there, even if accompanied by security arrangements. Israel would consider an Arab proposal based on territorial compromise. If the Israeli proposal for self-rule were accepted, Israel was prepared to discuss the question of sovereignty. Vance felt this and the Dayan-Karmal discussions on an interim settlement indicated progress. The Conference adjourned with the expectation of a further meeting in Sinai in a few weeks. Dayan felt that the Conference 'was of the highest importance, proving a milestone in the peace negotiations'. He concluded that the Egyptians really wanted peace as they had not walked out in reaction to his uncompromising position on the West Bank.

While Dayan believed peace was now achievable, Sadat concluded that Israel's intransigence was making agreement impossible. Dayan's publicised comment that 'the Israeli army was sitting on the Golan Heights, West Bank and most of the Sinai and if the Egyptians don't want to come to an agreement, the army would stay where it was', reinforced his view. So did Israel's failure to make any genuine

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65. Dayan, op.cit., p.146.
67. Vance, op.cit., p.215
68. Dayan, op.cit., p.140.
concessions and Begin's public rejection of Sadat's request for the return of El Arish. Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia urged a reconciliation between Egypt and the Steadfastness states. The Saudis believed that Sadat's peace initiative had failed and direct talks with Israel should be replaced by an Arab summit and a return to a Geneva-type conference. Sadat also faced internal unrest. His own advisers and some army officers were uneasy at Israel's repeated refusal of further concessions. Given such mounting opposition, and hoping to isolate Israel and encourage American intervention, Sadat refused to resume talks in the Sinai unless Israel agreed to the principle of evacuating all lands occupied since 1967. He then expelled the Israeli military mission and gave a sabre-rattling speech in Alexandria in which he accused Begin of being like a cowman who steals your cow and then tries to sell it back to you.

Sadat's dramatic visit to Jerusalem seemed to have led nowhere. The peace process appeared to have broken down irrevocably.

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70. International Herald Tribune, 31-7-1978


73. Newsweek, 7-8-1978, pp.9,10.
Chapter 4: The Camp David Accords

Carter became increasingly apprehensive about the deteriorating Egyptian-Israeli relationship and Sadat's moves towards reconciliation with Syria. Sadat set October, when the mandate of the Sinai monitoring force expired, as a deadline for achieving results by negotiation. 'Sadat was very frustrated and angry and seemed willing to precipitate some sort of crisis.'\(^1\) To break the impasse Carter decided to hold a summit at Camp David and sent Vance to the Middle East in early August to invite the two leaders. Carter's direct participation meant his prestige became involved at a time when his popularity was waning and mid-term Congressional elections were approaching.

Begin accepted the invitation immediately. His handling of the peace negotiations had been severely criticised within Israel and he could not risk turning his back on them. He made no new commitments to Vance but said he would try hard to reach a 'permanent partial agreement',\(^2\) thus ominously presaging Israel's attempts to gain a separate peace with Egypt.

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1. Carter, op.cit., p.315
Sadat accepted the invitation more readily than expected, as it provided an acceptable reason to retreat from his previous refusal to negotiate further with Israel until it had made a commitment on withdrawal. The new element was the American pledge to participate in the talks as 'full partners', something Sadat had long sought.  

Syrian leaders accused Sadat of 'high treason' and moving towards a separate agreement. The Soviet Union claimed the United States was 'trying to scuttle a Geneva peace conference' with a meeting that was 'a new point in the unprincipled ... policy of negotiating a separate Egyptian-Israeli deal for peace ... aimed at strengthening American imperialism in the Middle East'.

With Egypt and Israel holding substantially unchanged positions, prospects for a comprehensive peace agreement looked dim. Undeterred the Carter administration prepared intensively for the summit, aiming at a comprehensive settlement and a draft Egyptian-Israeli agreement. Vance and Brzezinski were instructed to prepare briefing books for the President without consulting each other. Brzezinski warned Carter:

you will have to persuade Begin to make more substantive

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5. International Herald Tribune, 11-8-1978
concessions, while convincing Sadat to settle for less than an explicit Israeli commitment to full withdrawal and Palestinian autonomy.\(^7\)

To prevent either side manipulating press reports it was decided that all participants should remain at Camp David and press releases should be made only by Jody Powell. This media blackout was surprisingly successful and media speculation could only cite 'Israeli diplomatic sources aware of the general discussion' or 'informants close to the Egyptian delegation'.\(^8\) By isolating negotiations from public opinion, concessions from Begin and Sadat were formalised and signed before being subjected to attacks from radical Arabs or right-wing Israelis.

Another vital part of the preparation was a round of meetings held by Carter and his aides with leaders of Congress and Jewish organisations. Their reactions strengthened Carter's resolve in clashes with Begin.\(^9\) Carter had learned from his early clashes with the Israeli lobby to seek their acquiescence in advance.

\(^7\) Brzezinski, op.cit., p.253.


\(^9\) Carter, op.cit., p.322.
Opening Positions

After arriving at Camp David, Begin and Sadat each held talks with Carter and outlined their negotiating positions. Begin favoured an agreement on general principles only, disapproved of American proposals and insisted that a Ford-Kissinger commitment entitled Israel to see any such proposals first. Begin presented his plan for Palestinian autonomy and Sinai withdrawal, insisting that Israel must retain the Rafah settlements as a buffer between Gaza and Egypt and retain control of the Sinai airfields for up to five years with rights of continued use. Israeli forces must remain on the West Bank to prevent a PLO takeover.10

Carter warned Begin of the consequences of failure: the erosion of US influence, the vulnerability of moderate Arab states and increased opportunities for Soviet penetration. Carter proposed signed agreements encompassing Palestinian rights and an Egyptian-Israeli treaty. He warned that Sadat would never accept the Sinai settlements. Begin then objected to the wording of SCR 242, particularly 'the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war',

claiming that it did not apply to the West Bank and Gaza which were taken in a defensive war. Carter was discouraged by Begin's reiteration of 'rigid unimaginative positions' and his 'unwillingness to look at the subject in broader perspectives'.

When Sadat met Carter he claimed Begin wanted to keep the West Bank. Carter, despite his own reservations, explained the difficulty for Begin of changing long-standing opinions and warned that any proposals must be patently fair to Israel to get Congressional and public support. Sadat agreed with Carter that the summit should produce a firm framework for peace. He outlined Egypt's peace proposals which to Carter's dismay restated Egypt's maximalist position, demanding eventual Israeli withdrawal to the May 1967 boundaries, removal of all Israeli settlements, withdrawal from Arab Jerusalem and the right of unrestricted return of Palestinians. It blamed Israel for previous wars and demanded it:

Pay full and prompt compensation for the damage which resulted from the operations of its armed forces against the civilian population and installations, as well as its exploitation of natural resources in occupied territories.

Sadat indicated he would be flexible on all issues except land and sovereignty. He might agree to a full peace with normal relations and outlined how representation of Arabs and Palestinian refugees could be

12. Dayan, op.cit., p.162
handled by the governing authority. He accepted peacekeeping forces in Sinai, minor modifications in the West Bank borders and an undivided Jerusalem. Israeli military outposts could remain during the interim period but Israel must make a commitment to withdraw military forces and government at a specific time. He would continue to negotiate for the West Bank until King Hussein joined the peace process.\textsuperscript{13}

The other American negotiators, including Vance and Brzezinski, met the rest of the Israeli delegation. Both Dayan and Weizman felt Begin was too rigid over the settlements and claimed they sought genuine self-government for the Palestinians.\textsuperscript{14} Weizman also met Sadat and they concurred that a concrete agreement should be reached. Sadat said that it must cover the West Bank and Gaza as well as Sinai, or the Soviets would gain control of the whole region. Weizman was concerned too that Sadat’s aides were hardliners.\textsuperscript{15}

Begin and Sadat met initially on the second day. Carter saw Begin first to warn that Sadat’s opening paper was harsh but he would be flexible. Begin told Sadat that their positions were so far apart it would take months to reach agreement. Sadat replied that they should reach a comprehensive agreement here, not a partial or separate one. Begin said that sequential agreements should be considered, reviving

\textsuperscript{13} Carter, op.cit., pp. 340-342.
\textsuperscript{14} Brzezinski, op.cit., pp. 255, 256, 258.
\textsuperscript{15} Weizman, op.cit., pp. 348-350.
Carter's suspicion that Begin wanted to deal with Sinai but avoid West Bank-Gaza issues. Carter agreed with Sadat that all controversial issues should be addressed. Sadat stated he would not sign a Sinai agreement before a West Bank-Gaza accord. He then read his hardline proposals. The forewarned Begin restrained his reaction, saying he would have to consult with the Israeli delegation. Carter was at first pleased by his moderation but later believed that Begin had been relieved by the harshness of the paper, to which he continually referred, seeing it as clear evidence of the unreasonableness of the Egyptians.  

Begin discussed the Egyptian proposal with his negotiators who agreed that it must be rejected. Begin claimed the proposal was designed to force Israel to break up the conference and incur international condemnation. Sadat's demands for compensation incited an infuriated Begin to exclaim: 'what chutzpah! What impertinence!'  

The next morning Carter and Vance met Begin, Dayan and Weizman to discuss the Egyptian document. The irate Begin ignored Carter's suggestion that it be filed away. He insisted that the Sinai settlements could not be moved because of a national consensus that they stay. Begin bypassed Carter's attempts to steer the discussion

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17. Dayan, op.cit., p.162  
round to final borders and denounced Sadat’s plans. Carter, infuriated by this carping on what was only an opening position, demanded to know if Israel really wanted peace, claimed it was ridiculous to speak of Jordan overrunning Israel and suggested to Begin’s resentment that his autonomy plan was a subterfuge to enable Israel to keep the West Bank. Carter stressed Sadat’s courage in visiting Jerusalem and the protection a demilitarised Sinai and agreement with Egypt would give Israel. Begin, undiverted, returned to Sadat’s document again and demanded it be withdrawn. After comments in Hebrew from the other Israelis, he finally agreed to Carter’s suggestion that they say the proposals were unacceptable. \(^{19}\) Carter had attempted to shift Begin first with angry accusations, then with praise for Sadat and then by pointing to the advantages agreement would bring. He continued to use these methods.

Begin and Sadat, with Carter again mediating, then held their second meeting, at which there were several heated arguments. Begin derided the suggestion that Israel pay reparations to Egypt while Sadat accused Begin of wanting to keep settlements on Arab land. Begin asserted that he was returning all but 2,340 square miles of captured territory. Sadat claimed that basic principles, not details, should be discussed, pointing out that the ‘inadmissability’ phrase could not be ignored. ‘All restraint was gone, their faces were flushed.’ Begin asserted that no Israeli leader could advocate dismantling the Sinai

\[^{19}\text{Carter, op.cit., pp.346-350.}\]
settlements. Sadat pounded the table, shouting that he wanted Israel secure but land was not negotiable. The two then argued about sovereignty on the West Bank and responsibility for the war in Lebanon. When Sadat accused Begin of acting in bad faith, Carter intervened, saying they were both honourable men.  

The heated discussion continued for three hours with Carter occasionally intervening to restore calm. He then recapitulated the major areas of difference. They included the extent of demilitarisation of the Sinai, Israeli settlements, Palestinian self-government, Israeli forces and sovereignty on the West Bank and Gaza, Jerusalem, the type of peace, the return of refugees and the Sinai airfields. The meeting adjourned under considerable strain with Carter 'bemused about what to do next'. Sadat's prejudices about Begin appeared to have been reconfirmed. Begin however told the Israeli delegation that he was pleased the ice had been broken.  

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22. Dayan, op.cit., p.163.
The American Plan

With the Egyptian and Israeli positions still far apart and strong personal antagonism between Begin and Sadat, the Americans decided to produce an American plan. An earlier American proposal was revised by Carter, Vance, Brzezinski and the American 'professional team' of Middle East experts to take account of the stated Egyptian and Israeli positions and produce a final draft.²³

Carter had begun to see Begin as an immovable obstacle, believing that the American draft would be acceptable to Sadat and the Israeli people. It included: full peace with diplomatic and commercial relations, secure recognised borders and a phased Israeli withdrawal from a demilitarised Sinai, with a three month period to negotiate a Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and full autonomy for the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza. It proposed a five year transitional period to negotiate its permanent status and an Israeli force withdrawal to specified security locations. It included the 'inadmissability' phrase, the participation of Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians and Israelis in deciding the future of the West Bank and Gaza, the application of SCR 242 to the areas, recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and Jordanian participation in a West

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Bank police force. Some crucial issues were not mentioned lest they take Begin's sole attention, notably the Sinai settlements and airfields; the proposals were "seventeen pages of high explosive" for the Israelis.

Carter presented the American proposal to the Israelis on Sunday 10 September. He reminded Begin that agreement with Egypt would preclude any successful Arab attack on Israel but claimed his task would be hopeless unless both sides accepted SCR 242. Begin asked for time, reminding Carter again of the US commitment to coordinate any US proposals with Israel. Carter insisted on explaining the document. Begin, 'white and scowling', immediately attacked the inclusion of the 'inadmissibility' phrase, claiming that the Six Day War entitled Israel to change its frontiers and that the Americans had copied the Egyptian plan. Carter angrily charged Begin with wanting to keep land and using gobbledygook to reject SCR 242.

Begin analysed every sentence of the proposal and objected to almost every phrase about Palestinians including 'legitimate rights of the Palestinians' and 'Palestinian people'. Carter felt he wanted to renege on commitments already made on Palestinian autonomy by planting Israeli settlers throughout the region and retaining a veto over


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decisions of the self-governing authority. Carter angrily warned that no self-respecting Arab could accept such proposals. Begin infuriated Carter by seeking to insert the words 'Jerusalem the capital of Israel', a proposal ridiculed by Dayan. Begin was presenting an extreme Israeli position in retaliation for Sadat’s proposal; but unlike Sadat he clung 'tenaciously' to every point. Weizman and Dayan spoke to Begin at first in Hebrew and later in English to ‘tone down Begin’s obduracy’. The long and often angry presentation and analysis of the American proposals lasted far into the night.

Israel's Counter Proposals

The Israelis, treating the American document as a first draft, sought a formula for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the West Bank and Gaza which would not prescribe a total departure. Dayan concluded that the only way an agreement could be reached was to devise vague formulae. The Israelis decided to demand that Sinai settlers remain and under Israeli control, the removal of the 'inadmisability' phrase, and exclusion of any obligation either to withdraw Israeli forces from the West Bank and Gaza or to concede Palestinian rights to

self-determination or statehood. The Israeli delegation was 'not devoid of friction' especially when Begin branded opposition to his views as 'harmful to Israel'.

The Israelis' written suggestions were handed to the Americans on the morning of 11 September. They had excised the language in the preamble drawn from SCR 242, changed 'Palestinian People' to 'Palestinian Arabs', and 'Self-governing Authority' to 'Administrative Council'. Specific formulae for determining the final status of the West Bank and Gaza were replaced by vague proposals for dealing with outstanding issues, including Jerusalem, after the transitional period. They had refused any freeze on West Bank settlements.

A revised American document took account of the Israeli positions without accepting them all. It now contained items the Israelis had refused to approve as well as items Egypt was unlikely to accept.

The Egyptian Reactions to the Revised American Plan

Sadat met Carter to hear the Israeli position and receive the American document. He rejected the Israeli proposal to allow their settlers and

airfields to stay longer than two years but agreed to Carter's suggestion of three years. He demanded that Egyptian and Jordanian army patrols be allowed in Gaza and the West Bank, as he could not agree to an exclusive Israeli military occupation. He rejected Carter's proposal for full diplomatic, cultural and economic relations between Egypt and Israel because of Begin's attitude. Sadat then took the document for analysis by his advisers. 31

On Tuesday 12 September Sadat came to discuss the American document with Carter who, having observed a heated argument among the Egyptians, feared Sadat had come to announce his departure. To forestall this, Carter dwelt on the advantages to Egypt of a peace agreement with Israel. Sadat was only temporarily diverted. He claimed that as the United States 'struggled to deal with Israeli demands', they 'were putting forward proposals which would alienate the Arab world' especially over Jerusalem and the Palestinians. Sadat seemed about to retreat from earlier commitments. Carter explained how difficult this made his position and promised to invite Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia (the country Sadat was most concerned about) to Washington to explain the agreement. He pointed out that the Arabs were already familiar with this wording from the Aswan and Vienna statements. Moderate Arabs would realise that an agreement would free Egypt and the United States to deal with more acute problems in the Middle East. 32

Sadat remained at Camp David.

In their comments on the American proposals the Egyptians reinserted 'legitimate rights of the Palestinian people', demanded withdrawal of all Israeli settlements and the right of the Palestinian people to decide their own future after the transitional period. They reiterated that sovereignty for Gaza and the West Bank should be returned to Egypt and Jordan initially and Arab sovereignty restored to East Jerusalem. Verbally though, Brzezinski asserts, they did not raise too many objections. The Egyptian delegation was even more divided than the Israelis. While Sadat wanted some protection of Palestinian rights but was prepared to leave Jerusalem undivided, his advisers insisted on the stronger written position. They were united in their demand that all Israelis leave Sinai.

The Americans began the arduous task of redrafting the comprehensive agreement. Carter drew up a draft Egypt-Israeli agreement himself. He found that Weizman and Gamasy had made progress on delineating demilitarised zones, limited force zones and peace keeping forces. As Carter had already accepted the Egyptian position that all Israelis must withdraw from Sinai, Sadat accepted the draft intact.

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34. Brzezinski, op.cit.,p.264
Begin was now threatening an Israeli departure. He was still objecting violently to the 'inadmissability' phrase and was 'very emotional over the Sinai settlements'. He suggested ending the conference. Carter again tried to persuade Begin to modify his position, stating that Israeli opinion polls regularly showed a substantial majority of Israelis would accept an end to settlements, removal of the Israeli settlers in the Sinai and the yielding of substantial proportions of the West Bank for peace agreements. He accused Begin of giving up peace and normal relations with his only formidable enemy, unimpeded passage through strategic waterways and permanent security just to keep a few illegal settlers on Egyptian land.36 Begin told Brzezinski: 'My right eye will fall out, my right hand will fall off, before I ever agree to the dismantling of a single Jewish settlement'.37

Revision and Persuasion

The comprehensive framework was again redrafted and the Americans sought to persuade Begin that the principles of SCR 242 applied to all fronts and to transform Begin's self-rule proposals into a serious

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36. Carter, op.cit., p.385
37. Brzezinski, op.cit., p.263
arrangement for autonomy. Vance and Brzezinski believed too many concessions had already been made and tried to 'beef up the document to take account of the Egyptians' concerns'. They inserted a clause requiring direct elections after the treaty to enable residents of the West Bank and Gaza to participate in the final governmental form of the West Bank and proposed an Arab or Moslem flag be flown over Islamic sites in Jerusalem. The draft provided for a settlements freeze, recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, an elected self-governing authority for the West Bank and Gaza and a municipal council with representatives of all inhabitants to supervise Jerusalem.

For eleven hours on Wednesday 13 September Carter and Vance worked on this revised framework with Barak and el Baz. Carter felt that Barak was trusted by Begin and el Baz so hardline that anything he approved would be accepted by Sadat. Carter suggested removing the 'inadmissibility' phrase from the preamble and attaching the whole of SCR 242 to the agreement. This was accepted by el Baz in return for the removal of the phrase 'there shall be no more war between them' which he felt might cause a problem if Israel did not withdraw from Sinai. The dispute over terminology was solved by using Begin's

38. Vance, op.citt., p.222
39. Brzezinski, op.cit., p.266
40. Vance, op.cit., p.222
preferred 'Judea, Samaria and the Palestinian Arabs' in Hebrew and 'West Bank, and Palestinian People' in the English and Arabic texts. The Jerusalem clause proposed a united city with unimpeded access by all to holy places, to be managed by the respective faiths and a municipal council of inhabitants. Compromises were achieved but Barak could not negotiate on controversial issues like the settlements.\footnote{41} Vance and Brzezinski met Begin at lunch. He was outraged at the proposal for Jerusalem which he rejected outright, claiming it literally gave him palpitations.\footnote{42} Vance then discussed the revised draft with the Israelis. He had been instructed to take a firm line in the light of Begin's comments. The Israelis opposed the proposal that Palestinian elected representatives approve the final form of government for the West Bank and Gaza, claiming it was a referendum which would lead to a Palestinian state, and more extreme than the Aswan formula which they had reluctantly accepted. Begin stated that the summit was apparently going to end with an exchange of declarations as to why each side could not accept the other's position. Vance indicated that he was willing to return later. 'Barak, Rosenne and Rubenstein then started for the nth time to prepare a new text of our proposals.' The meeting was very heated with Vance growing 'very angry

\footnote{41}{Carter, op.cit., pp.387-388.}
\footnote{42}{Brzezinski, op.cit., p. 266}
\footnote{43}{Dayan, op.cit., pp.173-175.}
and red in the face'. \(^{43}\) Vance reported that he had had a 'humdinger of a row' with Begin and that Begin's position was unreasonable. \(^{44}\)

**Failure Looms**

A dejected Carter was beginning to feel the conference was doomed to a failure for which the American press and Jewish Associations would blame him. Sadat had rejected a proposal to defer a decision on the Sinai settlements. The comprehensive agreement was obstructed by Israeli attempts to ward off any proposal that could lead to a Palestinian state, thus precluding any genuine self-determination for the Palestinians which was the minimum Sadat could accept. The Egypt-Israeli agreement was stalled because the Israelis refused to withdraw fully from Sinai. While not publicly opposing Begin on a position he held so strongly, some Israelis concluded that the Sinai settlements should not prevent an agreement and were 'seeking ways of persuading Begin to accept their removal'. \(^{45}\)

On Thursday evening Dayan met Sadat at the urging of Weizman who believed that Dayan, influential with Begin, really wanted agreement.

\(^{43}\) Brzezinski, op.cit., p.267.

\(^{44}\) Weizman, op.cit., pp.368-369.
The Americans too thought Dayan was flexible and creative without realising how strongly he believed Israel should remain on the West Bank or how he resented what he saw as the arrogance of some of the Egyptians. Carter had urged Dayan not to discuss controversial issues. Dayan forgot this request when Sadat claimed that Israeli stubborness over the Sinai settlements was the major problem. Dayan heatedly replied that Egypt had previously rejected negotiations for war. Sadat warned that Karmel wanted to resign, el Baz was opposed to the American draft and that if Israel would not withdraw totally from Sinai, he would admit failure and leave. Dayan does not explain what else he said at this meeting to so incense Sadat; but on the following morning, Friday 15 September, a sombre Sadat told Vance there was no hope of agreement so he must go home.

Carter and Brzezinski had began planning to conclude the conference on Sunday evening but to maintain the news embargo until noon Monday so the President could make the first public statement. These plans to conclude the conference without open discord were shattered when Carter heard of Sadat's impending departure. Carter pointed out to Sadat that he would be violating a promise and harming US-Egyptian relations. Egypt would be blamed for the failure of the conference and Sadat's

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47. Vance, op.cit., p.224.

reputation as a peacemaker damaged. The futility of his journey to Jerusalem would be demonstrated and Egypt would eventually be pushed back into the Soviet camp. Sadat said he was leaving because Dayan had said Israel would not sign any agreement and Sadat's advisers opposed him signing an agreement with the US alone lest Israel use it as a starting point in future negotiations. Carter told Sadat that, if any nation rejected any part of the document, none of the proposals would remain in effect and warned that it could be the end of his Presidency and their friendship. Sadat agreed to stay.

Israel's Defence Minister Weizman, an ex-airforce commander, had concluded that as the Sinai airfields were an obstacle to peace they should be removed. At lunchtime he proposed to Harold Brown that the Americans build new airfields inside Israel. When they were completed Israel would evacuate the Sinai airfields. This proposal was accepted.

The next morning, Saturday 16 September, Carter tried to get either Sadat or Begin to change their position on the Sinai settlements. Sadat agreed to have UN forces stationed in the area and give the settlers three years grace, but was adamant that they must leave. Dayan told Carter he wanted the settlers to remain for twenty years but doubted whether Begin or the Knesset would approve their removal at

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all. Weizman supported the withdrawal of the settlers and felt the Knesset would approve too. The public unity of the Israeli delegation began to waver as it appeared that only the Sinai settlements were preventing agreement.

Barak, Dinitz and Dayan met Mondale, Vance, Brzezinski and Lewis to discuss the comprehensive framework. The Israelis still rejected anything that could lead to a Palestinian state with Dayan differentiating between the requirements of SCR 242 which applied only to a treaty with Jordan and those relating to autonomy for the Palestinians. The Americans rejected this attempt to avoid applying SCR 242 to the West Bank. Brzezinski noted that Dayan was skilled at creating 'vague and obfuscating formulas'. Barak indicated that Begin tended to total rigidity with his original reaction to any proposal a curt dismissal; only if pressed would he concede minimum merit to the position.

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52. Dayan, op.cit., p.175.
53. Brzezinski, op.cit., pp.268, 269
Hope and Despair

In order to persuade Begin to alter his position on the Sinai settlements, Israeli aide General Tamir asked his old friend, Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon, to ring Begin urging the evacuation of the Sinai settlements. Shortly afterwards Begin told the Israeli delegation that:

Arik Sharon had phoned him; to his surprise Sharon was in favour of evacuating the settlements if they were the last remaining obstacle to a peace agreement.\[54\]

That Saturday evening Carter met Begin, Dayan and Barak. He wished to show Begin how close the two sides were, but 'immediately Begin began talking about the blessed settlements'. Carter insisted; only the Sinai settlements were at issue. Begin proposed three months negotiation on a treaty and if agreement on all other issues was reached he would submit the settlements question to the Knesset. Carter repeatedly warned that Sadat would only agree to negotiate a treaty if Israel was already committed to total withdrawal from the Sinai. The embattled Begin shouted 'ultimatum', 'excessive demands', 'political suicide'.\[55\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{54}}\] Weizman, op.cit., p.370

Begin, disagreeing with his own delegation and pressured by the Americans, faced traumatic decisions. He wished to go down in history as a peacemaker but these pressures conflicted with the 'ingrained philosophy he had followed throughout his life'. He opposed any plans which would force Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, but feared opposition from his own supporters and the precedent set by the removal of the Sinai settlements.

After several hours, Begin capitulated and agreed to submit to the Knesset (and allow a conscience vote on) the question: If agreement is reached on all other Sinai questions, will the settlers be withdrawn? The discussion then turned to the Framework for Peace in the Middle East. A relatively harmonious discussion about the West Bank and Gaza ensued with only minor modifications being demanded by the Israelis.

Agreement appeared to have been reached at the last moment. However the exhausted negotiators had failed to specify clearly the agreement on settlement freezes.

On Sunday 17 September, the last day of the conference, Carter redrafted the language in both documents to include the minor modifications the two sides sought. Another crisis erupted when the Israelis saw a draft letter to Sadat re-stating the American position that Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem was illegal. An urgent


meeting was then held in which Carter refused to break the promise to
give Sadat a letter outlining the US position on Jerusalem which had
not changed since 1967. Barak accepted Carter’s proposal to delete
all quotations from the letter which would state that the US position
was as expressed by US ambassadors to the United Nations. Carter then
went to tell Sadat about the latest crisis.

Barak took the new draft to Begin explaining that it was proposed
both Begin and Sadat should attach letters stating their countries’
position on Jerusalem. Begin approved and when Barak told him the
President was ‘rattled by the ultimatums from all sides’, Begin phoned
Carter at Sadat’s hut to say the redrafted letter was acceptable.

Another setback occurred when Carter saw Begin’s draft of a Knesset
motion which stated that peace negotiations would commence after the
Knesset voted. Carter insisted it say negotiations would not commence
until after the Knesset had voted. Barak agreed but Begin claimed it
would put the Knesset under pressure. He then went to Sadat’s cabin.
Carter hastened there too ‘because I thought it was crucial for me to
intercede if they were arguing. I ran towards Sadat’s cabin.’ Begin
had been seeking Sadat’s support by asking if he thought the Knesset
should be under pressure. He took Sadat’s no as support for his

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60. Carter, op.cit., p.400.
position. Carter eventually formulated language that satisfied both
Begin and Sadat. 61 It was: If... all outstanding issues are agreed
upon, are you in favour of the removal of the Israeli settlers from the
northern and southern Sinai areas or are you in favour of keeping the
aforementioned settlers in those areas? 62

The Framework for Peace in the Middle East and the Framework for the
Conclusion of a Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel were signed late
that Sunday night at the White House.

The Accords: A Framework for Peace in the Middle East

The preamble stated that the agreed basis for the accord was SCR 242
in all its parts and future negotiation should be carried out with any
other neighbour on the basis of SCRs 242 and 338. It quoted selections
from SCR 242 calling for the respect of sovereignty, territorial
integrity and the right of states to live in peace within secure
recognised boundaries. It noted that parties could agree to security
arrangements on a reciprocal basis. The agreement was intended to
constitute a basis for peace between Israel and each of its neighbours

prepared to negotiate.

For the West Bank and Gaza it provided that Egypt, Israel and Jordan would negotiate on the modalities of a self-governing authority and the withdrawal and redeployment of Israeli forces. Palestinians could be included in the Egyptian and Jordanian delegation. Joint Israel-Jordan forces would patrol the area. This transitional phase would continue for five years while the final status of the region and its boundaries would be negotiated with Palestinian representatives. The final agreement would be submitted to a vote of the elected representatives of the Palestinians.

The Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty

Between Egypt and Israel

Egypt and Israel agreed to negotiate a peace treaty within three months to be implemented within two or three years. The principles of SCR 242 were to apply. The parties agreed to the full exercise of Egyptian sovereignty in Sinai and withdrawal of Israel's forces. The right of passage for Israeli ships through Suez and the recognition of the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba as international waterways were accepted. Force limitations were agreed to; Egypt was limited to one division in the Sinai west of the passes and only police and UN forces were to be stationed within the designated area west of the
international border and the Gulf of Aqaba. Israel was limited to four infantry battalions in a zone stretching for three kilometres inside the Israeli border. Early warning stations would be permitted and the UN forces could not be moved unless approved by all five permanent members of the Security Council. After an interim withdrawal normal relations between the two nations would be established. Three to nine months after the signing of the treaty Israeli forces would be withdrawn east of a line from el Arish to Ras Mohommed.

The Letters

Attached to the Accords were nine letters including one from Begin to Carter committing him to put the question of the Sinai settlers to the Knesset within two weeks and one from Sadat stating that Knesset agreement was a pre-requisite to peace negotiations. Sadat outlined Egypt's position that Arab sovereignty should be restored to Jerusalem; that there should be open access to holy places; that essential functions should be supervised by a joint municipal council. Begin asserted the Israeli position that Jerusalem 'is one city, indivisible, the capital of the State of Israel'. Carter's letter on Jerusalem stated that the US position remained that stated by US Ambassadors Goldberg and Yost in the UN General Assembly. Carter acknowledged that the terms 'Palestinian' and 'West Bank' would be construed by the
Israelis as 'Palestinian Arabs', 'Judea' and 'Samaria'.

Conclusions

Stated American positions conflicted mainly with Begin's and it was him they sought to budge. At the same time they were aware of the limits to the pressure they could exert with Carter's popularity low and Congressional elections approaching. Carter became increasingly exasperated with Begin's style of negotiating to the point where he expressed doubt about whether the man was quite sane.

With Sadat Carter's relations remained excellent. Sadat's style of negotiating was to present a hardline proposal, indicate areas where he would compromise and leave the details to Carter to negotiate. He wanted the removal of Israeli troops from Sinai, an Israeli commitment in principle to withdraw from occupied territories and the negotiation of some concrete proposal for Palestinian self-government. Although definite on Sinai withdrawal, he needed agreement on the other two to avoid condemnation from moderate Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia.

63. The Accords and letters are published in full in Dayan, op.cit., pp.321-331.

64. Brzezinski, op.cit., p.264.
which was financing his ailing economy. Also many Egyptians were committed to justice for the Palestinians. Thus Sadat had to hold out for the very concessions the Israelis were most reluctant to give, any proposals for a Palestinian state. However Sadat also valued American support and his friendship with Carter and did concede points at his request.

Carter cajoled, conciliated and berated the Israelis at Camp David. Begin made painful concessions but through Dogged persistence avoided others and ensured that the Framework for Peace was so vague it was unenforceable and its implementation was not linked to the Egypt-Israel treaty. Initially he insisted that the Sinai settlements remain permanently under Israeli control and wanted to avoid signing any agreement at the summit. He also objected to American proposals. Sadat however wanted formal agreements signed and American proposals. The Israelis sought to replace specific formulae for determining the final status of the West Bank and Gaza with vague proposals. The Americans rejected Israeli attempts to have them recognise the inapplicability of SCR 242 to the West Bank and refused to condone the retention of the Sinai settlements. Carter's praise for Sadat made Begin fear an American-Egyptian alliance against Israel. He continually dangled the advantages of an agreement to render Israel safe from effective Arab attack, refused to allow Begin to berate Egypt and demonstrated how close the two sides were. He was well briefed and at one stage claimed the American position reflected Israeli opinion in the Knesset more closely than Begin's, citing Israeli opinion polls.
Begin first asserted the Knesset would never approve the removal of the settlements, then conceded it might pass by two or three votes.65

After Camp David the Arabs claimed that Egypt had given everything and Israel nothing, but this was based on the Egyptian hardline opening proposal, not the position Sadat indicated to Carter he was willing to accept. The Israelis did concede points. They signed frameworks after the summit. They considered American proposals. They agreed to remove the Sinai settlements subject to the Knesset vote and accepted a limited force zone for three kilometres on the Israeli side of the border (a substantial concession for such a small country). They agreed under the Framework for Peace that Israel's soldiers should withdraw on the West Bank to specific security locations and consented to the right of Palestinian representatives to vote on the final form of government, a proposal they had heatedly rejected. These proposals fell short of what the Palestinians or the Jordanians would accept but they were an advance on the Israelis' initial position.

Carter found Sadat willing to be accommodating and his technique for dealing with him was more restrained. Sadat accepted American compromises on the Framework for Peace and Jerusalem, agreed to a three year withdrawal period from the Sinai and concurred in a more extensive demilitarisation on Sinai than he wanted. He agreed that the permission of all permanent members of the Security Council would be

65. The actual majority was sixty-five votes.
required before the peace keeping force could be withdrawn. He accepted Carter’s demand for a full peace. He gained Egyptian sovereignty over the whole of Sinai and an agreement which, if implemented, would have given Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza more control of their own affairs.

However on the final Friday when Sadat appeared on the edge of disrupting the American plan for a harmonious conclusion to the conference, Carter resorted to all the techniques at his disposal to persuade Sadat to stay. He delineated all the consequences Sadat wished to avoid. He (as he had not done with the Israelis) appealed to Sadat not to risk their friendship or damage Carter’s Presidency. He proposed a solution to Sadat’s problem about signing an agreement with the United States. Sadat failed to get an Israeli commitment to withdraw from all the occupied territories or have Arab sovereignty restored to Jerusalem. He failed to get an agreement which would lead to an eventual Palestinian state. His inability to persuade the Israelis to accept linkage of the two treaties eventually rendered the Framework for Peace worthless.

The American role at Camp David was crucial. Without Carter’s determination and informed intervention no agreement would have resulted. The weaknesses of the Framework for Peace reflected the limits of American influence on Israel. Carter, desperate for a settlement, ignored the centrality of the Palestinian problem and the intensity with which even moderate regimes would reject proposals which failed to provide justice for the Palestinians.
Chapter 5: The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty

Carter claimed the Accords would provide a full peace, recognised boundaries, an end to military occupation and give the Palestinians the right to decide how to govern themselves.\(^1\) Saunders elaborated, saying they provided an opportunity for the people of the Middle East to turn away from war and laid the foundations for an overall Arab-Israeli settlement; he noted that Israel had now recognised the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.\(^2\) The American media, Congress, Jewish Americans and the American public greeted the Accords with enthusiasm.\(^3\)

But the Frameworks were attacked by other Arab governments, the PLO and the Palestinian residents of the West Bank. They were reinterpreted by Begin whose statements to the US media conflicted substantially with those of Carter and Sadat. He belittled the Palestinian gains and

\(^1\) Message from the President of the United States, September, 1978, Washington.


\(^3\) *Newsweek*, 2-10-1978, p.6.

emphasised not what had been 'achieved at Camp David but what had been avoided'. 4 Carter warned that this disavowal of agreements to withdraw its armed forces, negotiate with the Palestinians and grant them full autonomy, was harming attempts to gain the cooperation of moderate Arabs. Begin's evasive reply and continued speeches made Carter doubt his sincerity. 5

A heated dispute erupted between the Americans and Begin over what had been agreed to on the final Saturday night about a settlements freeze on the West Bank and Gaza. Carter believed that Begin had agreed to a freeze while Palestinian autonomy were being negotiated and had told Sadat so. It was to be clarified in a letter from Begin. The Americans' suggested wording for the letter was rejected and there had been no time to produce another before the Accords were signed. Begin's subsequent letter stated the freeze would only be for three months while the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty was being negotiated. 6

Reactions to the Camp David Accords

Vance tried to elicit Arab support for the Accords. Before he

6. Dayan, op.cit., p.185-188.
arrived, the Jordanian Cabinet asserted it was not legally or morally bound by the Camp David Agreements and the Saudi Cabinet declared they could not be considered a final acceptable formula for peace. While Vance argued that the Framework for Peace could ultimately lead to Palestinian self-determination, the Saudis and the Jordanians doubted that Israel would adhere to its spirit and felt that no Arab leader could join the negotiations because Sadat had accepted a separate peace. Hussein stated that Vance's visit confirmed his opinion that the Accords deviated from SCR 242 and provided 'a sugar coating' for Begin's autonomy plan. He pointed to Begin's claims that Israeli troops and settlements could stay on the West Bank indefinitely.

After Vance had left, Arafat and Qadafi went to Jordan to sustain Hussein in his refusal to join the negotiations. Hussein stated that the Accords provided for neither Palestinian self-determination nor Israeli withdrawal.

The PLO executive committee called for a general strike in opposition to the Accords and warned Palestinians contemplating entering the 'autonomy conspiracy' that they would 'face the will of our people and

11. Cobban, op.cit., p.100
its just retribution'. West Bank Palestinians became increasingly hostile as Begin made it clear that the Accords would not lead to Palestinian self-determination and many responded to the PLO strike call. The Soviet Union opposed the Accords, and the Rejectionist Front meeting in Damascus agreed to cut all political and economic ties with Egypt. Arafat told delegates: 'Sadat has sold Jerusalem, Palestine and the rights of the Palestinian people for a handful of Sinai sand.'

Most Israelis supported the Camp David Accords but there was strong opposition from the right. Leading Herut figures claimed they contained significant risks and jeopardised Israel's security in the south. Gush Emunim protested by establishing illegal settlements on the West Bank and were forcibly evicted by Israeli troops. Despite such opposition Begin was 'authoritative and single-minded' in defence of the Accords when faced with opposition from Herut and the NRP Cabinet members. He sponsored the Accords in the Knesset while Sinai residents demonstrated by blocking traffic with a tractor parade.

Begin sought to allay opposition claiming there would not be a Palestinian state under any circumstances. He confirmed that Israeli

settlements and forces would remain on the West Bank after the transition had ended. An undivided Jerusalem would 'remain the capital of Israel for eternity'.\textsuperscript{16} The Accords were accepted by the Knesset. Begin may have won the support of a few wavering conservatives but he ensured that no other Arab leaders would join the autonomy talks.

In Egypt too there was popular support for the Accords as many believed peace was the precursor to economic recovery. There was also opposition. Leftist members of the National Progressive Party rejected the peace initiative and opposed the concept of two frontiers that it imposed on Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood castigated the agreement for 'capitulation to the national and religious enemy'. Former leaders of the Revolutionary Council which had overthrown the King rejected both political and military aspects of the Accords. Nine independents warned of possible Israeli hegemony over Egypt, criticised Sadat's failure to consult with the other Arab leaders and to regain an Arab Jerusalem and Palestinian statehood.\textsuperscript{17} However the majority accepted Sadat's decision. There were no riots and the army remained supportive.

Implementation of the Accords appeared to face substantial obstacles. Begin immediately withdrew from commitments to Palestinian autonomy. The PLO, the Soviet Union and the Rejectionist Front condemned Sadat for signing them; even 'moderate' regimes refused to


\textsuperscript{17} Shoukri, op.cit., pp.401,402.
support them. West Bank Palestinians rejected participation in the autonomy process.

Blair House

Carter, hoping to ensure a peace treaty within the stipulated three months, invited delegations to Blair House in Washington. The talks began on 12 October. Vance and Atherton coordinated the negotiations with the Americans presenting proposals to facilitate discussion. Four main points of contention emerged. The Egyptians wanted the treaty linked to an Israeli commitment to a timetable for implementing Palestinian autonomy; they also wanted the exchange of ambassadors delayed. The Israelis wanted it clearly specified that the obligations of this treaty would take priority over any previous Egyptian treaties of mutual defence with Arab countries. Israel also sought an Egyptian commitment to provide it with Sinai oil on a preferential basis. This became increasingly important as Israel's major oil supplier, Iran, became more unstable.

Carter met both delegations separately on 17 October and jointly on the 19th. He proposed that linkage to Palestinian autonomy be included

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in the preamble with an exchange of letters stipulating a timetable. When told the Israelis were returning to Jerusalem for Cabinet consultations, he proposed that a draft treaty be taken back for Cabinet approval. Carter attended intense negotiations, first between the Americans and the Israelis, then with the Egyptians. He persuaded the Egyptians to allow Israeli ships through Suez when the treaty was ratified and to agree to the exchange of ambassadors. They rejected the Israeli formula on 'priority of obligations'. Carter supported this Egyptian position and the need to refer to linkage in the preamble, using 'some pretty harsh language' to the Israelis. At seven the next morning Carter found the Egyptians conciliatory. The Israelis then compromised.\(^\text{19}\) The draft treaty proposed a faster interim withdrawal in the Sinai in return for an exchange of ambassadors and linkage to Palestinian autonomy in the preamble. The Egyptians accepted the Israeli wording on 'priority of obligations' and agreed in principle to sell oil to Israel. They could not agree on the wording for the letter stipulating dates for the implementation of Palestinian autonomy, so it was deferred.\(^\text{20}\) Carter noted in his diary: 'I think we've put together an Egypt-Israel peace treaty'.\(^\text{21}\) He was optimistic.

\(^{19}\) Dayan, op.cit., pp.219-221.

\(^{20}\) Vance, op.cit., p.221; The Times, 23-10-1978.

\(^{21}\) Carter, op.cit., p.408.
Hussein had sent a list of questions to Vance about the Camp David Accords. Extensive publicity was subsequently given to the American answers which asserted that the Framework for Peace required a freeze on Jewish settlements whose fate would be decided during the autonomy negotiations, that East Jerusalem was occupied territory, and that Palestinian refugees would have the right to settle on the West Bank and Gaza.22

These answers provoked protest in Israel and in retaliation Cabinet announced it would add three hundred new housing units to West Bank settlements. Vance stated that he saw the decision 'as a very serious matter' and his government was 'deeply disturbed by it'.23 Carter wrote to Begin 'one of the worst sounding notes we've ever received'.24 Sadat threatened to cancel the negotiations but agreed to leave the delegation in Washington after a personal appeal from Carter.25

In this tense atmosphere the Israeli Cabinet gave the draft treaty a hostile reception. It rejected the linkage statement in the preamble and the letter outlining a timetable for Palestinian autonomy; it


requested some alterations to the treaty but approved it in principle. Sadat also objected to some points, particularly the clause relating to 'priority of obligation'. With the talks at an impasse, Begin and Sadat were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Israelis returned to Washington, with the amendments proposed by their Cabinet. For the next few days discussions centred on bilateral agreements between Israel and the United States. Israel sought a vast grant to pay for the removal of the civilian and military infrastructures from Sinai. Carter was reluctant to discuss grants after the decision to expand West Bank settlements and became furious when it was suggested that America pay for the removal of the 'illegal Sinai settlements'. He refused to approve talks between the US Treasury Secretary and the Israeli Finance Minister.

In early November an Arab summit in Bagdad castigated the Accords. A delegation was sent to Cairo to persuade Sadat to withdraw from the negotiations, but he refused to receive it. The summit then decided to remove the headquarters of the Arab League from Cairo and threatened economic sanctions should Egypt sign a treaty with Israel. The possible loss of Arab aid, tourism, deposits in Egyptian banks and the jobs of more than one million Egyptians employed in Arab countries alarmed

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27. The Age, 27-10-1978, p.8; Newsweek, 13-11-1978, p.6
Sadat and the Egyptian negotiators.\textsuperscript{28} The position of those opposed to the negotiations was strengthened and unease spread to the army. Sadat had to make further demands to avoid the stigma of accepting a separate peace. The Egyptians now insisted that the letter on Palestinian autonomy contain a four stage programme with specific timing linked to the Sinai withdrawal and normalization of relations with Israel. Sadat also rejected the proposal to grant Israel special rights to purchase Sinai oil.\textsuperscript{29}

The Americans proposed modifying the Egyptian autonomy letter by specifying that negotiations for autonomy would begin one month after the signing of the treaty, with a target for elections by the end of 1979 or nine months after the treaty was signed.\textsuperscript{30} The Israelis accepted this formula with a twelve month target date and agreed to retain the linkage sentence in the preamble; but their recommendations were rejected by Cabinet which declared on 12 November the new Egyptian demands were unacceptable.\textsuperscript{31} Begin, returning from Canada, supported this decision and demanded American financial commitments and guaranteed oil supplies.\textsuperscript{32} With the possibility of agreement receding, the Blair House talks adjourned on 13 November.

\textsuperscript{28} Dayan, op.cit., pp.235, 236.
\textsuperscript{29} Vance, op.cit., p.239
\textsuperscript{30} Dayan, op.cit., p.239; \textit{The Age}, 14-11 1978, p.8
On 16 November Egypt's Vice-President Hosni Mubarak and Prime Minister Mustapha Khalil came to Washington. They offered access to Israeli ships through Suez as soon as a treaty was signed and insisted on a link between an interim withdrawal from the Sinai and the institution of autonomy in at least Gaza. Carter pointed out that Israel had now agreed to begin autonomy negotiations within a month of a treaty being signed and said that he would recommend Sadat sign the treaty. Sadat replied that he could not sign the existing treaty as it provided a separate peace. He insisted that Israel agree to a target date for the establishment of autonomy which would coincide with completion of the interim withdrawal from the Sinai and precede the exchange of ambassadors. He also objected that the language of the 'priority of obligations' clause was 'offensively explicit in subordinating prior Egyptian agreements' to the treaty with Israel. At the end of November Sadat forwarded similar demands to Begin adding that, if Israel accepted the earlier interim withdrawal previously proposed, ambassadors could be exchanged one month later.

The Israeli Cabinet had deliberated for some weeks on reports from Blair House. It resented the fact that its proposals for changes had been rejected while new Egyptians demands gained American support and

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33. Carter, op.cit., p.411
the fact that its demands for economic aid and guaranteed oil supplies had been ignored. Begin pre-empted the Cabinet decision by telling the Herut Central Committee that he opposed the new Egyptian demands; he stated that Israel would only negotiate autonomy on condition that the Israeli army and settlements remained on the West Bank and Israeli security was maintained. On 30 November Cabinet announced Israel would sign the draft treaty of 12 November but rejected the latest Egyptian demands. Negotiations for autonomy would commence after the treaty was ratified.

Further American Initiatives

By early December it was clear that successful negotiations were being impeded by unyielding attitudes adopted by both sides in response to domestic criticism and external events. With the 17 December target date looming, Carter sent Vance to the Middle East with compromise proposals. A US legal opinion attached to the treaty would state that Egypt would not be debarred from aiding an ally under attack. A second interpretative note would declare that the treaty was being concluded 'in the context of a comprehensive peace settlement in accordance with


the provisions of SCR 242'. Annexed to the treaty would be a letter stating that elections should be held by the end of 1979 for a self-governing authority to be established within one month. Sadat, worried about Arab opinion and the Iranian revolution, reluctantly approved but would not exchange ambassadors until the authority was established. 38

Vance found the resentful Israeli Cabinet just as obdurate. On 15 December it re-asserted its willingness to sign the draft treaty; but it rejected new Egyptian demands on the exchange of ambassadors, on the fixing of dates for the implementation of autonomy and for an interpretative letter which nullified the 'priority of obligations' clause. It blamed Egypt for the failure to complete the treaty on time and rejected America's stand on the Egyptian proposals. 39

In December and January the Americans tried again to bring the Egyptians and Israelis to agreement. Vance met Dayan and Khalil in Brussels but the meeting only highlighted their differences. On 17 January Atherton tried to gain agreement over Article six, the 'conflicts of obligations' clause; but by the time he had made it satisfactory to the Israelis it was unacceptable to the Egyptians.

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Camp David Ministerial Talks; Begin Visits Washington

Carter proposed that another round of talks be held at Camp David away from the media. They began on 20 February. Carter intended to join them should any progress be made, but this appeared unlikely. With Muslim fundamentalists now triumphant in Iran, an Egypt-Israel treaty now appeared a crucial part of American foreign policy in the region. The Saudi government, however, feared a fundamentalist onslaught against their own regime and increased opposition to the treaty. The Israeli Government, deprived of Iranian oil, became more reluctant to part with Sinai oil and its buffer zone.  

The Egyptian delegation, led by Prime Minister Khalil, arrived at Camp David with the authority to conclude a treaty but not to make concessions. The spectre of Islamic fundamentalism was disturbing the Egyptian leaders. The People's Assembly had sent congratulations to Khomeini and close allies like Sudan threatened to break off relations with Egypt if it signed a treaty with Israel. Khalil warned Dayan that Egypt could not sign a separate peace. It must specify gains for the Palestinians. He suggested that the autonomy process begin first in Gaza. Vance supported the Egyptian demand for linkage and proposed that the word 'goal' be substituted for 'target date' in the letter.

40. Newsweek, 5-3-1979, p.25.
specifying Palestinian self-government. Carter emphasised to Dayan and Khalil the need to complete negotiations rapidly. A dispirited Dayan said that agreement seemed to be receding as Egypt was reneging on earlier stands. Israel too was taking a harder line.41

Carter and Vance concluded that, as Dayan was not authorized to negotiate but had to refer everything back to Jerusalem, Begin should be invited to join the talks. The protocol-conscious Israeli Cabinet felt that Begin should meet only with Sadat and resented American support for new Egyptian demands; it rejected the request. Carter insisted that Begin come to Washington for talks with him.42

These talks, from 2 to 4 March, began combatatively when Begin told reporters he would refuse to sign worthless treaties.43 Begin told Carter that he had suffered terribly in Israel because of his concessions; he asserted his willingness to sign a treaty but rejected irresponsible Egyptian demands for a timetable for autonomy. Carter warned that Sadat could not defy Arab opinion while the peace talks foundered and reviewed the consequences for Israel should Egypt rejoin an Arab front. Begin was extremely negative, saying Sadat still wanted to destroy Israel and refusing to accept any interpretative notes. Carter emphasized the need for flexibility, pointed to the pressures on

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42. Vance, op.cit., p.243; Dayan, op.cit., p.267.
Sadat and claimed Israel had continually raised its demands. The talks become so heated that Carter did not produce the new American proposals. At the first meeting of the full delegations Begin was again belligerent. 'He gave a remarkable and dispiriting performance'.

On the second day the atmosphere improved. Begin was more amenable, perhaps feeling that he had gone too far or that he had sufficiently emphasized Israel's independence. He accepted Vance's reformulation of the 'priority of obligations' clause which both claimed there was 'no assertion that this treaty prevails over other treaties' and that in the event of a conflict between the obligations of this treaty and another, 'the obligations under this treaty will be binding'. This enabled the Israelis and Egyptians to point to the part which suited them. The wording in the letter on autonomy was changed with 'target date' being replaced by 'goal' and the words 'elections to be held expeditiously' replacing a specific timetable. At Begin's recommendation these proposals were approved by Cabinet. Although his press secretary claimed they were different and Begin claimed they represented as a complete American turnaround, Dayan asserted they were different.

44. Carter, op.cit., p.414.
45. Brzezinski, op.cit., p.280.
46. Vance, op.cit., p.244.
47. International Herald Tribune, 6-3-1979, p.3; Dayan, op.cit., p.268.
the same proposals Cabinet rejected during the Blair House conference. Carter had been able to convince Begin to accept them where Vance, Dayan and Weizman had failed.

Carter Goes to Egypt and Israel

Carter concluded that only his personal intervention could induce Egypt and Israel to sign a treaty. He decided on a personal visit to gain agreement on the remaining disputed areas and to bypass Begin by appealing directly to the Israeli Cabinet and people. The unresolved issues included Egyptian agreement to the wording the Israeli Cabinet had approved on the autonomy letter and the 'priority of obligations' clause; setting a date for the exchange of ambassadors and Israel's demand for preferential treatment in the purchase of Sinai oil.

Brzezinski briefed Sadat, pointing to the strategic necessity of getting the treaty signed, emphasizing the administration's determination to enhance US-Egyptian co-operation and affirming Carter's commitment to a comprehensive peace. He also told Sadat that it was essential for Carter's political future that a treaty be signed

quickly, implying that Begin sought to delay the talks in the hope that he would be replaced by a more pro-Israeli President. Sadat expressed concern for Carter's future, saying that he would have to 'give the President items with which to hammer at Begin'. He agreed to invite Begin to Cairo and generally accepted the new American proposals. 50

Carter found Sadat willing to be flexible. He sought minor changes in the 'priority of obligations clause' and would let the Israelis have Sinai oil via the Americans or directly on a competitive basis. He agreed to the timing of the exchange of ambassadors. He still sought Israeli agreement to allow Egyptian liaison officers into Gaza and to proceed with autonomy there first; he refused to sell oil to Israel on preferential terms. He asked the Americans to negotiate the best terms for him that they could. 51

The Americans were pleased with Sadat's response and confident that an agreement could be reached; but they decided that it would be unwise to arrive in Jerusalem looking too confident lest the Israelis feel that 'an Egyptian-American deal had been cooked up'. 52 When Sadat told reporters that only some words stood in the way of settlement, American officials warned that Sadat was not that pleased and his hardline

52. Brzezinski, op.cit., p.283.
53. Newsweek, 19-3-1979, p.11.
advisers were displeased. 53

This mood of optimism was quickly shattered in Jerusalem when Begin said he would not sign or initial any agreement until he had Cabinet and Knesset approval. Carter, furious at not having been told this condition earlier, demanded to know whether Begin 'actually wanted a peace treaty, because my impression was that everything he could do to obstruct it he did with apparent relish.' 54

The next morning Carter and his advisers met with several members of the Israeli Cabinet. Carter told them he wished to conclude all the requirements for the treaty; Sadat also wished to conclude negotiations immediately. Begin reminded Carter that Cabinet and the Knesset would have to debate the treaty first. Vance outlined the changes Sadat sought in the 'priority of obligations' clause. Begin immediately rejected them, claiming the Egyptians were unwilling to commit themselves unequivocally to peace. The autonomy letter was then discussed and Begin indicated his unwillingness to commence autonomy negotiations in Gaza or allow the stationing of Egyptian liaison officers there. Heated exchanges ensued between Carter and Begin. 55

In the afternoon Carter stated that Washington regarded the treaty as an important part of its Middle East policy. He claimed that Sadat had proved willing to compromise and had accepted positions approved by

Begin. Cabinet responded negatively to Carter's demands. It was unwilling to revoke the decision recently made to accept the texts agreed to by Begin in Washington. Carter pressed them hard because he feared negotiations would collapse if a treaty was not concluded during his visit. 56

The Israeli Cabinet met all that night. They agreed to accept the Egyptian amendments to Article six and to withdraw from El Arish early if ambassadors could be exchanged on completion of the interim withdrawal. These were also proposals Cabinet had rejected during the Blair House negotiations. Carter's personal pleas had convinced the Israeli Cabinet to amend its position but not enough yet to achieve an agreement. They still refused to include any commitment to begin autonomy negotiations in Gaza first or allow the stationing of Egyptian liaison officers. 57

Carter heard a report of this Cabinet meeting when the Americans met the full cabinet the next day. Both Carter and Begin were becoming irate. Carter tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Israelis to accept Egyptian liaison officers and begin autonomy first in Gaza. The Israelis still wanted preferential access to Egyptian oil and refused on principle to receive it via the Americans. 58 When Carter went to

address the Knesset, he claimed that the people wanted peace but the
leaders had not 'yet shown that they had the courage to take a chance
on peace'. When the Americans rejoined the Cabinet, no further
progress had been made. Begin produced a draft statement which tried
to 'gloss over' the failure to agree and adjourned the meeting. A
depressed Carter concluded that they would have to concede failure and
return home.  

Several ministers disagreed with Begin's decision and remained behind
seeking a solution. One suggestion appeared possible, when Dayan
communicated it to Begin, he agreed that Dayan should discuss it with
Vance. Dayan proposed to Vance that Israel withdraw its demand for
preferential access to Egyptian oil, provided the Egyptians agreed that
Israel had the right to buy its oil, thus signalling that the economic
boycott was over. In return Egypt should withdraw its Gaza demands.
Israel would be prepared to consider Egyptian requests to institute
autonomy first in Gaza during the negotiations which would commence one
month after a treaty was ratified.

Vance immediately contacted Carter with these suggestions and he
agreed that this last concession would provide a treaty acceptable to
Sadat. The American negotiators drafted these proposals into an annex

60. Vance, op.cit., p.249.
61. Dayan, op.cit., p.275, 276.
to be added to the treaty. It established normal economic relations between Egypt and Israel including the right of Israel to buy Egyptian oil on the same terms as other competitors.\(^62\) Carter told Begin at breakfast that he wanted agreement before he left the region. He outlined the new proposals on Sinai oil and offered a fifteen year American guarantee to support it. Carter pressed Begin hard and he eventually agreed to support the proposals provided Egypt dropped its Gaza demands.\(^63\)

The American delegation then flew to Cairo where Carter, Vance and Brzezinski met Sadat, Khalil and Mubarak. Carter, 'although playing a weak hand, did one of the best selling jobs of his career', telling Sadat that he would be pleased, claiming that Begin had behaved normally for two days 'being unpleasant and interrupting', but that moderates had convinced him to be more constructive.\(^64\) Carter told him that the Israelis would be prepared to deal with Gaza first although rejecting an Egyptian presence. He said that he had substituted an American guarantee of oil for Israeli demands for preferential supplies from Egypt and that he would like to announce that US-Egyptian agreement had been reached.\(^65\)

\(^{62}\) Vance, op.cit., 249.

\(^{63}\) Carter, op.cit., pp.424,425.

\(^{64}\) Brzezinski, op.cit., p.285

\(^{65}\) ibid.
Sadat overruled objections from his advisers, saying that this was satisfactory. When he met Carter alone, Carter asked him to agree to exchange ambassadors early, an item he had not raised in front of Sadat's more critical advisers. Sadat agreed. The news was phoned to Begin and announced to the press. 66

The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty

The treaty provided for complete Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai with a UN patrolled buffer zone between the two countries. There was to be a small demilitarized zone on the Israeli side of the border and a large one on the Egyptian side. Normal relations were to be instituted between the two countries and Israel would have the right to buy Sinai oil on a competitive basis. Israeli ships would be allowed through Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran were declared international waterways. The treaty was to be binding on Egypt in the event of a conflict with its other agreements but was not to prevent it carrying out its obligations under the UN charter to aid nations in self defence. Within one month of its ratification Egypt and Israel were to begin negotiations for implementing the Camp David agreements on Palestinian self-rule. They were to make a 'good-faith' effort to

complete those negotiations within one year. Letters were attached providing for a US guarantee of compliance and the early exchange of ambassadors. 67

The weak linkage clause was not sufficient to deter accusations that Egypt had signed a separate treaty. The treaty was greeted with hostility by all Arab governments. Economic sanctions were applied to Egypt and even close allies like Morocco broke off relations. Saudi Arabia joined in the condemnation but not the economic sanctions. West Bank leaders denounced the accords, refusing to participate in the autonomy negotiations. The PLO swore to sabotage it. Hussein was openly hostile. The treaty was obviously not going to lay the foundations for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty was signed in Washington on 26 March 1979. Without the persistence of Carter and his advisers it is unlikely the treaty would have ever been signed. Though both Sadat and Begin desired such a treaty, the formidable obstacles in their path had become too complex for them to overcome alone.

67. The full text of the treaty is in Dayan, op.cit., pp.332-355.
Conclusion

The accounts by five participants in events leading up to the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty amply illustrate the power the United States had attained in the Middle East as a result of its unique ability to influence Israel. Conservative Arab states and Israel regarded the Soviet Union with suspicion and its influence declined dramatically when Sadat turned unequivocally to the United States. The joint Soviet-American statement brought violent objections from Israel and Sadat sent a message opposing any initiative that would prevent direct negotiations between Egypt and Israel, mediated by the United States. After Sadat's visit to Jerusalem the Soviet role was limited to that of commentator on the intense negotiations fostered by the United States.

All the biographies emphasise the crucial role of President Carter in the peace negotiations. He decided to pursue a comprehensive peace with a just settlement for the Palestinians. He opposed with some success Israeli actions detrimental to peace, forced Israel to withdraw from Lebanon and gained approval from long-term supporters of Israel for his criticisms of Begin's policies. In response to an appeal for help from Carter, in a dramatic impasse-breaking gesture, Sadat went to Jerusalem. Carter sent envoys to assist in direct Egypt-Israel negotiations and when those failed invited Begin and Sadat to Camp
David where he persuaded both to moderate their demands and reach agreement. When further meetings failed to produce an Egypt-Israel peace treaty he again intervened directly travelling to the Middle East and applying pressure on Sadat, Begin and the Israeli Cabinet to gain compromises and conclude a treaty.

The biographies clearly demonstrate the limitations on the power of the US president to influence Israel. They describe the difficulties Carter, Vance and Brzezinski experienced in dealing with the Israel lobby as they publicly espoused the need for a Palestinian homeland and sought to have the Geneva Conference re-convened. They illustrate the methods the Administration took to deflect the lobby's hostility, including regular briefings of Congressional leaders and the Jewish community, and careful use of the press. The importance of the lobby is emphasised by the amount of time spent in planning how to avert or undermine its criticism. They were not always successful and were forced to re-include Israel on a list of nations permitted to buy advanced weapons and to retract the joint Soviet-US statement. These early defeats demonstrated the dangers of clashing with Israel. Ultimately Carter was forced to reneg on his commitment to a comprehensive peace and just settlement for the Palestinians as it was just too dangerous politically.

The autobiographies add to the public record with their descriptions of the interaction between the leaders. The clashes and antipathy between Israel's Prime Minister Begin and Carter are described in all the autobiographies as Carter sought to persuade Begin to be more
generous in negotiations and to halt the establishment of new settlements on the West Bank. In contrast the empathy between Carter and Sadat affected negotiations as Sadat made concessions that Carter thought were necessary or could harm Carter's position.

The autobiographies of the Israelis provide a different but often complementary account of negotiations. Begin is shown assuring Dayan that his Government would pursue peace and considering what territory could be conceded at his first cabinet meeting. He defended the Camp David Accords by preventing conservatives organizing an attack on them before the Cabinet and Knesset debates. Dayan's account of the Israelis' search for some formula that would satisfy the Egyptians and Carter while retaining their hold on the West Bank fully justified Carter's suspicions. While the Israelis keenly sought agreement with Egypt they were determined to retain control of the West Bank.

These accounts demonstrate the way the Administration attempted to circumvent the agreement not to talk to the PLO until it recognized Israel's right to exist. They show how Vance made contact with the PLO through Saudi intermediaries even proposing wording that would satisfy the American requirement that the PLO recognize Israel's right to exist and accept SCR242.

The biographies show how intensely the Carter sought 'moderate' Arab support for his initiatives and illuminate the position of the Saudi Government whose public stances conflicted with their private assurances to the Americans. While refusing to endorse the Camp David
Accords and criticising the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty they continued to assure the Americans that they would attempt to moderate Arab reactions and would not cut aid to Egypt.

Each author presents a different perspective on the negotiations. Carter's extensive notes enable him to present a very detailed frank but circumspect description. He is willing to note his anger with the Israelis but not his expletives nor the attempts his team made to ensure that the Israelis would be blamed for the failure of these negotiations. Nor does the circumspect Vance who was present at many of the meetings and whose descriptions provide briefer but complementary accounts. Brzezinski is franker. He retails Carter's description of Begin as a 'phsyco' and details the American efforts to co-ordinate positions with the Egyptians to ensure the Israelis were blamed if negotiations failed both at Camp David and later in Egypt and Israel. He also describes how Mondale was encouraged to join the rest of the administration in standing up to Israel and how Vance was gingered up to take an aggressive stand against Begin at Camp David.

Both Weizman and Dayan had suffered intense criticism from right wing Israelis and were anxious to demonstrate the vigilance with which they guarded Israel's interest. Dayan emphasises his annoyance at Egyptian and American arrogance and failure to appreciate Israel's generosity and vulnerability. He notes that it was his suggestion that Cabinet announce its decision to enlarge West Bank settlements in retaliation for the American answers to Hussein's questions. This contrasts with the American accounts of a creative Dayan moderating Begin's obduracy.
Weizman displays more interested in people than the others and his account provides enlightening portraits of the participants. The friendship which grew between Weizman, Sadat and other Egyptians and the time he spent in Egypt with the military committee enables him to provide a clearer picture of Egyptian responses. He describes his growing belief that Israel must respond adequately to Sadat's initiative to demonstrate to the Israeli army that its leaders had done all they could to prevent another war. and the disputes this lead him into with his fellow Cabinet Ministers.

Many of the details portrayed in the autobiographies were not recorded in the press. Others were described vaguely and inaccurately. The autobiographies therefore have allowed new light to be thrown on the process of negotiation and on the immense influence of the US President when exerted personally. Only after their publication can President Carter's pivotal role be fully appreciated.
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