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# Jimmy Carter and Anwar el-Sadat: Relationships and Motivations Behind the 1978 Camp David Accords

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# Jimmy Carter and Anwar el-Sadat: Relationships and Motivations Behind the 1978 Camp David Accords

**Abstract**

This thesis addresses the American and Egyptian motivations behind the conclusion of the 1978 Camp David Accords between the United States, Egypt, and Israel. In addition, it considers the role the personal relationships developed between the principal leaders played in reaching an ultimate agreement. The thesis primarily relies on recently declassified Department of State and Central Intelligence Agency documents to reconstruct the American and Egyptian impetuses for peace, as seen from the outset of Jimmy Carter's presidency. It also draws on the memoirs and writings of those directly involved in the peace process. Then, the thesis reviews how these factors manifested themselves during the thirteen day summit at Camp David. The thesis argues that the American and Egyptian motivations for peace hinged on the personal desires of Carter and Anwar el-Sadat. Furthermore, the personal relationship cultivated between the two presidents proved essential in reaching a final agreement.

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Jimmy Carter and Anwar el-Sadat:  
Relationships and Motivations behind the 1978 Camp David Accords

by

Treston Paul Chandler

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The report of the investigation undertaken as a  
Senior Thesis, to carry two courses of credit in  
the Departments of History and Politics

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Michael T. Orr  
Krebs Provost and Dean of the Faculty

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Dan LeMahieu

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*To all those who have fought for peace,  
continue to fight for peace, and will fight for peace.  
May peace come, insha'Allah.*

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## Introduction

The Camp David Accords were the first time an Arab state concluded peace with Israel and officially recognized Israel's right to exist. Egyptian president Anwar el-Sadat broke from the Arab world to come to Camp David and negotiate peace with US president Jimmy Carter and Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel. What prompted these leaders to pursue peace?

Various explanations of how foreign policy and state decisions are formulated in the international arena exist. In 1969, Graham T. Allison posited three conceptual models to explain governmental behavior. All account for how a government chooses a certain action given the problem faced. The rational policy model views the state as a unitary actor that makes rational decisions based on value maximization toward achieving strategic goals. The organizational process model sees acts as outputs of large organizations which operate in line with standard procedures based on regular patterns of behavior. Conversely, the bureaucratic model concentrates on internal politics within a government. It explains state actions as the outcomes of bargains between individuals at different levels of government. Allison's article forms the basis for decision-making theory.<sup>1</sup>

Opposite decision-making theory are more traditional approaches to international relations, such as liberalism, realism, and their corollaries. For example, Shibley Telhami, an Arab-Israeli scholar at the Brookings Institution, advances a realist explanation for the outcome of the Camp David Accords. He argues that Egypt's

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<sup>1</sup> Graham T. Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *The American Political Science Review* 63, no. 3 (1969): 690.

decision to sign a separate peace treaty with Israel was the result of changes in the distribution of military and economic power in the Middle East and around the world.<sup>2</sup>

These theories discount the role of leading individuals in state actions. Margaret G. Hermann et al. address this gap and introduce leaders as authoritative decision making units. They consider when these predominant leaders exercise their decision making ability and how their leadership styles affect outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Hermann also explores the personal characteristics—namely beliefs, motives, decision styles, and interpersonal styles—of political leaders. She concludes that there is significant correlation between a leader’s personal characteristics and foreign policy outcomes.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack add to this study by examining how the “goals, abilities, and foibles of individuals are crucial to the intentions, capabilities, and strategies of a state.” They reintroduce the centrality of the individual and demonstrate how prominent leaders shape not only their own country’s foreign policy, but that of others as well.<sup>5</sup>

The Camp David Accords have been examined through many different theoretical lenses. However, they have not been systematically studied in a manner that uses the latter theory on the personalities of leaders as a base from which to approach them. Understanding the effect the political leaders played at Camp David—including their personal motivations and relationships—is essential to understanding the process of

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<sup>2</sup> Shibley Telhami, *Power and Leadership in International Bargaining: The Path to the Camp David Accords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret G. Hermann et al., “Who Leads Matters: The Effects of Powerful Individuals,” *International Studies Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 86-89.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret G. Hermann, “Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using the Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders,” *International Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1980): 7-8.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, “Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesmen Back In,” *International Security* 25, no. 4 (2001): 109, 145.

peacebuilding at a head of state and government level. Moreover, it helps explain how and why foreign policy outcomes are formed. The Camp David Accords were the product of the personal efforts of Jimmy Carter, Anwar Sadat, and Menachem Begin. Their personal motivations and desires for peace, coupled with the relationships that developed between them, explain why peace was concluded after thirteen days in the hills of Maryland.

Because the resumption of the Arab-Israeli peace process was a Carter initiative, he plays a central part in the study. Sadat's unique stance among the Arabs makes him the other main figure of study. Begin, while no doubt vital to the ultimate agreement, was more similar to his predecessors than Carter or Sadat were. Moreover, since Israel's inception in 1949, it has always ostensibly sought peace with its Arab allies. Until the original Geneva Peace Conference in 1973, the Arab states never even thought of peace with Israel. Thus, Egypt agreeing to negotiate peace with Israel was more novel; why Egypt chose to conclude a separate peace with Israel is more unknown than why Israel made peace with Egypt. Furthermore, Carter and Sadat's motivations—especially their personal desires for peace—emerge as key factors in the peace process in the main primary sources considered, whereas Begin's motivations do not. Recently declassified Department of State records and CIA reports form the basis for the study. In addition, the memoirs and writings of those involved are consulted.

The thesis is organized into three sections dealing with different elements of the peace process. Chapter one concentrates on the American motivations behind restarting the Arab-Israeli peace process. Carter's personal desire for peace played a major role in that effort. It also examines the developing friendship between Carter and Sadat. In

tracing the American impetus for entering negotiations, the first months of talks are considered, from Carter's inauguration to the end of that summer. Chapter two deals with the Egyptian motivations for participating in the negotiations. Like Carter, Sadat's personal wish for peace plays a prominent part in his prioritization of peace. The chapter concentrates on the period between Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the Camp David Accords. The final chapter investigates how the American and Egyptian motivations for peace, as well as the Carter-Sadat friendship, manifested themselves at Camp David and proved crucial in bringing about an agreement.

Effort is made to avoid using biased and value-laden language associated with the Arab-Israeli conflict. As such, the wars are referred to by their year, rather than the names often attached to them in Israel—Six-Day War and Yom Kippur War—or Egypt—*an-Naksah* (the Setback) and Ramadan War/October War.

## Chapter One

Attaining peace between Israel and the neighboring Arab states was a primary objective of American foreign policy at the start of President Jimmy Carter's administration in January 1977. The first part of this paper will explore the motivations behind placing a primary importance on Middle East peace and how these motivations were vital enough to forgo the major risks associated with engaging in the peacemaking process. Numerous theories have been put forward regarding what prompted American initiative into negotiating peace in the region. Shibley Telhami argues that the active role of the US in negotiations is explained by two components: minimizing Soviet influence in the region and securing oil; and the United States' commitment to the survival of Israel and its desire for Israel to live in peace.<sup>1</sup> The goal of this chapter is to analyze the extent to which Telhami's assessment of the situation is correct and to discover additional or alternative motivations the US held. Was Carter's personal desire for peace in the region influential on official foreign policy? How did Carter's own beliefs impact the diplomatic process and American stances on issues? Additionally, the relationships Carter developed with President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel will be examined. These relationships prove vital to the ultimate conclusion of an agreement at Camp David. They also indicate Carter's personal desire for peace. In doing so, the initial negotiations will be considered to evaluate the factors affecting American involvement in the process.

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<sup>1</sup> Shibley Telhami, *Power and Leadership in International Bargaining: The Path to the Camp David Accords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 14.

The day after Carter's inauguration on January 20, 1977, the president's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski submitted a memorandum to the president, vice president, and relevant cabinet secretaries asking for policy recommendations on the short-term issues facing the Middle East. In addition, he called for consideration of the broader question of Arab-Israeli peace.<sup>2</sup> Brzezinski focused on military aid to Israel, anti-boycott legislation directed at the Arab boycott of Israel, and what initial steps the US should make in Middle East peace negotiations. On the last point, he listed three main policy concerns: reconvening Geneva and potential alternatives, position on the Palestinian representation in negotiations, and the optimal timing for US diplomatic action.<sup>3</sup> That Carter and Brzezinski called for prompt action on Middle East peace policy shows the administration's commitment to a resolution, but it also displays the motivations behind taking a role in the peace process. The US commitment to Israel is clear from the discussion on military aid and anti-boycott legislation. In this sense, Telhami is correct in asserting that the US special relationship with Israel played a major role in the American government's actions. This commitment never wanes throughout the talks, but the degree to which the White House is willing to pressure the Israeli government does, as will be shown later.

Two weeks later, on February 4, a meeting of the Policy Review Committee was held to discuss the conclusions reached thus far.<sup>4</sup> The consensus of Vice President Walter Mondale, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, and Brzezinski was that there should be a minor increase in aid to Israel. It would act as

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<sup>2</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Arab-Israeli Dispute*, January 1977-August 1978, vol. VIII, ed. Adam M. Howard (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2013), doc. 1, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 1, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 3.

a show of good faith ahead of Vance's trip to the Middle East. All agreed that this was the maximum aid that should be approved, and it should be communicated to Israel that this was not an initial bargaining position, but a final offer. Failure to do so would upset the climate during Vance's trip and risk alienating the Arabs.<sup>5</sup> Despite this conclusion, they all believed an increase in aid was not militarily necessary for Israel. It was only justified to secure a favorable atmosphere for Vance's visit.<sup>6</sup> This suggests that there was an emphasis on peace in all action the administration took toward Israel and the Arab world. Furthermore, the Carter cabinet was willing to be critical in its attitude regarding Israel, which only increased over the negotiations.

The meeting continued with a discussion of the peace process. Vance was particularly keen on shortening the time table as much as possible. He believed that it would be "disastrous" to push off convening Geneva past September because of the instability of current affairs.<sup>7</sup> Enno Knoche of the CIA described the precarious position Sadat was in after food riots earlier that week. Knoche argued that Sadat's future depended on American action.<sup>8</sup> As such, prompt measures had to be taken to seize the rare opportunity in which all parties appeared reasonably willing to go to Geneva. Both substance and procedure would have to be the topic of Vance's trip to the Middle East. Brzezinski felt that substantive positions needed to be clearly established and should be a primary component of Vance's mission. Getting the Arab states to better define what peace meant and getting all parties to decouple sovereign borders and secure defense lines had to be done before progress was to be made, according to Brzezinski.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., doc. 3, 8-9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., doc. 3, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., doc 3, 16.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., doc 3, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., doc. 3, 15-16.

Therefore, Vance's primary focus should be on establishing the Arab and Israeli positions on the issues, both substantive and procedural, and attempt to find out the limits of each side's flexibility.

The first Policy Review Committee meeting showed the American approach to resuming negotiations on Arab-Israeli peace, but it also communicated the underlying motives of the Carter administration. Notably absent from the discussion was meaningful consideration or worry over potential Soviet influence in the region. The Soviet Union was referred to a few times in response to its role at the Geneva Conference, but otherwise was not a focal point of debate.<sup>10</sup> Knoche did point out that the USSR was monitoring the situation and would like to have been the "Arab champion in Egypt and Syria," but he did not state that negotiations should be centered on maximizing American influence in the region vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> In addition, a CIA report on the Soviet Union's position in the Middle East observed that Soviet influence had continually declined over the previous five years. It showed no signs of improvement at the start of Carter's presidency.<sup>12</sup> Telhami's assertion that minimizing Soviet influence in the Middle East was the primary concern, apart from protecting Israel, of American involvement in the peace process does not comport with the initial strategies of the Carter administration. While it was no doubt a factor, it was not the primary impetus for the United States.

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<sup>10</sup> The original Geneva Conference convened under President Nixon in December 1973 following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. The Soviet Union was co-chairman at the conference, which ended with the intention of resuming at a later date. The Carter administration initially attempted to organize discussions under the presumption of resuming the conference and, therefore, had to include the Soviets in the formal negotiations at Geneva.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 3, 15.

<sup>12</sup> "The Soviet Role in the Middle East," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d517777, June 1, 1977, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d517777>.



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Carter himself believed firmly in protecting and strengthening Israel, but he did not believe in supporting Israel in all regards. As will be discussed later, Carter continued the former administration's opposition to settlements in the occupied territory and went so far as to call for a Palestinian homeland. Nevertheless, he was thoroughly invested in Israel's survival. In his memoir, Carter described his trip to Israel in 1973 as a visit that had a great impression on him and confirmed his belief in the necessity of a Jewish state. Furthermore, he saw his affinity for Israel as the product of his commitment to the Judeo-Christian ethic and biblical study which both Jews and Christians engaged in.<sup>13</sup> In his meeting with Rabin in Washington in March 1977, Carter said, "Many Americans who share my religious background feel in a very personal way that the establishment of Israel is the fulfillment of religious prophecy."<sup>14</sup> On a deep personal level, Carter was fundamentally committed to Israel. Carter also viewed Israel as a strategic ally in the Middle East, and he noted that he had no firm feelings toward any Arab states.<sup>15</sup> From this, it would appear that Carter's personal desire for peace in the region can be explained by his commitment to Israel.

However, that argument is complicated by Carter's human rights mission. Of particular concern to the president was the West Bank. Carter wrote that "the continued deprivation of Palestinian rights was not only used as the primary lever against Israel, but was contrary to the basic moral and ethical principles of both our countries."<sup>16</sup> To help the Palestinians and to alleviate growing international pressure on Israel because of its

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<sup>13</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1982), 274.

<sup>14</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 20, 156.

<sup>15</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 275.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

occupation of the West Bank, Carter wanted a peace settlement. He was personally invested on both sides of the dispute, and these competing interests could only be reconciled through a comprehensive peace agreement that would safeguard the rights of both the Palestinians and Israel. The president's desire for peace should be seen in this light.

American involvement in the Middle East peace process was not without significant political risk to Carter and his administration. Failure to reach a peace agreement after making it a central element of his foreign policy would prove to be a political embarrassment for the president. In his memoir, Vance recalled the two approaches the White House could have taken toward peace. First, the United States could have engaged in a minimalist, "damage-limiting" strategy that would have resulted in the least possible involvement "in the face of apparently intractable issues and the steep political risks of failure."<sup>17</sup> Such an approach would have fulfilled American obligations to allies in the region—notably Israel—and helped prevent Soviet encroachment in the Middle East. The prospect of reaching any solution to the Palestinian and territory issues, however, was minuscule. Vance wrote that this approach was outlined to ensure "the new administration faced squarely the heavy political weather a serious peace initiative would provoke."<sup>18</sup> Thus, the first option was politically safe and carried minimal risk.

The alternative was to become actively involved in the peace process. The goal was to achieve a comprehensive resolution on the West Bank, the Sinai, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights between the principal Arab nations and Israel. The US would

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<sup>17</sup> Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 165.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

signal to the parties that it was prepared to take the initiative and directly participate in negotiations. This approach offered the greatest chance of success, but came with a high risk of failure. It would likely strain relations with Israel, for, as Vance noted, it would force Israel to confront difficult decisions about its security and reconcile those with its suspicion of the Arab states' desire for peace.<sup>19</sup> The administration recognized this risk was unavoidable and took actions to allay concerns at home among those sympathetic to Israel.

Throughout the negotiations, cabinet members frequently met with leaders of the American Jewish community to update them on the peace efforts, dispel their worries over Israel's alienation, and solidify their support for the American role in the talks. In early March, following his trip to the Middle East, Vance met with Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and five other prominent Jewish leaders to discuss American policy in the Middle East.<sup>20</sup> Schindler and his colleagues expressed considerable concern over direct American involvement in the process. They worried about whether the US was planning on being "even-handed" in negotiations, which forced Vance to again restate the special relationship between the United States and Israel.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Yehuda Hellman, the executive director of the Conference of Presidents, felt Carter's press conference earlier that day led to a "feeling of rebuff" among the American Jewish community, due to its "tone and ambiguities."<sup>22</sup> The group feared headlines that would suggest disagreement

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>20</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 21, 157.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., doc. 21, 162.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., doc. 21, 161. That morning, speaking after his meeting with Prime Minister Rabin of Israel, Carter referred to defensible borders and secure borders as "just semantics" and emphasized that Israeli defense lines may not be the same as sovereign borders in a final solution.

between the two states. While Vance was able to ease the group's concerns—they ultimately issued a press release stating the meeting was “useful, frank, and reassuring”—there was still underlying concern about the nature of the United States' role in the process.<sup>23</sup> The meeting displays the deep worry American Jewish leaders held about the extent to which the Carter administration would put forward its own proposals. Doing so could embarrass Israel and make the special relationship between the two countries more tenuous. As a result, Carter and his team had to be cautious in negotiations to prevent alienating political support at home.

The political clout of the American Jewish community, and the risk Carter engendered through pushing peace negotiations, indicates the president was particularly interested in the peace process for reasons outside of a traditional realist paradigm. In June 1977, Carter's advisor Hamilton Jordan<sup>24</sup> wrote a detailed memo on the domestic implications of the administration's foreign policy initiatives.<sup>25</sup> Jordan concentrated on the Middle East peace talks and the effect they would have on public support for the president's agenda. He stressed the need for congressional backing and recommended early and frequent consultation on the status of peace talks with key members of Congress. Furthermore, Jordan noted the need for public education on foreign policy initiatives. Minimal public understanding could have been beneficial if proper steps were taken to positively influence public perception of the White House's efforts.<sup>26</sup> However,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., doc. 21, 163.

<sup>24</sup> Carter did not formally appoint a White House Chief of Staff during the first two years of his presidency. In the latter half of his term, Carter named Hamilton Jordan to the position. Jordan's role in the first two years of Carter's presidency resembles that of a Chief of Staff.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., doc. 38, 279.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., doc. 38, 281.

Jordan saw the American Jewish community as the pivotal group that's support had to be garnered for the peace process to succeed.

Jordan characterized the American Jewish community and the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) as some of the most powerful players in electoral politics. If Carter failed to maintain their backing, he was likely to suffer significant electoral losses, and potentially even the presidency. According to Jordan, Jews registered and voted in larger numbers than any other subgroup in the country. In the 1976 presidential election, this disparity led to Carter receiving two Jewish votes for every African American vote he received. Additionally, American Jews were predominantly Democratic and their support had been reasonably stable since World War II. Because of high Jewish turnout, they could often sway the results of primary elections. Finally, Jordan noted, "Whereas disproportionate Jewish voting is only politically significant in areas where Jewish voters are concentrated, Jewish contributions to political campaigns are disproportionate nationally and in almost every area of the country."<sup>27</sup> Because Carter would inevitably be forced to exert some pressure on Israel in order to get the country to compromise to an acceptable point for the Arab states, the president risked alienating the Jewish community. Thus, he would put his reelection in jeopardy.

AIPAC was, and still is, one of the primary vehicles for the American Jewish community to express its political interests. It is an umbrella organization comprised of the leaders of the most prominent Jewish groups in the country. The group is charged with communicating the views of member organizations regarding US foreign policy to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., doc. 38, 285-86. Jordan pointed out that despite the fact Carter came from an area of the country with a relatively small Jewish population, 35 percent of his primary campaign contributions were from Jewish supporters.

Israel. Jordan described AIPAC's underlying goal as promoting the welfare of Israel, as understood by the Jewish community.<sup>28</sup> Similar to the high political participation rates of American Jews which Jordan recounted above, AIPAC's "collective mobilizing ability is unsurpassed in terms of the quality and quantity of political communications that can be triggered on specific issues perceived to be critical to Israel."<sup>29</sup> AIPAC also did not face any opposition interest group at the time and may have even been immune to overall public opinion. "It is even questionable," Jordan concluded, "whether a major shift in American public opinion on the issue of Israel would be sufficient to effectively counter the political clout of AIPAC."<sup>30</sup> With AIPAC's political influence, Carter could ill afford to risk losing its support. However, some American pressure had to be put on Israel to get it to change its positions. As Brzezinski observed in his memoir, peace would only come with American persuasion of Israel; only by arguing that US-Israeli relations were in jeopardy could Israeli politicians justify such concessions.<sup>31</sup> To be willing to pressure Israel to change some of its fundamental positions vis-à-vis the Arab world primarily on the basis of minimizing Soviet influence in the region and securing the flow of oil seems unlikely. Brzezinski recalled that Carter occasionally remarked that he would be willing to lose the presidency if it meant genuine peace in the Middle East.<sup>32</sup> Because Carter was willing to lose his office over an agreement, there was clearly an underlying desire for true peace present in his administration, beyond the potential benefits it could have to the United States.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., doc. 38, 287.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., doc. 38, 287-88.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., doc. 38, 288.

<sup>31</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1983), 88.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 97.

Although Telhami is correct in claiming that the American desire to keep the Soviet Union out of the Middle East and to support Israel were strong motivations in seeking a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, to suggest that they were the main, or even only, impetuses for US involvement goes too far. The White House was no doubt concerned with both of these factors, but there was also an important personal motive, on the part of Carter, to achieve peace. The potential for failure was high; as a result, the likelihood of political embarrassment and electoral fallout was also great. For Carter to have utilized a significant amount of political capital on garnering support for a peace deal merely to further basic American strategic goals, which themselves carry negative possible consequences, is improbable. Carter's prioritization of achieving peace in the Middle East, in spite of the political dangers of such actions, demonstrates his personal desire for peace and the effect that had on American foreign policy.

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The American peace initiative began in earnest in February 1977 with Secretary of State Vance's trip to visit the principal states in the Middle East. It is important to note that for much of the first year of Carter's presidency, the administration pushed to reconvene the Geneva Peace Conference. Following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the United Nations established the conference in an attempt to resolve the underlying issues diplomatically. It failed to do so, and dissolved with the prospect of being reconvened in the future. Because this framework was already in place, Carter hoped to use it to formally bring Israel and its Arab neighbors to the table. While this never happened, it serves as an important backdrop to the resultant Camp David Accords and demonstrates why efforts were refocused to concentrate on bilateral talks between Israel and Egypt. First, however, Vance and Brzezinski met with Israeli General Moshe Dayan, later

foreign minister under Menachem Begin, to gauge Israel's current position and what it hoped to achieve through peace. These meetings are just the first example of how the special relationship between the US and Israel manifested itself in the negotiations. During the sequestered talks at Camp David in the following year, this special relationship proved vital to Israel's achievement of a favorable outcome.

A little over a week after Carter's inauguration, Brzezinski met briefly with Dayan and the Israeli ambassador to the US, Simcha Dinitz, to update them on what actions the White House planned to take moving forward.<sup>33</sup> Brzezinski informed Dayan of Vance's planned visit to the region and was optimistic on the chance to make progress. Dayan was more measured in his assessment of the situation. While he acknowledged all countries in the region were more forthcoming at the moment, he recognized that many steps would have to be taken to narrow the gap between the Arab and Israeli positions. He restated that Israel was still willing to trade some withdrawal in exchange for peace. However, the level of withdrawal remained limited. In no scenario was Israel willing to accept full withdrawal to the 1967 borders in return for real peace.<sup>34</sup> As such, he believed the best that could be achieved was an end to the state of war and possibly further withdrawal from the Sinai. In addition, Dayan emphasized that the West Bank was different than the other occupied territories. He asserted that Israel had the right to be there; non-security issues factored into its calculations regarding the territory.<sup>35</sup>

Vance's meeting with Dayan the following week yielded many of the same results. Despite the limited picture of peace Dayan painted in his discussion with Brzezinski, Dayan expressed real optimism about the prospect of some peaceful

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<sup>33</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 2, 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*



resolution. Additionally, he believed Sadat truly wanted peace, as did Jordan and Palestine. Dayan was unsure whether they were willing to become party to a formal peace agreement, but he felt they wanted to see a “peaceful situation” established.<sup>36</sup> He proceeded to give an assessment of the positions of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia as he saw it. Of note is his belief that Palestinians were not strongly attached to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). If given the choice between citizenship under a Palestinian government, which Dayan presumed Yasser Arafat would head, or under Jordan, Dayan said that Palestinians would undoubtedly side with Jordan.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the peace process, Israel repeatedly assumed that Palestinians had a stronger affinity to Jordan than their own state, and this influenced procedural considerations regarding Palestinian representation at Geneva. Ultimately, while Dayan advocated for negotiations to begin immediately following the upcoming Israeli elections, he ensured to temper expectations. For him, only a settlement with limited withdrawal was possible.<sup>38</sup> The administration’s initial meetings with Dayan show how far off peace was, even when all parties claimed they wanted a settlement.

Secretary Vance’s objectives for his visit to Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon were both procedural and substantive. The Policy Review Committee on February 4 determined Vance should first attempt to reach an agreement on broad principles, which could be enacted through subsequent particularized agreements. Next, Vance should get the Arab states to be more specific on what they meant by peace. Finally, Vance should communicate to all parties that there was a difference between “secure defense lines” and ultimate sovereign borders. All this was to be done to give the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., doc. 4, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., doc. 4, 21.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., doc. 4, 23.

administration a better understanding of the positions of all parties and to lay the groundwork for settlements that could be reached, in principle, before the Geneva Conference even convened.<sup>39</sup>

The first stop on Vance's trip was Jerusalem, where he met first with Foreign Minister Yigal Allon and later with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. In these meetings, the secretary established Israel's basic positions on both substantive and procedural issues. Allon informed Vance that Israel was prepared to participate in the Geneva Conference at any moment, even prior to Israeli elections if necessary, given that the conference retained the same format as before. Israel took this position, noted Allon, because it did not want to be an obstacle to peace.<sup>40</sup> The appearance of being the party responsible for the failure of peace talks was a concern of each state and proved an important bargaining tool for the United States at Camp David. Procedurally, however, it would refuse a separate Palestinian delegation and would only allow Palestinians—including PLO representatives—to participate at Geneva in Jordan's delegation.<sup>41</sup> On substantive issues, Allon focused on conveying to Vance how integral defensible borders were to Israel. He believed that they could be achieved without annexing land populated by Arabs, but that Israel would not compromise on the matter; security guarantees were not enough.<sup>42</sup>

Allon also made an important comment on Israel's perception of the Arab negotiating strategy. He said, "The Arab strategy, particularly Sadat's strategy, is based on the belief that only America can deliver Israel. In the event that Israel refuses to be delivered, Sadat hopes to achieve a split between the US and Israel, but he is deluding

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., doc. 3, 6-7.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., doc. 6, 27-28.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., doc. 6, 28-29.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., doc. 6, 30-32.

himself.”<sup>43</sup> To a certain extent, as will be seen in Sadat’s relationship with Carter and the US, Allon was correct. Sadat depended on the US to pressure Israel into compromising on key points, such as withdrawal. This approach was contingent on the White House’s willingness to take the political risks that would result from forcing Israel’s hand. Because Carter was willing to take this chance, Sadat’s strategy brought at least limited success.

Vance’s meeting with Prime Minister Rabin addressed similar issues, but it was largely consumed with a presentation by Israel’s military intelligence director, Major General Schlomo Gazit. Before the presentation, Rabin made a concerted effort to reassert the special relationship between the US and Israel. In doing so, he set the tone for Gazit’s plea for continued and increased military assistance. Rabin contended that the relationship was “based on a common desire for peace and tranquility in this part of the world, in addition to shared basic values.” It could only be maintained through “frank and intimate consultations before taking actions” and a strong Israel.<sup>44</sup> Gazit’s presentation argued a case for increased American military support of Israel. While Rabin thanked Carter for the boost in aid, Gazit described an uncertain Arab world with improved military capabilities and advantages in troops. The result was heightened fear of another Arab surprise attack, akin to that in 1973. Because of the present situation, Israel therefore made further arms requests.<sup>45</sup> The Israeli government’s approach to the meeting shows its anxiety over the peace process. Although claiming to want peace, Israel was foremost concerned with maintaining its relationship with the United States. Carter’s apparent willingness to push Israel on key points alarmed Israeli leaders.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., doc. 6, 30.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., doc. 7, 38.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., doc. 7, 40-48.

Ultimately, the degree to which Carter was willing to force Israeli concessions—factoring in the political dangers of additional pressure—in part determined the final outcome at Camp David.

Following these meetings, Vance sent a telegram to Carter in which he detailed Rabin's main points to be addressed in a peace agreement, assessed Israel's perception of its current situation, and discussed the government's aid requests.<sup>46</sup> According to Vance, Rabin stressed three questions to be resolved through negotiations. First, what would the nature of the relationship between Israel and the Arab states be after the treaty? At issue was whether there would be full normalization of relations, with open diplomatic channels, exchange of ambassadors, and trade. Next, what would the final sovereign borders be? Rabin said Israel was willing to move back from current military lines, but that full withdrawal could not be accepted; defensible borders was his requirement. Vance took this to mean that there might be an opening to give sovereignty to the Arabs on specific territory while reaching an agreement for an Israeli security presence on the land. Finally, the Palestinian issue had to be resolved. Rabin pushed for bilateral negotiations with Jordan on this point and called for a Palestinian entity tied to Jordan, as opposed to an independent state. From these meetings, Vance concluded that his trip would be valuable in establishing important base positions from which negotiations could proceed.<sup>47</sup> He would seek out similar starting points in his other discussions with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Aside from substantive issues, Vance noted the manner in which the Israeli leadership went out of its way to restate the importance and vitality of the special relationship that existed between the two nations. He communicated how Israel, while

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., doc. 8, 52.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., doc. 8, 52-53.

making efforts to show its willingness to seriously discuss peace, was still falling back on its more strongly held positions of bolstering its economy and military through its close ties with the US.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, while Israel was willing to discuss peace, it was foremost concerned with maintaining its relationship with the United States. This aim is important to note going into the ultimate Camp David negotiations.

The secretary's next visit was to Cairo, where he met with Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy and President Sadat. In the first meeting, Fahmy emphasized Egypt's dire economic situation and how having to spend money on the military took away resources the government could be using to address its economic issues.<sup>49</sup> Egypt's economy, and the role it played in bringing Egypt to the negotiating table, will be considered in the next chapter. Nonetheless, the dire state of the Egyptian economy was a major concern for Sadat's government. Peace would mean less military spending and more funds for resolving economic problems. Apart from economic concerns, Fahmy was worried about the military imbalance in the Middle East between the Arab states and Israel. As a result, he requested additional arms from the US. He noted that if the two countries wanted to continue to further bilateral relations, Egypt's military needs had to be dealt with. Most importantly, Fahmy linked the arms imbalance to the vitality of peace talks. As long as Israel, with American support, remained militarily superior to the Arab nations, it would refuse to compromise.<sup>50</sup> "Only when the Israelis are not sure they can count on the US," said Fahmy, "will they listen. If they are certain of US support they will start to put conditions forward that they know will be rejected."<sup>51</sup> To conclude an agreement, he

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., doc. 8, 52; 56.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., doc. 9, 58.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 9, 59.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., doc. 9, 60.

argued that neither side could be negotiating from a position of weakness.<sup>52</sup> Fahmy was correct in his observation, and the ultimate outcome of the Camp David Accords was largely the product of how far the White House was willing to push Israel.

Later that day, Vance held a meeting with Sadat, in which they discussed both substantive and procedural issues as well as established a relationship between the two countries' administrations. The manner in which Sadat opened the meeting is representative of the way Sadat would relate to the United States throughout peace negotiations. While the State Department's note taker did not keep a verbatim record, he clearly used the language of the participants. Sadat opened the talks by "stating this was a happy occasion for him to meet and welcome Secretary Vance to Egypt as a friend and representative of a friendly country and a friendly President with whom he hoped to have the best of friendly relations."<sup>53</sup> Although diplomatic rhetoric often takes such a form and therefore should not be overestimated, Sadat's frequent emphasis throughout negotiations on referring to the US and Carter as a friend is indicative of the path he wanted the peace process to take. Sadat, in addition to peace, was concerned with establishing closer relations with the US. Egypt's negotiating strategy should be evaluated through this lens.

Following his opening remarks, the Egyptian president surveyed the history of American involvement in the Egyptian-Israeli peace process. Sadat concluded that the United States must actively participate in negotiations for peace to be achieved. Furthermore, he placed Egypt's full confidence in the Carter administration's ability to bring the parties together and negotiate a settlement.<sup>54</sup> Sadat agreed with Vance that

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., doc. 10, 67.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., doc. 10, 70.

Geneva was the best solution to move the process forward. He recognized the difficulty of convening it quickly, due to Israeli elections, but he stressed his willingness to go to Geneva as soon as possible.<sup>55</sup> On basic substantive issues, Sadat stated that withdrawal must be to the 1967 borders, with the potential for reciprocal territory adjustments in the West Bank.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, he proposed a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza that would be tied to Jordan in a confederation.<sup>57</sup> Above all, Sadat prioritized resolution of the Palestinian problem. To that end, he viewed Palestinian participation at Geneva (which would mean inclusion of the PLO) as essential.<sup>58</sup> Fahmy made this clear to Vance in their initial meeting, when he said that “he could not and would not wish to negotiate for others, including the Palestinians. Only the Palestinians can do this.”<sup>59</sup> Sadat changed his position on not negotiating for the Palestinians at Camp David. What caused this change in approach will be considered in the next chapter. Determining the motivation behind Sadat’s shift on requiring Palestinian representation in talks is key in understanding why Sadat ultimately accepted the agreement. The final substantive issue Vance raised was the nature of the peace between Israel and the Arab states. Israel, as seen above, demanded normalized relations. Sadat rejected this notion. He argued that peace agreements never included such a provision; he believed that it should be left up to future generations. First, a peace agreement was needed.<sup>60</sup> What form the nature of peace would take was a central issue at Camp David the following year.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., doc. 10, 71-72.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., doc. 10, 74.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., doc. 10, 73.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., doc. 10, 72.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., doc. 9, 63.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., doc. 10, 77.

Vance's talks with Israel and Egypt displayed the wide gulf between the two states' views on how peace in the Middle East should be achieved. As he observed in a telegram to the White House before he left Cairo, not only were their positions divergent, but the "suspicion and distrust of each other's intentions are profound and are matched by an almost total inability on each side to understand the other's political realities."<sup>61</sup> The Carter administration had an immense challenge to not only bring both countries to the table, but to ultimately produce an agreement acceptable to both states (or at least to the leaders of both states). In order to do so, Carter placed an emphasis on establishing personal relationships with both leaders—especially Sadat—which he could use as leverage if needed. Prior to even meeting with Sadat, Carter began building this relationship through Vance. Throughout the secretary's meeting with the Egyptian president, Sadat frequently expressed his confidence in Carter to bring about a settlement. Vance stressed this confidence in his telegram, noting Sadat said "I shall never let you down."<sup>62</sup> Sadat also expressed his commitment to peace in a private meeting with Vance. He was willing to do anything, according to Vance, in order to reach an agreement. He also claimed that he could get the Arabs to follow his lead as a result of his considerable influence in the region.<sup>63</sup> Sadat's private disclosures to Vance were significant because he was the only leader to make such explicit commitments in private. These commitments proved crucial in allowing Carter agency in altering minute details in the final agreement to accommodate Israel while still abiding by Sadat's broader demands.

Because Carter's original goal was to reconvene the Geneva Conference, Vance also visited Jordan and Syria to form relationships with King Hussein and President

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., doc. 11, 81.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., doc. 11, 82.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., doc. 11, 83.



Hafez al-Assad and to assess their positions on procedural and substantive issues.<sup>64</sup> The meetings dealt with the same issues that Vance addressed in Egypt and Israel. Jordan and Syria expressed similar positions to Egypt on substantive issues: peace does not mean normalization of relations; must be full withdrawal to the 1967 borders; and a Palestinian entity must be created.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, both King Hussein and Assad believed that Palestinian representation—potentially including PLO members—was essential. However, compared to Sadat, both leaders were pessimistic about the possibility of reconvening the Geneva Conference. King Hussein remarked that Sadat was too openly optimistic about the conference's prospects; such optimism could lead to Arab fragmentation, which Hussein and Vance believed had to be prevented.<sup>66</sup> Coupled with Syria's preference for a unified Arab delegation at Geneva, the lack of optimism on the part of Hussein and Assad represented a distinct divide with Sadat on peace.<sup>67</sup> Although all sides were willing to discuss peace, only Sadat was open to taking prompt action toward a resolution. Sadat's personal convictions, the current economic state of Egypt, and assumption that the Arab world unwaveringly supported Egypt help explain why Egypt ultimately broke from the Arab world to conclude peace. These factors will be considered in the next chapter.

Vance's trip was successful in forming relationships with the leaders of the principal states and establishing the initial positions of each country. In his memoir, Vance recalled that four fundamental issues arose in these discussions. There was disagreement over what the nature of peace would be, what the final boundaries would

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<sup>64</sup> As this paper focuses on the Camp David Accords, the Carter administration's dealings with the other Arab states will be considered only in passing.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, docs. 12, 14, 15.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 12, 89.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 15, 119.

be, what the status of a future Palestinian entity would be, and how the Arabs would come to Geneva and if the Palestinians and PLO would be included.<sup>68</sup> These four issues, minus the procedural concerns, ultimately shaped negotiations at Camp David.

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Carter believed he should play an active role in the peace process by cultivating relationships with his Arab and Israeli counterparts. To create these relationships, the White House decided to invite Rabin, Sadat, and King Hussein to Washington. Carter would play a key role in forcing concessions from every side. The meetings, as Vance described in his memoir,

would demonstrate that the president was committing his personal prestige and influence to the peace process. The best way of bringing the sides, especially the Israelis, to face up to hard, dangerous choices was for Carter to intervene directly in the negotiating process at critical moments. Without his personal involvement, it was unlikely that the leaders, Arab or Israeli, would have sufficient confidence to take the necessary risks to achieve peace.<sup>69</sup>

Negotiations required the president to put his own credibility on the line in order to demonstrate how seriously he took the peace process. Carter's willingness to get actively involved in situations that had a high risk of failure again shows his dedication to achieving peace over and above securing basic strategic goals in the region. Going into the meetings, the Arab leaders held "a spirit of hope and cautious optimism," according to Vance. The Israelis, on the other hand, were more anxious about the course being

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<sup>68</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 169-71.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

embarked on and feared the potential consequences of such actions.<sup>70</sup> This reticence set the stage for the first meeting with Rabin.

By all accounts, Carter's talks with Rabin did not go well.<sup>71</sup> Rabin refused to cede any ground or show genuine interest in peace. In their second meeting, Carter expressed explicit frustration with him. He accused the prime minister of being less flexible than he was when Vance was in Israel and pushed him to become more specific and concrete in addressing various peace scenarios.<sup>72</sup> Carter acknowledged Rabin's political realities, but he stressed the need to work toward new solutions. Following the formal meetings, Carter retired with Rabin to the Residence to have a personal, informal exchange. He would do this with each leader. Carter described Rabin in his diary as "very timid, stubborn, and also somewhat ill at ease."<sup>73</sup> When asked what he wanted Carter to specifically get out of the Arab leaders, Rabin did not respond. Carter concluded that "the Israelis, at least Rabin, don't trust our government or any of their neighbors. I guess there's some justification for this distrust."<sup>74</sup> The fruitless visit led the president to wonder whether the White House should even engage in a large peace initiative.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, it prompted backlash from the American Jewish community, as noted earlier in this chapter. Brzezinski expected Israeli opposition. He shared the Carter administration's belief that Israel was trying to buy time and was more interested in preserving an exclusive relationship with the United States than achieving comprehensive

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 280; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 90.

<sup>72</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 20, 149; 151-52.

<sup>73</sup> Jimmy Carter, "Monday, March 7, 1977," in *White House Diary* (New York: Picador, 2011), 31.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>75</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 280.

peace. The difficulty going forward was how Washington could maintain its relationship with Israel while also opening new ties to the Arab states.<sup>76</sup>

Despite this setback and domestic pressure, Carter spoke out in a favor of a Palestinian homeland the next week.<sup>77</sup> He also shook the hands of PLO representatives at a United Nations event. This was a sensitive action because Kissinger had promised the US would not deal with the PLO until they accepted UN Security Council Resolution 242 and Israel's right to exist.<sup>78</sup> The president's commitment to pushing toward peace, which included progressive actions such as those above, shows his personal, rather than strategic, resolve to bring peace to the Middle East.

The most important relationship Carter cultivated in the Middle East peace process was that with Sadat. Not only would it turn into a personal friendship, but it would be a central tool Carter utilized to bring about a final agreement at Camp David. Sadat came to Washington in early April. In the first meeting between the two leaders, it became clear that both sought to form a friendship with the other. Carter opened with a typical diplomatic salutation, praising Sadat for his "forceful moves" toward peace and expressing admiration for the Egyptian people.<sup>79</sup> Drawing on this, Sadat furthered the friendly atmosphere by connecting to Carter on a personal level. Sadat emphasized their similar origins; both men came from "villages" and shared common principles of "the sense of limits, of family ties, of love of the land." He determined that Carter was the man needed to help end the conflict in the Middle East. "You come from a village like I do. We share the same principles," said Sadat, "and have the same type of religious

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<sup>76</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 92-93.

<sup>77</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 23, 164.

<sup>78</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 281. Resolution 242 was passed after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and dealt with establishing peace negotiations. It controversially calls for Israeli withdrawal.

<sup>79</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 25, 166.

background. I feel that we can do a lot together.”<sup>80</sup> Sadat went on to speak of the central role the United States needed to play if there was to be peace. He believed the US served as a balancing force in the region—both sides trusted and respected it.<sup>81</sup> Carter concluded his final meeting with Sadat with his most personal remarks to any foreign leader involved in the Middle East peace process. Carter said, “I want to thank you, President Sadat, for coming. You have caused me a problem, however. Now all my family want to go to Egypt.”<sup>82</sup> As Carter’s comments suggest, the two leaders formed a close friendship from the beginning, and this friendship proved instrumental at Camp David.

Carter himself immediately realized the potential impact of their relationship. In his diary, Carter wrote, “If he should become a personal ally, I think that would be significant to him and me. I believe he’ll be a great aid if we get down to the final discussions in the Middle East.”<sup>83</sup> Following their personal meeting in the Residence, which was much more productive than the one Carter had with Begin, Carter told his wife, Rosalynn, that it had been his best day as president.<sup>84</sup> Their friendship was natural from the beginning. The president recalled that they began to learn each other’s life stories, hometowns, families, and private and public ambitions, “as though we were tying ourselves together for a lifetime.”<sup>85</sup> Carter believed they had a true, close friendship.

Members of Carter’s administration also recognized the special nature of their relationship. Vance noted the two men developed “a special bond of trust and

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., doc. 25, 167.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., doc. 25, 171.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., doc. 27, 190.

<sup>83</sup> Carter, “Monday, April 4,” in *White House Diary*, 38.

<sup>84</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 284.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 284.

confidence.”<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, he recognized the advantage their close ties would provide in negotiations. Vance characterized the overall nature of the relationship as one based on mutual trust: “Because Sadat trusted Carter, he was repeatedly willing to take Carter’s word that a given step was necessary; and because Carter truly believed Sadat wanted peace, he was willing to take repeated political risks to maintain momentum of the negotiations process.”<sup>87</sup> Carter was able to extract concessions from Sadat because the Egyptian president believed Carter had true peace in mind. Accordingly, Carter demonstrated his commitment to peace through the risks he was willing to take to push the process forward. As the relationship developed, Carter’s motivation for a peace agreement stemmed not only from his personal desire for peace, but from the friendship he had built with Sadat and the obligations that flowed from such a relationship.<sup>88</sup> Brzezinski observed the effects of their relationship on Carter’s motivations in his memoir. He wrote, “For Carter, Sadat was quite literally family, in the Southern sense. Carter identified with Sadat in an extraordinary way. There was also a bit of hero worship. I almost felt a degree of deference in Carter’s feeling, a touch of loving envy for Sadat’s boldness and a great deal of protective concern.”<sup>89</sup> Sadat reciprocated Carter’s feelings. In his autobiography, Sadat praised the American president’s honesty; he felt a connection to Carter because of their strong faiths and humble origins.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 174.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>88</sup> The depth of Carter’s friendship with Sadat is demonstrated by Carter’s choice to open the Middle East peace section of his memoir with a lengthy recollection of Sadat’s assassination. In it, he expressed his desire to attend Sadat’s funeral in a personal, not professional, capacity. See: Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 269-72.

<sup>89</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 24.

<sup>90</sup> Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 302.

Substantively, Sadat did not alter the positions he stated to Vance on his trip to Cairo. He reiterated his points on borders and withdrawal. Regarding the Sinai, Sadat asserted that under no scenario would he allow Israeli soldiers to remain in any capacity.<sup>91</sup> The lengthiest part of the discussion concentrated on the nature of the peace. Carter tried to push Sadat to accept normalization of relations and open borders from the moment an agreement was implemented, but Sadat refused. He believed that normalization could only occur after they ended the state of belligerency and people could forget the past.<sup>92</sup> Although Carter was not able to persuade Sadat, he noted that the conversation was nonetheless productive and helpful. It set the tone for future negotiations between the two men.<sup>93</sup>

The Israeli parliamentary election on May 18, 1977 delivered a shock to the peace process in Likud's surprising victory over Labor. The American Embassy in Tel Aviv attributed the result to the uncertainty of American-Israeli relations as a result of the peace process. American Ambassador Warren Christopher noted that "the Israeli electorate foresees hard times ahead and has prepared to batten down the hatches by taking a strong swing to the right."<sup>94</sup> Concerns over the US-Israeli relationship were not limited to Israel. The American Jewish community expressed similar fears during a meeting with Carter and his cabinet in early July. Rabbi Alexander Schindler noted that the Jewish community felt unsure of the White House's commitment to Israel.<sup>95</sup> While Carter attempted to reassure him about his administration's unwavering commitment to Israel's security, his remarks did not fully alleviate the strong criticism he was facing.

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<sup>91</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 25, 170.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 25, 172-73.

<sup>93</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 283.

<sup>94</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 35, 266.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 49, 330.

Carter's resolve in face of harsh domestic criticism indicates his desire to achieve genuine peace, regardless of the political consequences.

Menachem Begin became the Israeli prime minister. His positions on key issues were extreme, making peace seem more unattainable. Carter worried about Begin's effect on the peace process as soon as he learned of the prime minister's positions. In his diary, Carter recalled an interview of Begin he saw on television. Carter wrote, "It was frightening to watch his adamant position on issues that must be resolved if a Middle Eastern peace settlement is going to be realized."<sup>96</sup> Most concerning was Begin's stance on the West Bank. Contrary to the positions of prior Israeli leaders, Begin believed that the West Bank was an integral part of Israeli sovereignty. Further, he claimed Israel liberated it during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.<sup>97</sup> For Begin, there would be no Palestinian entity in the West Bank. He went so far as to refer to the West Bank as Judea and Samaria, its biblical names, throughout negotiations. Nonetheless, Carter remained hopeful as he prepared for his meeting with Begin in July.

The meetings between Carter and Begin in Washington were tense and emotional, with few substantive or procedural gains resulting from them. However, they helped to establish the new Israeli government's positions on Middle East peace. Carter opened the meeting with his desire to cultivate a personal friendship with Begin and stated that the United States sought only to be an intermediary and would not impose any solution on Israel. He then gave an account of American views on the major issues, including UN Resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis of negotiations.<sup>98</sup> From there, Begin launched into

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<sup>96</sup> Carter, "Monday, May 23, 1977," in *White House Diary*, 56.

<sup>97</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 288.

<sup>98</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 52, 337. Resolution 338 was passed after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. It called for a ceasefire and for the terms of Resolution 242 to be implemented.



a long speech in which he recounted the history of the Jewish plight, the Arab-Israeli wars, and the current state of Israeli national security.<sup>99</sup> Throughout he emphasized the peril Israel faced and the grave nature of the situation. “We cannot allow our people to be destroyed,” exclaimed Begin, and “we cannot play with the lives of our children.”<sup>100</sup> Begin employed these emotional appeals in an attempt to show that Israel’s national security policy was not one of expansionism. Any territorial gains, according to him, were necessary defensive measures.<sup>101</sup> Carter saw this as problematic, because it called into question the viability of Resolution 242. However, Begin agreed to both Resolution 242 and 338 as being the basis for negotiations.<sup>102</sup> Despite this, he outright rejected the creation of a Palestinian homeland.<sup>103</sup>

Next, Begin presented an Israeli framework for peace, which was mostly a procedural document dealing with reconvening the Geneva Convention. The proposal called for negotiations to be based on Resolutions 242 and 338, for there to be separate delegations from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, for there to be no preconditions, and for three separate peace treaties to be concluded, which meant open borders and normalization.<sup>104</sup> Carter responded by saying the proposal was in many ways encouraging, but that it presented a number of obstacles to peace. Refusal to address ultimate borders was a problem, but Israel had the right to not negotiate final borders until Geneva. However, Carter stressed that settlements were having a deteriorative effect on negotiations. Failure to halt them until at least Geneva could derail the peace process. Finally, Carter

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., doc. 52, 340-344.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., doc. 52, 340; 343.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., doc. 52, 342-43.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., doc. 52, 344.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., doc. 54, 358.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., doc. 52, 352-53.

noted that there must be Palestinian representation at Geneva.<sup>105</sup> None of these issues were resolved in Washington, but the initial exchange of positions proved helpful in moving forward in negotiations. Carter recalled in his diary that he found Begin to be “quite congenial, dedicated, sincere, and deeply religious.” Furthermore, Carter believed he would be a good partner in the process, despite his stubbornness, as he agreed to keep an open mind.<sup>106</sup> The president’s relationship with Begin never became as close as his friendship with Sadat. Begin’s meticulous attention to detail, though, made such a relationship less important. As will be discussed later, Carter was able to utilize his closer friendship with Sadat to gain concessions and bring Sadat closer to Begin’s positions.

The next few months of negotiations were characterized by American mediation between Israel and the Arab states in order to bring them together at Geneva. The United State became more actively involved at this stage and drew up a list of five key principles to present to the parties on Vance’s trip to the Middle East in August. The principles included both procedural and substantive points which would need to be addressed before convening the conference. Procedurally, the White House stated that the goal was a comprehensive peace agreement and that the basis for negotiations were Resolutions 242 and 338. Substantively, the administration called for the end of belligerency and normalization of relations, withdrawal to “mutually agreed secure and recognized borders,” and the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian entity which could have social and economic ties to Israel. Regarding the Palestinian entity, there should be an element of self-determination for the Palestinians to decide their future status.<sup>107</sup> While both sides

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., doc. 52, 346-47.

<sup>106</sup> Carter, “July 19, 1977” in *White House Diary*, 71.

<sup>107</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 54, 360-61.

found issue with different parts of the principles, it represented the first American document put forward in an attempt to bridge the gap between Israel and the Arab states.

Through the summer and fall relations between the US and Israel became more strained as a result of the peace process. First, American and Israeli differences over the legality of settlements became pronounced when Begin recognized three existing settlements in the West Bank that had previously been declared illegal. Begin's move prompted Vance to send a telegram to the American ambassador in Tel Aviv urging him to convey the White House's belief that all settlement activity damaged peace negotiations.<sup>108</sup> Vance noted that such actions confirmed the "fears of the Arabs that the new Israeli Government intends to pursue an essentially annexationist policy with regard to the West Bank."<sup>109</sup> Carter was particularly troubled by Begin's recognition of the settlements because it violated a gentlemen's agreement they loosely agreed to when Begin was in Washington. In exchange for Carter not publicly speaking about his support for the 1967 borders, Begin had agreed to show moderation on the settlement issue.<sup>110</sup> Legalizing new settlements a week after their talks concluded called into question Begin's seriousness regarding peace.

Relations became further strained when Carter refused Begin's request for exclusive access to the American five principles proposal. Begin had become worried that by discussing its position on borders in private with Arab leaders, the United States was essentially imposing a precondition on the Geneva talks regarding final boundaries. He saw this as a contradiction of the American belief that the ultimate borders would be

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., doc. 59, 369-70.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., doc. 59, 369.

<sup>110</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 100.

determined through negotiations at Geneva.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, he asked that Vance withhold the principles on which Israel disagreed from the Arabs. Presenting them would position all parties against Israel. Begin closed by reasserting that it was not an issue of policy, but of life for Israel.<sup>112</sup> Carter responded by acknowledging Begin's concerns but pledged to give all sides the same chance to present their views on the proposal, for it was only proper. The goal of the principles, according to Carter, was "bridging gaps and overcoming obstacles on the way to a peaceful settlement."<sup>113</sup> Not showing them to the Arab leaders would render them useless. Carter's response indicates that, at this stage in the process, he was more concerned with reaching a peace agreement than minimizing fallout from strained US-Israeli relations. Therefore, Carter's desire for peace represents the most important motivation for pushing toward a settlement at this point in negotiations.

The key substantive development from Vance's August trip was the emergence of the West Bank transitional proposal. Its basic concept would ultimately serve as the model for the final agreement at Camp David the following year.<sup>114</sup> The proposal essentially called for a trusteeship over Palestine for an undefined period of time which would end in Palestinian self-determination.<sup>115</sup> In addition, Sadat declared for the first time that he would be willing to conclude a separate peace treaty with Israel if the other Arab states could not reach an agreement.<sup>116</sup> As a result, the initial seeds for Camp David

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<sup>111</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, 372-73.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>114</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 187.

<sup>115</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 65, 383.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 64, 382.

were planted during Vance's August trip. Carter would fall back on Sadat's willingness to deal with Israel independently when negotiations stalled later that year.

Carter was motivated to engage in the Middle East peace process due to his personal desire to have a region at peace, for a secure Israel, and for the Palestinians. There is no doubt that geopolitical interests played a role in American involvement in negotiations. However, emphasizing keeping the Soviets out of the Middle East and Israel's security ignores the president's fierce commitment to true and balanced peace. Carter's willingness to risk electoral defeat—to pressure Israel against domestic opposition—displays his strongly held belief in neutral, but fair, peace. His desire to directly participate in negotiations and cultivate relationships with his Egyptian and Israeli counterparts shows his disposition toward peace. Ultimately, his personal involvement would prove essential in reaching a peace treaty.

## Chapter Two

Like the United States, Egypt also made achieving peace in the Middle East a primary foreign policy goal ahead of Carter taking office in 1977. Along with his fellow Arab leaders, Sadat pledged to move forward on negotiations in the hope of concluding a comprehensive peace agreement that addressed both the Palestinian issue and the Sinai Peninsula. Before Carter's inauguration, Sadat and King Hussein issued a statement calling for a return to the Geneva Conference with the PLO representing Palestine as an equal party. In addition, they emphasized the need for a Palestinian state with a strong link to Jordan. A CIA analysis of the statement, recently released under the Freedom of Information Act, noted that it was intended to display Arab solidarity on the issue and put pressure on Israel to engage in the peace process in good faith.<sup>1</sup> From the beginning of Carter's presidency, Sadat pushed for progress.

Sadat ultimately broke with the rest of the Arab world to make peace with Israel. As a result, Egypt, which was the seat of the Arab League since its inception in 1945, was kicked out of the alliance for ten years and had no diplomatic relations with Arab states for eight years.<sup>2</sup> Because the cost of peace was so high, Sadat's motivations in concluding peace with Israel independently must be considered. What prompted Sadat to ignore his Arab brothers and recognize Israel? What role did Sadat's personal desire for peace play in negotiations? How did Egypt's struggling economy influence Sadat's disposition toward peace? An analysis of CIA reports, US State Department documents, memoirs of key officials, and Sadat's own writing suggests that Egypt's dire economy,

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<sup>1</sup> "Egypt-Jordan: Sadat, Hussein Statement," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d517709, January 17, 1977, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d517709>.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Cowell, "After Summit, a New Look for Egypt," *New York Times*, November 13, 1987, A3.

coupled with Sadat's own propensity for peace, drove Egypt's involvement in peace negotiations.

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Egypt's economy was struggling during the latter half of 1976 and into early 1977. An analysis of Sadat's domestic position in Egypt by the CIA noted that while Sadat likely did not face a significant challenge to power, the country's economy could pose problems for him.<sup>3</sup> Egypt faced stagnant economic growth, increased cost of living with no increase in overall income, and expensive subsidies that were difficult to support due to resource shortages. In addition, because of Sadat's softening of relations with Israel through the Sinai disengagement agreements, Arab economic support had wavered. Despite Egypt's weak economy, the report characterized his regime as stable. The CIA reached this conclusion in part because of Sadat's overwhelming domestic popularity. Although declining since the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, it was still strong; many Egyptians favored Sadat's "Egypt-first" approach and believed Egypt had assumed too much of the burden regarding Israel. Finally, the analysis described Sadat's "sense of mission" as an important asset for the Egyptian president. "He has a vision of what he wants Egypt to become and a strategy for achieving his goals, both in the Arab-Israeli context and in the Arab world at large," stated the report.<sup>4</sup> Egypt's struggling economy represented a long-term issue for Sadat; while it did not pose an immediate threat to his power, unaddressed it may have.

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<sup>3</sup> "Egypt: Sadat's Domestic Position," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d517771, June 1, 1976, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d517771>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Successful negotiations toward peace in the Middle East would serve to distract Egyptians from their economic plight. A CIA paper prepared for Brzezinski during the transition period between Carter's election and inauguration emphasized the importance of the peace process to Sadat's domestic stability. The paper observed that Sadat's position would become increasingly fragile if the economy did not improve in 1977, or if there were no developments in peace negotiations. "Progress toward a peace settlement," the analysis noted, "would reinforce Sadat's credibility, lessen the military's urgency about securing new sources of arms, and divert popular attention from economic grievances."<sup>5</sup> The need for an external distraction from the economic concerns of many citizens became even more pronounced after a series of food riots across Egypt. The riots resulted from new austerity measures that decreased a number of food subsidies. The national intelligence daily cable from January 19, 1977 reported that the "intensity and spontaneity" of the protests surprised Cairo. In addition, the CIA concluded that the riots were not the result of organized activity among leftist agitators, as the Egyptian government claimed. Therefore, the sudden unrest displayed the "widespread depth of feeling over economic grievances."<sup>6</sup> Sadat needed to take action to address his country's domestic problems. As the CIA's national intelligence estimate on Egypt observed, it was unlikely that there would be substantial economic improvement during 1977.<sup>7</sup> Thus,

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<sup>5</sup> "The Situation in the Middle East: The Arab Peace Offensive," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d5176ff, January 4, 1977, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d5176ff>.

<sup>6</sup> "Egypt: Widespread Rioting," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d5176fc, January 19, 1977, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d5176fc>.

<sup>7</sup> "National Intelligence Estimate: Egypt—1977," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d5176f5, February 3, 1977, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d5176f5>.



participation in the peace process enabled him to refocus his peoples' concerns to external problems, where a solution was more apparent.

The United States took prompt action to address Egypt's economic troubles in an effort to improve relations ahead of the resumption of peace negotiations. On February 2, 1977 the Carter administration gave Egypt an additional \$190 million in aid.<sup>8</sup> The American aid was immediately raised in Vance's initial meeting with Egyptian leaders during his February trip to the Middle East. Foreign Minister Fahmy opened the meeting by thanking Carter for the support and requesting further US aid, as well as American support in international organizations.<sup>9</sup> Fahmy believed that economic stability was closely linked to political stability. As such, both had to be secured if Egypt was to have a large role in the peace process.<sup>10</sup> Later that day, Sadat similarly expressed his appreciation for the aid.<sup>11</sup> As previously noted, the Egyptian government informed Vance that its push for peace was in part the result of wanting to spend more money internally, on its people and the economy, than externally on bolstering a stronger military.<sup>12</sup> This idea was echoed throughout the region and can therefore be seen as an important impetus for peace.<sup>13</sup>

Egypt's economic situation also played a role in its willingness to break from the Arab world and sign a peace treaty with Israel. During the summer of 1977 the CIA ordered a report on the potential economic consequences of a comprehensive peace

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<sup>8</sup> "U.S. Plans to Bolster Aid to Egypt by \$190 Million to East Unrest," *New York Times*, February 2, 1977, A20.

<sup>9</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Arab-Israeli Dispute, January 1977-August 1978*, vol. VIII, ed. Adam M. Howard (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2013), doc. 9, 57.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 9, 58.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 10, 67.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 9, 58.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 16, 125.

agreement.<sup>14</sup> The report discussed the various advantages such a peace deal would bring to each state involved in negotiations. First, in line with what the states themselves were highlighting, the analysis concluded that peace would allow the confrontation states to decrease defense budgets and enjoy economic gains as a result. Israel would benefit the most from decreasing defense spending, as its economy was hit the hardest following the 1973 War. In contrast, the Arab states, with the exception of Egypt, saw improved economies. The report described Egypt as having a “serious guns-or butter dilemma,” as evidenced by the January food riots. The Egyptian government did not have the capacity to support the military and civilian sectors simultaneously. Thus, reduced defense spending would have allowed for a much needed reallocation of resources. Furthermore, unlike the other Arab states, Egypt had important resources restricted due to belligerency with Israel. It could not exploit the oil in the Gulf of Suez because of Israeli harassment; similarly, it could not widen or deepen the Suez Canal. Peace would lead to billions of dollars in revenue from the sale of oil and canal passage fees. Finally, peace would solidify the confidence of private sector foreign investment, which was a major emphasis of Sadat’s “open door” economic policy meant to revitalize the Egyptian economy.<sup>15</sup> Such favorable economic gains made Egypt particularly disposed to peace among the Arab states. When talks stalled in the fall of 1977, these economic pressures factored into Sadat’s decision to begin seeking peace without the partnership of his Arab allies.

The relationship Egypt sought to build with the United States—to become the key American Arab ally—represents another Egyptian motivation for seeking peace. As

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<sup>14</sup> “Economic Consequences of a Middle East Peace Settlement,” prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d517703, July 1, 1977, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d517703>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

evidenced above, Egypt's dire economy prompted the need for increased foreign investment. American aid was already going to the country, but Cairo desired more, both economic and military.<sup>16</sup> Both forms would benefit the economy, for military aid, like economic, would allow resources to be allocated toward improving the overall standard of living through various economic projects. In his meeting with Carter in April 1977, Sadat pushed for a closer relationship between the two countries. He called for there to be "mutual understanding and friendship."<sup>17</sup> Carter shared Sadat's goal of achieving stronger ties with Egypt. He believed there was a definite possibility that the United States' economic, military, and political relationship with Egypt would be just as strong as that with Israel ten years in the future.<sup>18</sup> As Brzezinski remarked in his memoir, Sadat may have desired to utilize his friendship with Carter to build on the American-Egyptian relationship and perhaps displace Israel as the United States' closest ally in the region.<sup>19</sup> Carter was able to use the potential for a closer relationship to gain concessions from Sadat, as will be seen in the next chapter.

The clearest evidence of the Egyptian desire for closer ties with the US, however, are Sadat's own writings. His autobiography, *In Search of Identity*, was published in March 1978 (six months prior to the Accords). As with all memoirs, Sadat's autobiography must be considered carefully, in light of its intended purpose and audience. Because it was published following Sadat's trip to Jerusalem but before the final negotiations took place, the book was likely an appeal for peace to both the Arabs and Israelis, but also to the United States. Wanting to emphasize the potential for strong

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<sup>16</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 9, 58-59.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 25, 168.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 25, 176.

<sup>19</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1983), 236.

US-Egyptian relations, Sadat argued that ninety-nine percent of American interests in the region were in Arab countries.<sup>20</sup> Sadat asserted that Egypt safeguarded American interests more than Israel did. He repeatedly called the US a friend and noted that Egypt was not opposed to American aid to Israel; the only problematic aspect was Israel's expansionism. Sadat wished that the US would, in his view, stop letting Israel dictate its policies and act in accordance with its own interests.<sup>21</sup> Then, writing directly to the American people, Sadat emphatically stated, "We are ready for peace. We want it and welcome it."<sup>22</sup> Sadat's explicit address of the American people shows his attempt to bolster the public's perception of Egypt, in the hope of garnering more rewarding ties with the United States.

Another element in the Egyptian calculus regarding peace was Sadat's own personal desire for peace in the Middle East. Throughout his writings, Sadat frequently discussed how much he wanted peace. He couched the majority of his actions vis-à-vis Israel as moves toward an ultimate agreement. Because his autobiography was written in the midst of the process, it must be treated with care. Rhetoric cannot be taken to be reality. Additionally, his later book, *Those I Have Known*, published after his assassination in 1981, must similarly be read with caution. However, Sadat's personal inclination toward peace needs to be considered, as it represents a potential explanation for his willingness to split with the Arab world. Furthermore, as will be shown in the next chapter, it also caused division within the Egyptian delegation itself. Whether or not the extent to which he emphasized peace in his writings actually comported with his

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<sup>20</sup> Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: HarperCollins, 1978), 300.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

beliefs at the time, it shows how he wanted his actions to be perceived, and therefore is an important explanatory factor in Egypt's actions.

Sadat prided himself on calling for peace even before the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. In 1971, he addressed the Egyptian parliament and expressed his desire for peace, based on UN Security Council Resolution 242. He described his move as a “stunning surprise to the world at large” and far more progressive than any other Arab leader at the time.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, he characterized the call for peace as divergent from the Egyptian political class but in line with the true desires of the Egyptian people. All this was done, according to Sadat, “because I really wanted peace.”<sup>24</sup> Later, when Sadat returned the bodies of fallen Israeli soldiers from the 1973 War without negotiations, he said he did so for peace. Sadat felt that “for peace a man may, even should, do everything in his power. Nothing in this world could rank higher than peace.”<sup>25</sup> When he reopened the Suez Canal in 1975 for the first time since the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, he further utilized the language of peace. Eschewing the potential risks associated with opening it while Israeli forces remained within range, Sadat again noted that he did so because of peace.<sup>26</sup> Although Sadat's lofty rhetoric should not be taken too seriously, it shows how he wanted his efforts to be perceived. It displays how central peace was to his conception of Middle East relations. Whether or not these moves were actually carried out solely in search of peace, they represent how important Sadat thought peace to be, and how he viewed everything through such a lens. Thus, the pursuit of peace played a vital role in Sadat's calculations of Egyptian actions.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 273-74.

The Egyptian president's disposition toward peace may also explain Egypt's break from the Arab world. As noted above, Sadat found pride in Egypt's progressiveness on peace vis-à-vis the rest of the Arab states. In *Those I Have Known*, he analyzed the Arab position and found it restrictive and unproductive. Sadat recalled that Begin often challenged the Arabs to negotiate, for how could they expect to regain land without talking to the state currently in possession of it.<sup>27</sup> This stance was shared by the world at large. Sadat, finding merit in Begin's comments, wrote,

Our image before the world was truly an ugly one. We were calling for our land, but we were refusing to ask it of those who occupied it. We were calling for our rights, but we were refusing to sit down with those who had deprived us of them. All we did—what the Arabs still do, even now—was to sit in our capitals and issue warnings to Israel and her friends. The world heard those threats and warnings and laughed scornfully at us, making fun of our peculiar methods of obtaining our rights and recovering our occupied land.<sup>28</sup>

He recognized that the Arab position on indefinitely forgoing dialogue with Israel until withdrawal to the 1967 borders was guaranteed was fruitless. Peace could not be achieved without constructive discussion with all parties. Thus, Sadat departed from the traditional Arab stance and moved forward alone in search of peace. His trip to Jerusalem in November 1977 was the first step toward concluding peace without Egypt's Arab allies.

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<sup>27</sup> Anwar el-Sadat, *Those I Have Known* (New York: Continuum, 1984), 102.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Throughout the fall of 1977, negotiations to reconvene Geneva continued between the United States, Israel, and the Arab states. In addition to Vance's August trip to the region, the secretary and Carter met with the foreign ministers of the respective countries during the UN General Assembly meetings in September and October. Foreign Minister Dayan of Israel was more progressive in his outlook than Israel previously had been. Carter opened the meeting by saying that the Arabs had been more flexible than Israel lately, and that it was time for Israel to take action to realistically work toward Geneva; that included implementing a settlement freeze.<sup>29</sup> While he could not definitively speak for Begin, Dayan agreed that such a freeze would be helpful, and intimated that it may occur.<sup>30</sup> As Carter noted in his memoir, Begin ultimately would not impose a settlement freeze.<sup>31</sup> On procedural issues, Dayan stated that Israel would accept a unified Arab delegation to open the conference, but would then require bilateral negotiations on territorial issues. He also said that PLO members could participate as part of this unified delegation and become part of Jordan's delegation during bilateral talks.<sup>32</sup> Dayan's statements represented a departure from Israel's adamant stances on procedural issues. Carter believed that if Dayan was speaking accurately for Begin, there could be a productive Geneva Conference.<sup>33</sup>

A few weeks later, the United States and the Soviet Union, in their capacity as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, issued a joint statement laying out the centrality of the conference to resolving the conflict in the Middle East and enumerating the issues to be agreed upon at the conference. The October 1 Joint Statement noted that Israel had to

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<sup>29</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 106, 533-34.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 106, 544-46.

<sup>31</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1982), 292.

<sup>32</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 106, 537, 545.

<sup>33</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 293.

withdraw to the 1967 borders, that the Palestinian question had to be resolved with recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, and that normal relations between the two sides had to be established.<sup>34</sup> In his memoir, Vance wrote that he saw the communiqué as a necessary move to bring in the Soviets, who up until then had remained largely on the sidelines.<sup>35</sup> The statement was met with rebuke on both sides, but the Israelis were particularly upset. In a follow-up meeting on October 4 between Carter, Vance, and Dayan, Dayan declared the document unacceptable to Israel. He said that if it was the basis for talks at Geneva, Israel would refuse to participate.<sup>36</sup> Vance recalled that Dayan had particular trouble with the statement because it mentioned the “legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.”<sup>37</sup> While Carter described the meeting as productive in his diary, it did not produce substantive or procedural gains. Furthermore, it displayed Israel’s increasing intractability. Carter remarked in his diary that Israel was at that point “by far the most obstinate and difficult” negotiating partner.<sup>38</sup>

Although discussions with Israel did not yield results, the United States had reasonable success in talks with Egypt. A memorandum of conversation is not extant, but Carter noted in his diary that Fahmy welcomed the US-Soviet statement. Fahmy also delivered a personal letter from Sadat. The letter asked Carter to not intervene in a way that would prevent direct negotiations between Egypt and Israel, with American mediation, either before or after the Geneva Conference.<sup>39</sup> The letter shows that even prior to Sadat’s initiative to visit Jerusalem, Egypt was already considering breaking from

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<sup>34</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 120, 635.

<sup>35</sup> Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America’s Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 191.

<sup>36</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 124, 653.

<sup>37</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 193.

<sup>38</sup> Jimmy Carter, “October 4, 1977,” in *White House Diary* (New York: Picador, 2011), 113.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.



the Arab world and holding bilateral talks with Israel. Significantly, in light of Carter's meeting later that day with Dayan, the president referred to Egypt as "the most forthcoming and cooperative nation in the Middle East in working toward a peace settlement."<sup>40</sup>

The White House drew on Cairo's cooperation later that month when procedural talks hit a stalemate. On October 21, Carter sent a private handwritten letter to Sadat. In it, Carter asked for Sadat's help and drew on the personal relationship they had developed. Carter wrote:

Dear President Sadat,

When we met privately in the White House, 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. Secretary Vance has provided clarifications to many of your questions regarding the procedures outlined in the United States working paper. There is adequate flexibility in the language to accommodate your concerns. The time has now come to move forward, and your early public endorsement of our approach is extremely important—perhaps vital—in advancing all parties to Geneva. This is a personal appeal for your support. My very best wishes to you and your family.

Your friend, (signed) Jimmy Carter.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>41</sup> Jimmy Carter to Anwar el-Sadat, October 21, 1977, in William Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1986), 140-41.

Carter recalled in *Keeping Faith* that he was unsure what the result of the letter would be, but that he was confident Sadat would not let him down.<sup>42</sup> The letter had a profound effect on Sadat and directed him toward pursuing negotiations in Jerusalem.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, it is an explicit demonstration of the centrality of the personal relationship between the two presidents to the peace negotiations. At a moment when Carter was facing domestic pressure over American involvement in the process, he called upon his friendship with Sadat.<sup>44</sup> Sadat answered and went farther than Carter could have imagined when he sent the letter. Brzezinski perceived the effect of the letter in this manner. He believed Sadat saw it as “motivated by despair and calling upon Sadat to prove his friendship.”<sup>45</sup> Carter’s letter shows how he utilized his friendship with Sadat to bring about progress and agreement on peace.

Sadat took prompt action to move beyond the procedural impasse. Ten days after receiving Carter’s letter, Sadat returned a handwritten message, indicating that he would take “bold action” and refocus negotiations on substantive issues.<sup>46</sup> On November 2, he sent a follow-up letter, intended only for the eyes of Carter, Vance, and Brzezinski, in which he outlined a plan for a major summit to be held in East Jerusalem.<sup>47</sup> The proposal called for the five permanent members of the Security Council, along with Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Yasser Arafat, to participate. Its mandate was similar to that expressed in the US-Soviet communiqué.<sup>48</sup> When Fahmy delivered the document to Vance, he appended a few comments. Notably, he said Sadat’s proposal was made to garner

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<sup>42</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 295.

<sup>43</sup> Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 302.

<sup>44</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 295.

<sup>45</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 110.

<sup>46</sup> Carter, “Monday, October 31, 1977,” in *White House Diary*, 126. The letter is no longer extant. The only record of its contents is Carter’s diary entry.

<sup>47</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 141, 741.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 141, 743.

momentum and relieve Carter's domestic pressure. In addition, he remarked that only he and Sadat knew about the proposal in Egypt.<sup>49</sup> That only Sadat and Fahmy knew about the proposal illustrates the exclusive nature of Egypt's foreign policy under Sadat. Outside of his closest circle, everyone was kept uninformed of potentially groundbreaking initiatives. This style becomes even more apparent during Camp David, when Sadat essentially shut out his entire negotiating team at times.

The White House thought Sadat's idea was extreme and counterproductive. Carter responded to the Egyptian president by saying that, while he appreciated being consulted, he believed it would "seriously complicate, rather than facilitate, the search for peace in the Middle East." He urged Sadat not to move ahead with the summit idea.<sup>50</sup> Sadat altered his plan somewhat, but did not fully dispense of the idea of visiting Jerusalem. On November 9, he addressed the Egyptian People's Assembly and declared he would visit Israel and speak before the Knesset in order to achieve peace for the region and justice for the Palestinians. He asserted that he would not let procedural constraints, such as those imposed by Israel, to prevent Geneva from being convened and real peace negotiated.<sup>51</sup> American Ambassador to Egypt Herman Eilts believed Sadat's speech was consistent with the strategy he had been pursuing since 1973, rather than an act of desperation. It was not without risk, however. If it failed, Sadat would have distanced himself from the Arab world without reward.<sup>52</sup> The United States cautiously accepted Sadat's initiative; as Brzezinski recalled in his memoir, it did, however, end US efforts to reconvene Geneva in favor of direct Egyptian-Israeli talks.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., doc. 141, 744.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., doc. 142, 745-46.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., doc. 145, 751.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., doc. 145, 753.

<sup>53</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 111.

The importance of Sadat's trip to Jerusalem to his mindset regarding peace negotiations cannot be underestimated. For the rest of his life, he would refer to it as "my Initiative."<sup>54</sup> He perceived it as an inflection point in Middle Eastern history.<sup>55</sup> In his autobiography, the Egyptian president emotionally described his internal motivations behind his initiative. He drew on his experiences in prison during World War II to establish the necessity of changing one's mind and realized he had to cease to think of Israel as taboo.<sup>56</sup> "The barrier of mutual mistrust," Sadat wrote, had to be torn down. He felt it was his duty to take a moral stand to bring about genuine mindset changes. Failing to do so would have been to sin against both God and himself.<sup>57</sup> Throughout the rest of negotiations, he perceived any obstacle to peace as an affront to his daring initiative.

Sadat believed the initiative was initially a great success. The rhetoric he employed in his autobiography was no doubt exaggerated, but it is important in comprehending how he understood his actions. Sadat claimed that both Egyptians and Israelis received it well. He noted that the Israeli soldiers, whom he had fought against just four years ago, saluted him and "danced for joy." This response was the result of mutual respect for putting aside past differences and working together to achieve a common goal, according to Sadat.<sup>58</sup> Sadat's personal desire for peace also resurfaces in his discussion of his trip. The victims of war, including his brother, "deeply moved" the president and inspired him to visit Jerusalem.<sup>59</sup> His disposition toward peace is also seen in Carter's diary entry for the day before Sadat's visit. Carter recalled how enthusiastic

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<sup>54</sup> See: Sadat, *Those I Have Known*, 105.

<sup>55</sup> Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 313.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 304-5.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

Sadat was to be going to Israel—how sure he was of himself—despite what Carter perceived as a definite risk to his presidency and potentially even his life.<sup>60</sup> Carter’s concern for Sadat’s life was not unfounded, as Sadat’s assassination demonstrated.

The express purpose of the trip to Jerusalem was to break down the psychological barrier that had developed between Israel and the Arab states. Sadat defined the psychological barrier as the “huge wall of suspicion, fear, hate, and misunderstanding.”<sup>61</sup> In his speech to the Knesset, Sadat attempted to destroy the barrier. Although nothing substantively new arose from the address, it did represent a self-critical analysis of the relationship between Israel and the Arab world. After opening by recognizing that all of them—Christians, Jews, and Muslims—were under God, Sadat recalled his commitment to the well-being of all people, both Arab and Israeli.<sup>62</sup> He affirmed Israel’s right to exist—its right to live among its Arab neighbors in peace and security. He called on both sides to put aside psychological issues and embrace peace for the sake of future generations.<sup>63</sup> Finally, he wished for Israelis and Arabs to live together in a new life of “love, prosperity, freedom, and peace.”<sup>64</sup> Sadat’s speech was lofty in its goals. Its rhetoric displays the way he perceived the significance of his initiative, as well as what he thought it could achieve.

The Israelis were welcoming to the Egyptians and were happy to have Egypt recognize Israel, but were not encouraged by Sadat’s desire to ignore procedure and hold fast on substance. Dayan wrote in his memoir that Sadat seemed frustrated in Begin’s

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<sup>60</sup> Carter, “November 18, 1977,” in *White House Diary*, 138.

<sup>61</sup> Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 303.

<sup>62</sup> Anwar el-Sadat. “Speech to the Israeli Knesset,” in Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 330, 332.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 336-37.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

fierce interest in procedural matters. Conversely, Dayan was annoyed with Sadat's vagueness and penchant to speak in broad tones without specific details.<sup>65</sup> In addition to stylistic differences, the fundamental disagreements on the key issues to be resolved hampered negotiations. In the private conversations between Dayan and Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Boutros Boutros-Ghali, these divisions were laid bare. Boutros-Ghali also fervently stated that Egypt would not conclude a separate peace with Israel for fear of Arab backlash.<sup>66</sup> This view ran contrary to what Sadat had privately told Carter and is another example of how Sadat conducted foreign policy independently. Despite these vast differences, Dayan remained hopeful. He believed Sadat truly wanted peace; this desire would ultimately bring him closer to Israel's positions, according to Dayan.<sup>67</sup> Although Sadat's initiative was an important step toward bilateral negotiations with Israel, it did not cause the hard Israeli reset Cairo hoped it would.

While both the Israelis and Egyptians looked fondly upon Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, much of the Arab world immediately disavowed Egypt. Indeed, even Sadat's own foreign minister, Ismail Fahmy, resigned prior to the trip, citing irreconcilable opposition to his president's initiative.<sup>68</sup> Libya, Syria, and Iraq led the charge against Egypt. Even Saudi Arabia distanced itself from Sadat's initiative and recognized it as damaging to Arab unity. Numerous anti-Sadat and anti-Egypt protests broke out across the region and the world. Egyptian embassies in Athens, Beirut, and Tripoli were

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<sup>65</sup> Moshe Dayan, *Breakthrough: A Personal Account of the Egypt-Israel Peace Negotiations* (New York: Random House, 1981), 79-80.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>68</sup> "Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments, No. 295," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d517740, November 19, 1977, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d517740>.

sacked.<sup>69</sup> Despite this opposition, Sadat remained highly popular in Egypt after the trip. He also gained support from Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, and Oman, in addition to enthusiastic support from the Israeli media.<sup>70</sup> However, this support did not allay the opposition. At a summit in Tripoli, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Algeria, and South Yemen formed a rejectionist bloc and jointly denounced Sadat's peace initiatives. Sadat responded by severing diplomatic ties with those states and claiming he would move ahead with negotiations alone if others would not participate.<sup>71</sup> In his analysis of the situation, Brzezinski asserted that Sadat would likely go ahead and conclude a separate peace deal with Israel if the terms were favorable enough. If this occurred, the Egyptian military and public would probably support it. However, Brzezinski cited Ambassador Eilts's comment that Sadat was not determined to seek peace at all costs.<sup>72</sup>

The Arab opposition to Sadat's initiative foreshadowed the even more extreme Arab response following the Camp David Accords. Furthermore, it shows how Sadat was increasingly willing to break from the traditional Arab position in pursuit of peace. An improving economy, as estimated by the CIA, may account for his feeling of domestic stability and emboldened action.<sup>73</sup> But Egypt was still reliant on the Gulf

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> "Analysis of Arab-Israeli Developments, No. 296," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d517716, November 20, 1977, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d517716>.

<sup>71</sup> "Arab States: Egyptian Reaction; Arab States: Tripoli Summit Landing," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d51774a, December 6, 1977, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d51774a>.

<sup>72</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 164, 795.

<sup>73</sup> "Egypt: Financial Outlook Brightens," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d51772d, September 16, 1977, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d51772d>.

financially. Any moves to alienate the Arab world by pursuing a separate peace indicate Sadat's personal desire for peace.<sup>74</sup>

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There was relative confusion over how to proceed after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, for it was unclear whether or not Geneva was now feasible. His initiative broke Arab unity, which was an essential aspect of any potential peace conference. Vance returned to the region in early December to meet with the principal states. While he still was pushing for action toward Geneva, it became clear that the thrust of negotiations would now be between Egypt and Israel, with the United States serving as a go-between.<sup>75</sup> These negotiations proved two main points. First, the necessity of US involvement in the process. Second, that talks would ultimately require the leaders of each country to directly participate if an agreement was to be concluded.

Carter welcomed Begin to Washington on December 16 to discuss the Israeli response to Sadat's initiative. Their meetings were quite productive and helped lay the foundation for many of the negotiations that would take place over the next nine months and at Camp David the following September. Begin delivered two new proposals to the White House; one concerned the Sinai, the other the West Bank and the Palestinian issue.<sup>76</sup> On the Sinai, Israel agreed to cede sovereignty of the peninsula to Egypt and ultimately fully withdraw to the internationally recognized borders. Additionally, Begin noted that Israel would retain, for a transitional period of three to five years, a few military outposts and a couple airfields. Furthermore, the prime minister wanted to keep

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<sup>74</sup> "Egypt: Financial Implications," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d517704, December 17, 1977, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d517704>.

<sup>75</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 196-98.

<sup>76</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 177, 863-65.



two airfields indefinitely, ensure that the Sinai remained demilitarized, and retain a couple settlements in the north. In those settlements, the Jews would have been living similarly to how expatriate Arabs live in Jerusalem. Finally, to guarantee free passage through the Strait of Tiran, Israel wanted to have a UN force securing a stretch of land from the Israeli border to Sharm el-Sheikh. All the withdrawal would have been done in conjunction with the normalization of relations.<sup>77</sup> The White House found this proposal mostly acceptable. Carter saw it as a good starting point for negotiations on the issue.<sup>78</sup>

Begin's proposal on the West Bank, however, was not as forthcoming. It marked considerable progress on the part of Israel, but was ultimately inadequate and would have to be amended before serious discussion of it could take place. Both Vance and Carter noted the importance of Begin's willingness to offer such a plan in their memoirs. It represented an acknowledgment of the Palestinian problem and the need to address it.<sup>79</sup> The "Home Rule" proposal for the West Bank and Gaza called for the abolition of the Israeli military government over the territories and the creation of an elected administrative council to conduct the day-to-day governing of the territories. Israel would maintain control over public order and security. It would also retain sovereignty over the course of the five year transitional period; final sovereignty would be negotiated in future talks.<sup>80</sup> The proposal did not fully address the issue of withdrawal, the proper fate of Jerusalem, or immigration of Palestinian refugees back to the territories. The Americans raised these objections during the meeting. Further consideration of them would be necessary. Vance's reaction to the autonomy plan was that Israel was

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., doc. 177, 863-64.

<sup>78</sup> Carter, "December 16, 1977," in *White House Diary*, 150.

<sup>79</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 299; Vance, *Hard Choices*, 199.

<sup>80</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 177, 871-72.

essentially maintaining military and political control over the West Bank and Gaza, for it could always overrule the decision of the administrative council. It would not be good enough for a final agreement, but it allowed for a starting point in negotiations. Vance believed there had to be an Arab role in autonomy, along with a UN peacekeeping force, rather than the Israeli military, to keep order.<sup>81</sup> Begin, like Sadat with his trip to Jerusalem, frequently pointed out the boldness of this proposal in future talks and relied on it for leverage. Overall, Carter expressed hope in his diary following Begin's visit. The Israeli prime minister proved more flexible than Washington believed he would be.<sup>82</sup>

The next step in the process was a meeting between Begin and Sadat at Sadat's vacation home in Ismailia. While the meeting did not prove fruitful in resolving any of the outstanding issues, it achieved two aims. First, it furthered the relationship between Sadat and Begin, with Begin now visiting Sadat in Egypt. According to what Begin told the American Ambassador to Israel Samuel Lewis, he was satisfied with the outcome of the talks. Begin felt he had a better understanding of Sadat's positions and problems and had continuing faith in Sadat's desire for peace.<sup>83</sup> Sadat, on the other hand, was more guarded in his response, but similarly expressed his satisfaction with the atmosphere of the meeting.<sup>84</sup> Second, the negotiations established political and military committees, to meet in Jerusalem and Cairo, respectively, at the foreign minister level. These committees guaranteed that negotiations between the two states would be ongoing.<sup>85</sup> Although these discussions would be ultimately fruitless, continued meetings between Israel and Egypt were vital following the decline of efforts to reconvene Geneva.

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<sup>81</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 199.

<sup>82</sup> Carter, "December 17, 1977," in *White House Diary*, 151.

<sup>83</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 180, 890.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 181, 897.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 181, 898.

Carter's trip to Sadat's home in Aswan in January 1978 bolstered the relationship between the two presidents. During the meeting, Carter made efforts to strengthen their friendship and increase the pull it could have on getting Sadat to compromise. In his diary, Carter referred to the brief visit to Aswan as the most exciting element of his international trip (Carter's trip included stops in Poland, India, Iran, and Saudi Arabia) due to his "strong friendship toward Sadat."<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, in his memoir, Carter recalled Sadat's emphasis on the progress made toward peace, thanks to the American president's actions.<sup>87</sup> The State Department report of the meeting documented that Sadat met privately with Carter and Vance, which is significant because it again displays how Sadat exclusively conducted Egypt's foreign policy.<sup>88</sup> As a result, good rapport between Carter and Sadat was vital in gaining Sadat's approval of compromises. Sadat's independence also demonstrates how foreign minister level talks were not the best way to negotiate with Egypt. Substantively, as Carter noted in his diary, the United States and Egypt had no differences of opinion.<sup>89</sup> They agreed that Israel had to withdraw to the 1967 borders, that the legitimate rights of the Palestinians had to be recognized, and that all aspects of the Palestinian problem had to be resolved in a final agreement.<sup>90</sup> Following the meeting, Carter sent a letter to Sadat in which he further solidified their friendship. Carter wrote that it was always a "personal pleasure" to meet with Sadat and renew their "personal friendship." He also closed the letter in a personal manner: "Please accept my warmest personal regards for the continued health and happiness of you and Mrs. Sadat and for the prosperity and peace which the great people of Egypt and all the

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<sup>86</sup> Carter, "January 4, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 161.

<sup>87</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 303.

<sup>88</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 185, 917.

<sup>89</sup> Carter, "January 4, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 161.

<sup>90</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 185, 917.

peoples of the Middle East so richly deserve.”<sup>91</sup> While it is important not to assign too much credence to such remarks, the fact that Carter never replied in such a way to other foreign leaders shows his special relationship with Sadat. Thus, the Aswan meeting served to cement their friendship, which would become a crucial tool for Carter at Camp David.

The separate negotiations between Egypt and Israel quickly proved impossible and demonstrated the path forward was for the United States to bring together the leaders of both countries to work toward an agreement. After an apparent affront to Egypt’s foreign minister during one of Begin’s addresses to the political committee in Jerusalem, Sadat withdrew the Egyptian delegation. He allowed the military talks in Cairo to go ahead, but they lasted only a day.<sup>92</sup> Thus, the Carter administration looked to devise a new approach. In a private meeting with Brzezinski on January 20, the president and he first devised the Camp David idea. They believed it would help negotiations and Carter’s status among the public. A couple days later, Carter indicated to Brzezinski that he was leaning toward the idea.<sup>93</sup> It would ultimately become the preferred strategy.

The peace process over the next few months was colored by Israeli intransigence and minimal progress. Carter became increasingly frustrated with Begin, according to Brzezinski. It only served to increase Carter’s esteem for Sadat. The entire administration, Brzezinski wrote, “felt that the Egyptian leader had gone out on a limb in order to promote peace in the region and that Begin was busily sawing the limb off.”<sup>94</sup> Carter proceeded to be tough on Begin in their March meeting.<sup>95</sup> Later, he met with the

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., doc. 186, 918-19.

<sup>92</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 305; Vance, *Hard Choices*, 203.

<sup>93</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 240.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>95</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 232, 1079.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which Brzezinski described as shaken when Carter informed them the White House could not support Israeli policy inconsistent with peace.<sup>96</sup> However, in his diary, Carter expressed that he felt he had the support of all members of the committee.<sup>97</sup> Despite this support, the administration was unsure of public support for the continued drive for peace with increased American involvement.<sup>98</sup> In late June, Senate Democrats instructed Carter that he should stay away from the peace process, for it was a “losing proposal.”<sup>99</sup> That Carter pushed for peace when public support of it was uncertain further demonstrates his personal desire for peace in the Middle East, as discussed in chapter one.

Negotiations were essentially put on hold throughout the spring and summer due to the White House’s fight for congressional approval of F-15 sales to Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The sales were eventually approved in conjunction with additional military aid to Israel.<sup>100</sup> Following the approval of the deal, Vance held talks between the foreign ministers of Israel and Egypt in the UK, which again brought no results.<sup>101</sup> Yet another failure caused Carter to conclude the only way to bring about an agreement was to hold tripartite talks. Despite what Carter termed the political pitfalls of such an approach, he sent Vance to the Middle East in early August with letters inviting Sadat and Begin to Camp David.<sup>102</sup> On August 8, the Accords were officially announced.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 247.

<sup>97</sup> Carter, “March 23, 1978,” in *White House Diary*, 180.

<sup>98</sup> Carter, “February 3, 1978,” in *White House Diary*, 168.

<sup>99</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 315.

<sup>100</sup> Bernard Weinraub, “Debate is Intense,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1978, A1.

<sup>101</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 215.

<sup>102</sup> Carter, “Monday, July 31, 1978,” in *White House Diary*; Letters: US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, docs. 283 & 284, 1282-84.

<sup>103</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations*, doc. 289, 1303.

Sadat, like Carter, was in large part motivated to pursue peace as the result of a strong personal desire toward peace. This desire was expressed in both Sadat's own writings and his interactions with the Americans and Israelis. His initiative to go to Israel showcased his inclination toward peace to the whole world, and affirmed in his mind that he was committed to peace. In addition to these aspirations, Egypt's struggling economy pushed Sadat to conclude an agreement with Israel, which would open the country up to increased foreign aid and foreign investment. Similarly, Sadat strove toward peace in order to develop a closer relationship with the United States. All these factors played into Sadat's decision to visit Jerusalem. As negotiations after his initiative demonstrated, Sadat was the key player in Egyptian foreign policy; only through direct discussions with him would the president's peace ambitions be realized. In so doing, the friendship between Carter and Sadat was crucial to forcing the Egyptian leader to compromise.

### Chapter Three

The Camp David Accords represent an unprecedented form of diplomatic negotiations in order to reach a peace agreement. They involved three heads of their countries taking a prolonged thirteen day break from running their states to focus on achieving a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. In addition to the lack of historical basis for the approach, the notion of concluding peace between an Arab state and Israel was similarly remarkable.

Over the past two chapters, this paper has explored the motivations of both the Americans and Egyptians in seeking peace in the Middle East. This study particularly focused on Carter and Sadat. For Carter, his commitment to the permanent security of Israel, coupled with his human rights thrust regarding the Palestinians, formed the basis for his personal desire for peace. His own desire prompted the increased American involvement in the peace process and the convening of the tripartite negotiations at Camp David, despite the risks it created. For Sadat, Egypt's economic situation, its chance to become closer to the United States, and his own deep personal desire for peace were his primary motivations for being willing to split from the Arab world and conclude a separate agreement. During negotiations up until Camp David, a valuable friendship had emerged between Carter and Sadat. The two presidents found a kindred spirit in each other. Carter exploited this relationship throughout the talks to get Sadat to compromise. This final chapter will explore the ways in which the above factors manifested themselves during the thirteen day summit in Maryland. It will consider the American preparations for the Accords as well as the day-to-day proceedings during the negotiations. Ultimately, Carter and Sadat's friendship, in addition to the other elements previously discussed, proved essential in bringing about the framework agreements.

The unique nature of the Accords presents a difficulty to students of the negotiations. Because the summit was designed to be completely sequestered from the outside world, little official documentation was made during the course of the talks. As such, few primary source documents exist that allow the student access to the contingent mindsets of the actors. As a result, the various recollections of those involved, found in their personal memoirs, are the main sources for historians to use when reconstructing what occurred during the thirteen days. Memoirs are problematic sources because of the hindsight present in them. Nonetheless, they are still vital in discovering what happened, especially when they are the only sources available. Carter's personal diary, however, does provide a contemporary look into the discussions.

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Up until this point, brief mention has been made of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338—the foundations of the peace process. Because they play a central role in the negotiations regarding the West Bank and Gaza during the Camp David Accords, a deeper consideration of them is necessary. Resolution 242 was passed following the conclusion of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Its express purpose was to serve as the basis for peace agreements between the Arab states and Israel. The key language of the resolution comes from the second perambulatory clause, which states “*Emphasizing further* the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security.” Moreover, the resolution states that Israel must withdraw from all territories occupied during the war.<sup>1</sup> From the beginning of negotiations, Begin disputed that this applied to Israel's

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, S/RES/242, November 22, 1967, [http://undocs.org/S/RES/242\(1967\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/242(1967)).



acquisition of territory during the 1967 War; he argued it was a defensive act.<sup>2</sup> He continued to question the meaning of Resolution 242 during the Accords. The resolution also calls for a just settlement for refugees and an end to the state of belligerency, with the right of each nation to live in peace within its recognized borders.<sup>3</sup> Although important, they were of less concern at Camp David. Resolution 338 was passed to enact a ceasefire in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. After the ceasefire, it directed all parties involved to implement Resolution 242 and begin immediate negotiations to establish a “just and durable peace in the Middle East.”<sup>4</sup> Since Resolution 338 primarily makes reference to Resolution 242, it did not play as central of a role in the talks, except for being a basis for negotiations.

The United States began preparations in earnest for the summit at the end of August with Brzezinski’s “Strategy for Camp David” memorandum.<sup>5</sup> Brzezinski opened by stressing the necessity of Carter taking control from the beginning and forcing substantial compromises from both sides. He believed that Sadat could not afford to have the Accords end in failure. Conversely, both Begin and Sadat thought Carter could not have the talks fail. However, Begin believed that neither Carter nor Sadat could afford failure, and thus would try and exploit this perceived weakness. As such, Carter should take the initiative to frequently communicate the consequences of failure to both sides. Brzezinski also noted the differences in negotiating styles of Sadat and Begin. Sadat favored broad substantive discussions, while Begin fixated on minute procedural details.

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<sup>2</sup> Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America’s Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 159.

<sup>3</sup> UNSC Resolution 242, S/RES/242.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 338, S/RES/338, October 22, 1973, [http://undocs.org/S/RES/338\(1973\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/338(1973)).

<sup>5</sup> “Strategy for Camp David, Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski,” prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d51771a, August 31, 1978, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d51771a>.

Importantly, Brzezinski emphasized the centrality of Carter's personal meetings with each leader to gaining concessions. With regard to Egypt, Carter was to make it clear that failure meant the end of the special US-Egypt relationship. In terms of Israel, Carter had to be frank and inform Begin that if Israel blocks peace in the Middle East, the president would have had to take a series of actions that would have been detrimental to both US-Israeli relations and Israel itself. These included presenting to the American public a full survey of American interests in the region, how much aid the United States provides for Israel with no reciprocity shown during negotiations, and that the Carter administration would publicly detail its views on what constituted a fair settlement. On the other hand, both leaders were to be assured that success meant a strong relationship with the US, economic and otherwise.<sup>6</sup> Brzezinski's comments highlight the Carter administration's desire for peace discussed in chapter one; it was willing to jeopardize the country's special relationship with Israel in favor of peace.

In his strategy proposal, Brzezinski also laid out the absolute minimums the White House should accept from each side. On withdrawal and the West Bank and Gaza, Sadat should agree to an Israeli security presence during the transitional period and beyond. He should also agree to defer considerations on sovereignty until after the end of the transitional period. Sadat would be able to claim he ended the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and established the notion of withdrawal on all fronts. Begin, on the other hand, should agree to withdrawal in principle on all fronts, so long as Israel's long-term security is taken into account. In return, Begin can claim he protected Israel's security while not accepting any sovereignty changes. Regarding

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

settlements, Brzezinski argued that there should be a freeze on the establishment of new settlements. Finally, Brzezinski noted that both sides had to agree to continue negotiations on the West Bank and Gaza, agree to Resolution 242 in all respects, and adopt Sadat's language from his Aswan meeting with Carter regarding Palestinian rights; full normalization of relations should also be included.<sup>7</sup> Carter responded negatively to Brzezinski's absolute minimums. He asserted in his diary that all his briefing books contained too modest expectations. "I want to insist to the Middle East leaders that we resolve as many problems as possible at Camp David," wrote Carter, "not just come out with a declaration of principles leading to further negotiations. If we can't solve anything at this summit level, it's highly unlikely that foreign ministers and others can do so later on."<sup>8</sup> Carter had high expectations for his ability to draw on his relationships with both leaders to bring about a significant agreement. Even before the summit began, it became apparent that Sadat would be leaning on Carter. In a conversation with an unknown individual (name remains classified) he disclosed that he "has lost the trust and confidence which he had in Prime Minister Begin, and now he must fall back on his trust in President Carter's sincerity and fairness."<sup>9</sup>

Prior to the beginning of talks, the current economic outlook of Egypt was quite favorable, and the economic benefits of peace were actually somewhat muted. A CIA assessment in its briefing book analyzed the potential economic advantages an agreement would bring. It discovered mild immediate benefits but increased medium and long-term

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Jimmy Carter, "August 31, 1978," in *White House Diary* (New York: Picador, 2011), 217.

<sup>9</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978-December 1980*, vol. IX, ed. Alexander R. Wieland (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2014), doc. 14, 38.

gains.<sup>10</sup> Peace would allow Egypt to diversify its economy into a mixed economy. It would encourage foreign exploration of oil resources in the Gulf of Suez, continue growth in the tourism industry, and bolster foreign and domestic private investment. In addition, Egypt would be able to benefit from Israeli expertise on various matters and have a new market available to it. The analysis concluded, however, that the reduction in military size would not help Egypt economically, as those released from service would be unskilled workers. Furthermore, a settlement carried negative consequences as well. First, there was the potential for Egyptian alienation from the Arab world, which could mean decreased aid from the Gulf states. Second, “Economic expectations long held in check by the state of hostilities could accelerate beyond real short-run gains.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, economic considerations should not have been Egypt’s main motivation for concluding peace, according to the CIA.

The most remarkable and relevant elements of the briefing books prepared for Carter ahead of the Accords were the psychological/personality profiles on Sadat and Begin. While the actual profiles have not yet been declassified, an internal CIA article written by Jerrold Post, a key member of the team that assembled the profiles, has been. From it, the basic contents of the assessments can be gleaned. According to Post, the profiles contained integrated personality analyses of each leader, as well as consideration of their contrasting intellectual styles and how those may manifest themselves at Camp

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<sup>10</sup> “Briefing Book—Israel-Egypt: Economic Benefits of Peace,” prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d51775a, August 31, 1978, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d51775a>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

David. Post recalled that Carter informed the CIA after the Accords that they were entirely accurate.<sup>12</sup>

On Sadat, the profile highlighted his penchant for the dramatic and preoccupation with the big picture. An initial version of the report identified Sadat's "Barbara Walters syndrome"; it was later updated to his "Nobel Prize complex." The report concluded:

Sadat's self-confidence and special view of himself has been instrumental in development of his innovative foreign policy, as have his flexibility and his capacity for moving out of the cultural insularity of the Arab world. He sees himself as a grand strategist and will make tactical concessions if he is persuaded that his over-all goals will be achieved. . . . His self-confidence has permitted him to make bold initiatives, often overriding his advisors' objections.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, the profile noted Sadat's "abhorrence of detail," which stood in marked contrast to Begin.

Begin, on the other hand, was obsessed with "legal precision" and had an "inability to restrain himself from clarifying imprecision." The stark difference in personality prompted one official, according to Post, to remark that these differences might be large enough to suggest the two leaders should never be in the same room together.<sup>14</sup> Carter supplied an assessment of the benefit of these profiles to him in an addendum to his diary on the day he received the reports. The president highlighted the CIA's analysis of how they acted under pressure; Begin resorted to semantics, while

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<sup>12</sup> "Personality Profiles in Support of the Camp David Summit (Center for the Studies of Intelligence article)," prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA 527b88eb993294098d5177ce, June 1, 1979, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/527b88eb993294098d5177ce>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Sadat turned to generalized discussion of the broader impacts of such a proposal.<sup>15</sup> These contrasting styles allowed Carter to draw on his personal relationship with Sadat and get him to agree on principles that may be more favorable to Israel in detail but coincided with Sadat's overall goals.

Before turning to the proceedings at Camp David, it is important to point out that the White House decided the talks should be sequestered. Carter felt that what the press reported was no longer of meaning to him, for the administration had already eschewed all support and embraced the "all-or-nothing gamble," as Carter termed it. Thus, by excluding the press and requesting that neither Egypt nor Israel make any public comments during the negotiations, Carter believed posturing would be minimized and maximum flexibility ensured.<sup>16</sup> The president would be proven correct, as the private nature of the talks allowed fierce disagreements to proceed to compromised positions. Specifically, it enabled Sadat to entrust Carter with all acceptable positions and allow him to negotiate from there. Such a move would have been impossible if Sadat were continuously held accountable to the press and, as a result, the entire Arab world.

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The Camp David Accords officially began on September 5 and would conclude—after a surprisingly long time—thirteen days later on September 17. Sadat's helicopter landed at Camp David at 2:30 p.m. and he immediately proceeded to have an initial meeting with Carter.<sup>17</sup> In their discussion, Sadat stressed his desire to reach a complete agreement, over and above an establishment of procedures for future negotiations. He admitted his distrust of Begin's aspirations for peace and questioned whether the prime

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<sup>15</sup> Carter, "August 12, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 213.

<sup>16</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1982), 317-18.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

minster would negotiate in good faith. Crucially, Sadat stated he would back Carter “in all things.”<sup>18</sup> Sadat went on to affirm that he would be flexible on all matters except land and sovereignty. He asked Carter to work out the details.<sup>19</sup> From the outset, Sadat made his reliance on and trust in Carter abundantly clear through his promise to support Carter in all respects. It took only a single meeting for the CIA’s personality profile to be confirmed. Carter utilized Sadat’s willingness to allow him to determine specific details to reach agreement with Begin.

The Israeli delegation arrived soon after the Egyptian one and Carter greeted them with similar enthusiasm. However, he was not received with a similar warmth. Begin was much more reserved and favored learning all about the procedures of the summit.<sup>20</sup> The two leaders held their first meeting later that evening, in which Carter repeated many of the same procedural notes, such as the fact that the US reserved the right to submit compromise proposals if necessary. Consistent with President Ford’s pledge to allow Israel’s advance viewing of any proposed documents, Carter afforded Begin the privilege to see American proposals first.<sup>21</sup>

Both men then delved into the substantive issues to be resolved at Camp David. Carter outlined what he viewed as the agreed upon points between the two parties, as well as the outstanding points to be agreed on. On the Sinai, Begin reiterated his position without any changes. He expressed that settlements were a necessary buffer between Egypt and Gaza and that three airfields had to be kept during a three to five year transitional period. Furthermore, the Sinai had to be completely demilitarized. Similarly,

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<sup>18</sup> Carter, “Day 1, Tuesday, September 5, 1978,” in *White House Diary*, 216.

<sup>19</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 329.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*; Carter, “Day 1, Tuesday, September 5, 1978,” in *White House Diary*, 217.

<sup>21</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 333; Carter, “Day 1, Tuesday, September 5, 1978,” in *White House Diary*, 217.

the prime minister affirmed his position on delaying determination of sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza until after the transitional period. However, he was willing to give the Palestinians autonomy.<sup>22</sup> But, when Carter pushed Begin for details, it became clear that Israel would retain veto power over essentially every decision an administrative council could make.<sup>23</sup> They then clashed on settlements and Resolution 242. Begin again disputed the American claims to the illegality of settlements. What was most troubling, though, was Begin's refusal to recognize that Resolution 242 referred to the West Bank and Gaza. Begin classified taking them during the 1967 War as a defensive move and therefore not under the purview of the resolution.<sup>24</sup> Overall, the meeting was a disappointment to Carter. He saw no flexibility in the prime minister's positions.<sup>25</sup> Again, like Sadat, Begin adhered perfectly in the first meeting to the CIA's psychological profile.

The following morning Carter met with Sadat for a prolonged meeting, during which Sadat further entrusted Carter with the basics of Egypt's negotiating position and strategy. In the meeting, Sadat was much more forceful about Begin's obstinateness. The initial Egyptian proposal he planned to present would be entirely extreme to "expose" Begin. Carter termed it "very harsh and unacceptable to Israel" in his diary.<sup>26</sup> When Carter instructed him that it was not good enough, Sadat responded with a list of points on which he could be flexible; there could be full normalization, a united Jerusalem, and Israeli military points in the West Bank during the transitional period.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Carter, "Day 1, Tuesday, September 5, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 218.

<sup>23</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 337.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

<sup>25</sup> Carter, "Day 1, Tuesday, September 5, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 219.

<sup>26</sup> Carter, "Day 2, Wednesday, September 6, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 219-20.

<sup>27</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 340-41.



Carter viewed this as hopeful, and felt there could potentially be an agreement. On a procedural note, Carter requested Sadat allow for meetings with advisors, which he was reluctant to agree to, but ultimately did. In his memoir, Carter reflected that this was representative of Sadat's strategy through the Accords. He always preferred to negotiate and make decisions for Egypt by himself.<sup>28</sup> The Egyptian president's tactics were beneficial to Carter, for it allowed him to converse with a single individual, with whom he already had a strong friendship and could push toward compromise. The relationship also influenced Carter. In his journal, excerpted in *Power and Principle*, Brzezinski wrote that "it was quite clear that he was taken by Sadat's attitude, his willingness to consider ideas, his determination to seek peace, his pledge to be cooperative and helpful to the President."<sup>29</sup> Therefore, Sadat's attractiveness to Carter, based on their mutual personal desire for peace, likely prompted Carter to forcefully push Begin on issues which the US and Egypt agreed on. In that sense, their friendship benefited both parties.

Because of the extreme nature of Sadat's initial proposal, Carter sought out Begin before their first trilateral meeting to tell him to expect Sadat's plan to be severe and to not overreact.<sup>30</sup> He seems to have made a good decision, for Begin remained calm throughout the meeting. Carter decided he would play a minimal role in the first meetings with the two leaders in order to allow them to become better acquainted; he hoped this would lead to constructive discussions.<sup>31</sup> The conversation began with a review by each individual of how they saw the peace process currently. Both men expressed a firm desire of peace. Each made a kind gesture toward the other. Begin

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>29</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1983), 256.

<sup>30</sup> Carter, "Day 2, Wednesday, September 6," in *White House Diary*, 221.

<sup>31</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 343.

wished to be able to say *Habemus Pacem*, in reference to *Habemus Papam*, which is declared when a new pope is chosen. Sadat hoped the spirit of King David would reign at Camp David.<sup>32</sup> After an exchange which clarified that Sadat would be willing to negotiate separate, but linked, treaties on Palestine and the Sinai, Sadat read the Egyptian proposal. He asked that Begin not comment on it until the prime minister had considered it with his delegation. Carter sensed tension in the room. In an effort to alleviate it, he joked that if Begin would just sign the proposal as presented, they could all go home. The jest prompted laughter among the three leaders.<sup>33</sup> Although relations seemed like they would be cordial between the Egyptian and the Israeli after this meeting, those expectations quickly waned. Egypt's Foreign Minister Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel noted in his memoir that the Israelis were "serious and preoccupied" at dinner. He attributed their attitude to Sadat's plan.<sup>34</sup>

The Egyptian proposal was extreme and contained no compromises from the traditional hardline Arab position. Kamel included the document in full in his memoir. It called for a full withdrawal to the 1949 armistice lines (equivalent to the 1967 borders, but phrased in a manner that ignores any Israeli claim to the territory based on the 1967 War). The Israeli military government would be abolished, and Jordan and Egypt would be in charge during the transitional period in the West Bank and Gaza, respectively. The Palestinian people would have the right to self-determination and the establishment of a "national entity." Settlements also must be withdrawn during the transitional period, and East Jerusalem returned to the Arabs. Finally, the proposal required Israel to pay compensation to Egypt for exploitation of resources and damage to civilian centers. The

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<sup>32</sup> Carter, "Day 2, Wednesday, September 6, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 221.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 221-22.

<sup>34</sup> Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel, *The Camp David Accords: A Testimony* (London: KPI, 1986), 303.

only progressive aspect of the plan was Egypt's willingness to grant Israel full recognition and end the economic boycott.<sup>35</sup> Why such an extreme proposal was presented is not entirely clear. Dayan speculated that it was to show the rejectionist Arab states that Egypt was being aggressive, and he is probably correct.<sup>36</sup> Sadat knew he would ultimately compromise to more acceptable positions, but he had to first save face and show the Arab world he was not abandoning the Palestinian cause.

The following morning, on day three, the Americans had a very tense meeting with the Israeli delegation over Sadat's proposal. Begin detailed everything wrong with the Egyptian plan, including the use of the term Palestinian rather than Palestinian Arab, the reference to "conquered territory," the reduction of both Sinai and West Bank settlements, and the call for full withdrawal and autonomy.<sup>37</sup> Discussions became heated when Begin repeatedly dodged Carter's questions in favor of obsessing over details. Carter became angry and demanded to know what Israel actually needed for security; he believed Sadat would agree to Begin's autonomy proposal if he made it clear that Israel did not desire permanent occupation.<sup>38</sup> The meeting represented the difficulty the Americans would have with Begin and his penchant for falling into fruitless consideration of semantics and details. Similarly, it showed the extent to which Carter was willing to push Israel and invest his electoral future in the Accords. Brzezinski recalled in his memoir that Carter said he prioritized peace in the Middle East over his reelection, again displaying Carter's personal desire for peace.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> "Framework for the Comprehensive Peace Settlement of the Middle East Problem," in Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel, *The Camp David Accords: A Testimony* (London: KPI, 1986), 385-89.

<sup>36</sup> Moshe Dayan, *Breakthrough: A Personal Account of the Egypt-Israel Peace Negotiations* (New York: Random House, 1981), 162.

<sup>37</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 346-48.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

<sup>39</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 257.

Later that morning, the second trilateral meeting of the leaders occurred, this time focused on Begin's rebuttal to Sadat's proposal. It was not a cordial meeting and soon devolved into shouting. Begin methodically denied every point raised by the Egyptians. At one point, according to Carter, Sadat leaned forward, pointed at Begin, and exclaimed "Premier Begin, you want land!"<sup>40</sup> Then, when discussing withdrawal from the Sinai and settlements, Sadat yelled "Security yes! Land no!"<sup>41</sup> The CIA assessment regarding the incompatibility of their negotiating styles proved correct. When talks became heated, Begin fell into a spiral of detailed and semantic comments, while Sadat called for agreeing on basic principles first.<sup>42</sup> The two men fervently disagreed on essentially every principle. The issue of settlements, particularly in the Sinai, became one of the most prominent disagreements.<sup>43</sup> The desire for peace was apparent in all three men, but Sadat most notably asserted it during the meeting. He emotionally stated that he still believed they could meet on Mount Sinai—a meeting between the three leaders, with all three Abrahamic faiths represented. Sadat pled, "This is still my prayer to God!"<sup>44</sup> The meeting adjourned with a tense recollection of the outstanding points; Carter urged them to give him a chance to negotiate, to which both agreed.<sup>45</sup>

Carter leaned on his friendship with Sadat to maintain the Egyptian president's confidence and keep him at Camp David. The Egyptians were discouraged after the trilateral meetings. They saw Begin as completely intransigent on settlements and the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>46</sup> Carter appealed to Sadat's obsession with his Jerusalem initiative

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<sup>40</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 351.

<sup>41</sup> Carter, "Day 3, Thursday, September 7, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 223.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 359.

<sup>44</sup> Carter, "Day 3, Thursday, September 7, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 225; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 358.

<sup>45</sup> Carter, "Day 3, Thursday, September 7, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 226.

<sup>46</sup> Kamel, *Camp David Accords*, 308-9.

to placate his concerns. At the same time, he spoke highly of Begin's wish for peace in order to explain that Begin did want a just peace; obstacles between the two states positions must therefore be overcome.<sup>47</sup> The close relationship between Carter and Sadat troubled Kamel. Even at the early stages of the Accords, he realized that Carter was utilizing their friendship to go behind the Egyptian delegation's back. When Carter noted that if all three states agreed on a framework, the outside world would not oppose it, Kamel was concerned Sadat did not speak out against this notion. Kamel wrote, "I had a feeling that a lot was going on in the dark between Sadat and Carter, and that I should prepare myself for surprises which would probably be unpleasant!"<sup>48</sup> Later, when Kamel recognized the US was no longer considering the Egyptian proposal seriously, he noted that "the real mystery and disaster was Sadat's attitude. Although the plot was unfolding, he was never roused to anger and never demurred. He neither rejected, refuted, discussed nor explained!"<sup>49</sup> Kamel's criticism of Sadat shows the divide within the Egyptian delegation, both in terms of differing levels of desire for peace and willingness to depart from traditional Arab positions. Furthermore, it indicates the influence Carter had over Sadat. Sadat's trust in Carter's dedication to the Egyptian cause and peace allowed him to compromise when no other Egyptian would. Carter recognized the effect of their friendship. He told Brzezinski that the two leaders had a lot in common and Sadat was always willing to accommodate Carter when called upon.<sup>50</sup>

The president's personal desire for peace expressed itself in Carter's challenge of Begin's positions the following day, day four of the Accords. In a private meeting

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<sup>47</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 360.

<sup>48</sup> Kamel, *Camp David Accords*, 312.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>50</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 259.

between the two leaders, Carter raised that the US was going to develop its own comprehensive proposal to present to both parties as a starting point from which to work.<sup>51</sup> That morning, the Americans had determined it was the only way to narrow the gap between the two sides.<sup>52</sup> Carter strongly pushed Begin to dismantle the Israeli settlements in the Sinai. Begin had become particularly troubled by the American position on the issue; Brzezinski had referred to Israel as colonialist. The prime minister pledged to never recommend the settlements be moved. Then, he begged Carter to not make it an American demand. Carter refused.<sup>53</sup> The most contentious issues had to be discussed, remarked Carter, and he did not find the settlements in the Sinai necessary because of the peninsula's demilitarization. As such, Carter would include settlement withdrawal in the proposal.<sup>54</sup> The president's willingness to pressure Begin and favor peace over the special relationship with Israel again demonstrates his personal desire for peace.

After preparing the proposal on Saturday—all parties had agreed to suspend negotiations on the Sabbath—Carter presented the first American draft to Begin following their trip to Gettysburg on Sunday, day six of the Accords. Their interactions showcased Carter's fierce desire for peace and his personal support of Sadat through the pressure Carter exerted on the Israeli prime minister. Begin again raised issue with incorporating Resolution 242. He wanted to strike the entire preamble, including the fateful clause on the inadmissibility of territory from war, from the agreement.<sup>55</sup> Carter was furious and remarked that Begin's position indicates Sadat was correct—"what you

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<sup>51</sup> Carter, "Day 4, Friday, September 8, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 227-28.

<sup>52</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 220.

<sup>53</sup> Carter, "Day 4, Friday, September 8, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 228.

<sup>54</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 365.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

want is land!”<sup>56</sup> The two men similarly clashed over autonomy in the West Bank. The Israelis required what would essentially be veto power over local Palestinian decisions. Carter called Begin out, noting this sounded like “subterfuge” and no “self-respecting” Arab would agree to it.<sup>57</sup> Nearly the same proposal was presented to Sadat the next day, who was much more receptive to it. He remained adamant on the removal of the Sinai settlements, however, and resisted Carter’s attempt to get Sadat to incorporate full normalization of relations at this stage. In addition, he wanted Egyptian and Jordanian forces to guarantee security in the West Bank and Gaza in conjunction with the Israeli military.<sup>58</sup>

On Tuesday, Sadat and Carter held another meeting to discuss the proposal and the overall state of negotiations. Prior to the meeting, Carter observed a heated conversation between Sadat and his advisors.<sup>59</sup> It came at a time when tensions within the Egyptian delegation—between Sadat and Kamel—were nearing their peak. Kamel completed a memorandum that stated the ways in which Egypt could minimize damage when talks failed; Kamel believed they were going to because the proposals were not acceptable to him. Sadat’s foreign minister observed that the president had “come to believe that Carter constituted his only hope and his strongest ally.” The memo was an attempt to persuade Sadat to again advocate for traditional Arab positions.<sup>60</sup> Divisions between Sadat and Kamel only continued to grow.

After arriving five minutes later, Sadat seemed on edge and brought a piece of paper which he seemed eager to read. Carter took this as a sign of Egypt’s withdrawal

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 373.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>58</sup> Carter, “Day 7, Monday, September 11, 1978,” in *White House Diary*, 231.

<sup>59</sup> Carter, “Day 8, Tuesday, September 12, 1978,” in *White House Diary*, 232.

<sup>60</sup> Kamel, *Camp David Accords*, 337-40.

from negotiations, and thus did everything he could to shape the discussion in a positive light.<sup>61</sup> He appealed to the Sadat's peace ambitions and deflected the Egyptian's concerns over whether or not the Arabs would accept the proposal. Carter noted that Sadat was "a strong and courageous leader in the forefront of a movement toward peace, but restrained by his advisors' concern about the rest of the Arab world."<sup>62</sup> Without explicitly saying so, Carter urged him to transcend the traditional Arab position and agree to the reasonable provisions set forth in the draft. It worked. Sadat informed Carter that he would remain open minded on the need to delay resolution on the ultimate borders of the West Bank, what the final status of the Palestinians would be, and the permanent status of Jerusalem. The five year transitional period, provided there was full autonomy and self-government, could further benefit the Palestinian position.<sup>63</sup> Carter was relieved, but he worried that Sadat would be pressured into rescinding his comments. "I'm a little too influential on Sadat when we are together," wrote Carter in his diary, "and I hope that his attitude when he left will be maintained. His advisors always try to harden his position to accommodate the feelings of the Arab leaders in other countries."<sup>64</sup> The president realized that only through his close relationship with Sadat could the hardline Arab positions be resisted and peace be reached.

After another meeting with Begin in which little was accomplished and heated discussions over Resolution 242 were rehashed, Carter opted to make the unprecedented move to work directly with a subordinate member from each delegation. The president never fully stated why he made this change. Kamel speculated that Carter did it to buy

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<sup>61</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 233.

<sup>62</sup> Carter, "Day 8, Tuesday, September 12, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 233.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 233-34.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.



time in the hope that he could gain the necessary concessions.<sup>65</sup> Other possible explanations include Carter's political need to achieve a settlement regardless of content or that Carter felt he was best able to draft the agreement himself. Regardless of the reason, the idea proved fruitful. Carter met with Aharon Barak of Israel and Osama el-Baz of Egypt to draft a Sinai agreement and work on the West Bank and Gaza framework. El-Baz was a more flexible member of the Egyptian delegation, and Carter believed that the other Egyptian aides would not oppose his decision. If need be, Carter, could go over his head to Sadat.<sup>66</sup> Thus, the two camps slowly moved closer to an overall agreement, with Carter playing the central role in negotiations.

The next morning, Carter awoke at 4:00 a.m. with a grave fear that Sadat's life was in danger. The issues being addressed were highly emotional for the Arabs and Carter knew that many of Sadat's advisors were devoted to the PLO and other radical groups. Moreover, Sadat had been making decisions that they strongly disagreed with.<sup>67</sup> Carter's concern highlighted the major differences that emerged in the Egyptian camp. Sadat and Kamel had many heated arguments throughout the Accords. They disagreed over Sadat's ability to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians.<sup>68</sup> At times, Sadat verbally reprimanded Kamel in front of the Egyptian delegation.<sup>69</sup> Overall, Kamel felt that Sadat fundamentally misunderstood the Arab world and how it would react to such an agreement. This tension ultimately led to Kamel's resignation during the Accords. The disagreements between them indicate how important Sadat's personal desire for peace was in bringing Egypt to Camp David and in compromising while there.

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<sup>65</sup> Kamel, *Camp David Accords*, 348.

<sup>66</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 387.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

<sup>68</sup> Kamel, *Camp David Accords*, 335.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

Carter's relationship with Sadat faced its largest test when Sadat announced on September 15—day eleven—that he would be withdrawing from Camp David. According to Kamel, Sadat told Vance there was no hope of an agreement due to Begin's "rigidity and obstinacy." Importantly, he said the concessions he had made were for the United States and Carter personally, not for Begin.<sup>70</sup> Carter immediately went to see him. He pleaded with Sadat to reconsider and noted the progress that had been made—that the proposals were ostensibly becoming acceptable.<sup>71</sup> What turned out to be effective, however, was his personal appeal to his friend. Carter solemnly said,

It will mean first of all an end to the relationship between the United States and Egypt. There is no way we can ever explain this to our people. It would mean the end of this peacekeeping effort, into which I have put so much investment. It would probably mean the end of my Presidency because this whole effort will be discredited. And last but not least, it will mean the end of something that is very precious to me: my friendship with you.<sup>72</sup>

Sadat responded favorably. He told Carter that Dayan said Israel would not sign any agreement. This would have left Egypt vulnerable if it still signed an agreement, and so he opted to withdraw instead. Carter solved Sadat's worries by guaranteeing that the proposals would be void if Israel rejected either framework.<sup>73</sup>

These words had a profound effect on Sadat and shaped the rest of the summit. Kamel recalled that Sadat emerged entirely pleased from the meeting; he called Carter a "great man and extremely intelligent." In contrast to what Carter reported in his diary,

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 355-56.

<sup>71</sup> Carter, "Day 11, Friday, September 15, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 237.

<sup>72</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 272.

<sup>73</sup> Carter, "Day 11, Friday, September 15, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 237.

Kamel noted that Sadat told him the solution was that the agreements would have to be submitted for approval to the Egyptian and Israeli parliaments. If either rejected one or both of them, they would be cancelled.<sup>74</sup> Although similar to what Carter described, Sadat's version gave him more political cover. Regardless, it renewed Sadat's full confidence in Carter. He pledged to sign any agreement Carter put in front of him, without reading it.<sup>75</sup> Thus, what Sadat depended on most was his friendship with Carter. He placed absolute trust in him. Their relationship is what kept the Accords from dissolving. Moreover, it led Sadat to sign a framework that was opposed by virtually the entire Egyptian delegation.

Sadat's refusal to abide by his decision to withdraw from the conference and his vow to sign any agreement Carter deemed reasonable led to Kamel's resignation. The foreign minister confronted Sadat one last time to plead with him to reject the deal. Their meeting demonstrates once again the centrality of the Carter-Sadat friendship to the success of negotiations. Additionally, it indicates how fundamentally different Sadat's understanding of the Arab world and peace was from his own delegation. However, it must first be noted that Kamel's memoir is an overt attempt to correct the historical record, more so than that of any other participant at Camp David. The accuracy of quotations and the rhetoric employed should be treated with skepticism. Nonetheless, because it is the only record of the conversation and one of the best insights into Sadat's thought process, it must be considered.

Kamel began by outlining what he believed was unacceptable in the agreement, but then focused on Egypt's lack of a mandate to negotiate on behalf of either Palestine

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<sup>74</sup> Kamel, *Camp David Accords*, 356.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

or the other Arab states.<sup>76</sup> “You know nothing about the Arabs,” replied Sadat. He declared that the Arabs would never solve anything. Israel would indefinitely occupy and ultimately absorb the Arab territories, “with the Arabs not lifting a finger to stop them, contenting themselves with bluster and empty slogans.”<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, on the specifics of the frameworks, Sadat said that Carter had informed him that the vagueness is unimportant because the United States would be a full partner in negotiations on West Bank and Gaza autonomy. With the success at Camp David, Sadat believed Carter would win easy reelection. From there, Carter would be better positioned to fulfill his “moral obligation to do something for the Palestinians.” Kamel argued the Accords would isolate Egypt from the Arab world (he was, in fact, correct on this point).<sup>78</sup> Again, however, Sadat refuted his foreign minister. Sadat suggested that peace must be had to address Egypt’s economic problems. Cairo had to be able to dedicate all its resources to economic development. Only when Egypt was internally strong could it be helpful to the Palestinians.<sup>79</sup> Recognizing there was no chance to change Sadat’s mind, Kamel resigned.

Sadat and Kamel’s exchange highlights the various motivations Egypt had for concluding peace. First, Egypt’s economy was clearly at the forefront of Sadat’s mind. Although the aforementioned CIA analysis believed the economy was already on the road to recovery, the January 1977 food riots likely left a significant impression on Sadat. Peace meant the disappearance of potential war and complete focus on Sadat’s open door economic policy. Second, Sadat thought about the conflict differently from the other

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 364.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 366.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 367.

Arab states. He believed active negotiation with the adversary was necessary to achieve the Arab goal regarding Palestine. In *Those I Have Known*, Sadat reiterated this notion, writing, “Why not, then, put aside slogans and think anew about how to solve the problem in a modern way that the civilized world could accept and understand?”<sup>80</sup> Sadat was willing to forge his own path, even if it meant breaking from the Arab world. However, it should be noted that Sadat believed the Arab states would follow him. Next, he held a strong personal desire for peace which allowed him to grant more concessions than another in his position may have. Finally, Sadat’s close friendship with Carter helped to realize these goals. Without it, Carter would not have been able to narrow the differences between Egypt and Israel. Similarly, their shared personal wish for peace and understanding of what constituted a just peace aligned the two presidents.

The remaining two days of the Accords focused on reaching agreement on the Israeli settlements in the Sinai and, to a certain extent, the West Bank. Sadat showed maximum flexibility on the issue, offering everything short of changing his stance on withdrawal. He was in a “sober and constructive mood,” according to Carter.<sup>81</sup> No doubt his mood was influenced by his renewed confidence in Carter. Carter conceived of the idea that the settlement issue should be submitted to the Knesset for approval. Begin agreed.<sup>82</sup> The final major obstacle had been overcome. Up until the last moment, Sadat’s advisors argued against the deal. But Sadat had faith in Carter and consented to it.<sup>83</sup> Egypt and Israel did not agree on everything, and amended letters from Begin, Sadat, and

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<sup>80</sup> Anwar el-Sadat, *Those I Have Known* (New York: Continuum, 1984), 103.

<sup>81</sup> Carter, “Day 12, Saturday, September 16, 1978,” in *White House Diary*, 238, 240.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>83</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 226.

Carter, addressed the status of Jerusalem, settlements, and the future of comprehensive peace negotiations.<sup>84</sup>

The final agreement came in the form of two frameworks. The first, “A Framework for Peace in the Middle East Agreed at Camp David,” dealt with the Palestinian problem and the West Bank and Gaza autonomy plan. It was based on Resolution 242, “in all its parts.” This was a concession from Begin; however, the text of the resolution was appended rather than included in the body of the framework. The proposal called for Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon to join future negotiations. The autonomy plan established a self-governing authority comprised of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The transitional period was set to last for five years after the administrative council was inaugurated, with negotiations on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza to be started no later than three years into it. Finally, the proposal called for normal relations between signatories.<sup>85</sup> The second, “Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel,” covered the bases of negotiations for the forthcoming treaty. Again, it was based on Resolution 242 in full. Egypt was granted sovereignty over the Sinai up to the internationally recognized border, Israel would withdraw its military forces from the Sinai, the airfields would be vacated, and Israel would be guaranteed free passage through the Suez Canal. In addition, the Sinai would be demilitarized near the Israeli border. Following the signing of a peace treaty, full normal relations, in all facets, would be established.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> “Accompanying Letters,” in Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America’s Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 471-75.

<sup>85</sup> “A Framework for Peace in the Middle East Agreed at Camp David,” in William Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1986), 376-81.

<sup>86</sup> “Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel,” in William Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1986), 381-83.

The Camp David Accords were a successful diplomatic initiative that proved to be more symbolic than operational in solving the Palestinian problem. However, it did lay the foundation for the historic peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. The motivations for seeking peace considered in the first two chapters were made apparent in the negotiations at Camp David. Carter, inspired by his commitment to Israel's security, but also by his human rights initiative, maintained a consistent personal desire for peace. It guided him through the discussions and toward bringing the parties together. Sadat, bearing a similar desire along with economic considerations, strove toward peace against all internal and Arab opposition. Egypt would be isolated from the Arab world soon after, following the Baghdad Summit and subsequent suspension from the Arab League.<sup>87</sup> Conversely, the Accords led to much closer relations between the US and Egypt. To this day, Egypt receives the second most American aid, behind only Israel.<sup>88</sup> Crucially, Carter and Sadat developed a close friendship that allowed the two presidents to understand each other. Sadat, particularly, leaned on his trust in Carter to bring about a fair agreement. Egypt would ultimately sign the frameworks due to their relationship. Carter, in his diary on the final day of the Accords, summed this relationship up nicely:

On one of my walks with Sadat, we discussed that my being from the South gave me a sensitivity to the problems of the Middle East. My region had suffered, lived under an occupying power, for generations had been torn apart by racial prejudice, and was resurgent. The South had overcome its problems, and we

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<sup>87</sup> Marvine Howe, "Arabs Agree to Cut All Ties with Egypt Because of Treaty," *New York Times*, April 1, 1979, A1.

<sup>88</sup> Jeremy M. Sharp, *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations* (CRS Report No. RL33003) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016), 26-28, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>.

might be able to do the same thing for the Middle East. It was an interesting conversation.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Carter, "Day 13, Sunday, September 17, 1978," in *White House Diary*, 245.



## Conclusion

The friendship between Carter and Sadat played a vital role in concluding peace and indicates the validity of theory that focuses on the effects of political leaders on foreign policy. Furthermore, their personal desires for peace prompted them to go farther than others in seeking peace. The two men played significant and decisive roles in determining their countries' foreign policies. Sadat, in particular, followed almost exclusively his own feelings. The Camp David Accords are significant because they provide an unprecedented model of the form negotiations between the authoritative leaders of different states take. They also propose a roadmap for achieving peace in the Middle East. It is impossible to replicate the personalities of Carter, Sadat, and Begin, but an emphasis on current Middle Eastern leaders forming close friendships with each other and with the American president could prove constructive. At Camp David, such friendships ultimately brought about agreement. Moreover, the Accords suggest that intense American involvement may be necessary for Arab-Israeli peace.

This thesis adds to the work on the effect of political leaders on a state's foreign policy. However, it was limited to its sources and thus leaves many other areas for study. A similar study conducted using the Egyptian or Israeli documents would further increase understanding of the factors behind the success of the Accords. Additionally, an analysis of the Accords from the bottom up, focusing on the diplomatic advisors and organizational structures of each state, would allow scholars to gauge the overall effect of each level of government in foreign policy formulation. Finally, comparative studies with similar high-level negotiations would allow for a test of the conclusions arrived at in this thesis. Exploring why the 1978 Camp David Accords succeeded and the 2000 Camp

David Summit failed would increase understanding of when and how much political leaders can influence their counterparts in other states.

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