CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SOVIET CONNECTION
To counter the growing Israeli military threat to Egypt's national security, Nasser concluded an arms deal with the Soviet Union which he disclosed on September 27, 1955. Moscow agreed to supply arms to Egypt more due to the latter's role in opposing the Western-sponsored Baghdad Pact and for its anti-imperialist stance in general plus its decision to follow a non-aligned policy than due to its hostility towards Israel. To the Soviet Union the Arab-Israeli conflict (AIC) was a rather secondary factor or no factor at all than its desire to weaken Western attempts to encircle its southern underbelly with a string of hostile military alliances. It was also prompted by the desire to weaken Western influence and presence in the area and encourage regimes which can withstand Western pressure. Strictly speaking, Egypt and the Soviet Union came together in order to promote their respective political and security interests, even though they were poles apart ideologically. Since the Israeli factor was of secondary importance to Moscow it caused frictions in Egyptian–Soviet relations and the inherent contradictions came to the surface in subsequent years especially under President Sadat.

The 1967 Arab-Israeli War

The road to the 1967 war lay basically on the information Moscow provided to Nasser that Israel was planning an armed attack on Syria. Since Egypt and Syria had concluded a mutual defence
pact on November 4, 1966 Nasser acting on the information brought by Sadat from Moscow immediately plunged into action. The upshot of all this brought disaster to Egypt as Israel attacked Egypt on June 5, 1967 and overrun Sinai peninsula. The Soviet Union after Egypt's defeat gave massive and unprecedented help to Egypt while at the same time impressing upon Nasser the need to pursue a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli Conflict (AIC).

One of the crucial reason why Moscow insisted on a political solution of the dispute was its conviction that Egypt would not be in a position to take military action at least for two or three years. Brezhnev, at this time told the Arabs to be more flexible and accept an exchange for a withdrawal of Israeli forces, the termination of hostilities with Israel. The virtual opposition of Soviet Union to Egypt's military option and clear preference for a peaceful settlement pushed Nasser to reappraise the situation as no other country was willing to provide arms on such terms as the Soviets did. This was one of the crucial reasons as to why Nasser told the Arab Heads of State at the Khartoum Summit in 1967 "that we must also take into consideration the fact that there is agreement between the US and Soviet Union to resolve the problem by political means".¹ Nasser's displeasure over Soviet preference for a peaceful settlement became clear when he repeatedly warned about the futility of a peaceful settlement as long as the military balance remained in favour of Israel.

Meanwhile the Soviets in their direct talks with the US over the Arab-Israeli problem came to the conclusion that the Americans had taken them for a ride as far as the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 242 was concerned. Soon the Soviet Union informed Nasser that Moscow had lost all hope of political cooperation with the US and admitting that the US had "deluded" and "deceived" them. This compelled Moscow to supply Cairo with the promised arms. The supply of arms came to be thus directly linked with the level of progress towards a peaceful settlement of the AIC.

The War of Attrition

Given the negative posture of Israel towards withdrawal and blind US support to it even by the Nixon administration, Nasser decided to launch the war of attrition.

In response to Egypt's war of attrition the Israelis resorted to bombing of even civilian targets deep inside Egypt which compelled Nasser to seek additional Soviet arms. As usual he found the Soviets reluctant but Nasser was vehement with them on this occasion. He told them:

If we do not get what I am asking for everybody will assume that the only solution is in the hands of the Americans. We have never seen the Americans backward in helping the Israelis .... But as far as I can see you are not prepared to help us in the same way that the Americans help Israel. This means that there is only one course open to me. I shall go back to Egypt and I shall tell them that the time has come for me to step down and hand over to a pro-American President. If I cannot save them somebody else will have to do it. That is my final word.\(^2\)

---

In a surprise move on July 23, 1970 Nasser accepted the Rogers plan. Obviously, Brezhnev was upset at Nasser's acceptance of the US peace plan.

To sum up, the Soviet Union had strengthened its influence in Egypt since the 1967 war due to Nasser's dependence on Moscow for arms and diplomatic/economic support. Interestingly, the beginning of its decline in Egypt also began soon after the 1967 war. Nasser's major problem with Moscow was the level of arms they were ready to give to Egypt. Thus, the question of arms supply became a major issue in their bilateral relations and was to bedevil their ties later. This explains why the Soviets were opposed to Egypt going to another war and of course they wanted nothing to disturb the emerging détente with the US. So Egypt was not sure if the Soviet Union would help it regain by war what it had lost in the war when all peaceful avenues were exhausted. This became the main source of friction between Cairo and Moscow. They wanted Nasser to pursue a peaceful settlement but when he informed them of his acceptance of Roger's plan they were suspicious about Egypt's direct contact with the US.

Sadat's break with the Past

The death of Nasser in 1970 caused anxiety in Moscow about the future shape of things in Egypt. The Soviet leaders sent a powerful delegation, led by Premier Kosygin, to Nasser's funeral. According to Heikal the Soviets among other things were apprehensive that "the new leaders of Egypt whoever they were might try to prove themselves by rushing into a new war.
with Israel". To the great relief of Soviets, Sadat, who succeeded Nasser as President assured them that Egypt would not initiate war without taking the Soviet leadership into confidence. The Soviets continued to emphasize the significance of a search for a peaceful solution of the AIC.

Meanwhile on February 4, 1971 Sadat astonished the world by his first ever peace initiative. The Soviets were surprised, mainly for three reasons: Firstly, they had anticipated a routine three months extension of ceasefire, but when Sadat extended it for only one month they were surprised if not annoyed for the simple reason that any renewal of hostilities was bound to tax Soviet resources. They also seemed to have believed that a war "could lead to a disaster, a fall of the progressive Egyptian regime and consequent discreditation of Soviet efforts on the Arabs behalf". Secondly, Sadat's proposal definitely meant the involvement of the US which they detested; and lastly, Sadat's proposal to establish diplomatic ties with the US was viewed by Moscow with great anxiety. It appears that Sadat had not consulted the Soviet leaders and had acted independently which was


5. Sadat began tentative soundings in America's direction which came as early as in his first weeks of power: on October 21, 1970, he gave an interview to New York Times saying that 'much could be done if America were not so closely identified with Israel and that Egypt was not in the Soviet camp' cited in Felipo Fernandez Armesto, Sadat and his statecraft (London: 1982), p. 123.
the prime cause for Soviet concern.

Apart from his peace proposals a number of other issues also necessitated urgent consultations between the two countries. Sadat accompanied by his War Minister General Mohamed Fawzi went on a secret two day visit to Moscow on March 1, 1971 at the invitation of the Soviet leaders. During the talks Sadat emphasized the need for prompt delivery of arms needed by Egypt. He also told them that "on your advice I have gone further in my efforts for peace than any other Arab leader". Perhaps Sadat partially succeeded in convincing the Soviets regarding his various plans and the latter in return assured him to send more arms. In retrospect it can be said that Sadat's request for sophisticated arms to live up to his goal of making 1971 a "year of decision" was certainly turned down by the Soviets, who feared that yet another war with Israel would escalate to global proportions and that the Arabs would emerge defeated again.

Growing Differences with Moscow

In a swift move, Sadat dismissed Ali Sabri the pro-Soviet Vice-President on May 2, 1971. The Soviets became very suspicious of Sadat. This event intensified their anxiety as it could have serious consequences for their relations with Egypt. This might have been the reason for their signing a

6. Heikal, n. 3, p. 222

treaty of friendship with Egypt to safeguard their interests in Egypt. The Soviet leadership sent Podgorny to assess the situation in Egypt. He arrived in Cairo on May 25 exactly, one week after Sadat's action against Ali Sabri and his group. The 15-year Treaty of Friendship was signed on 27 May.

The compelling reason why Sadat signed the treaty was his expectations that it would enable him to procure necessary weapons for the recovery of occupied Arab lands. It also assured him of Soviet friendship and cooperation despite his several measures which were clearly disapproved by the Soviets.

An abortive Left-wing Coup d'etat, on July 19, 1970, to overthrow President Numeiry of Sudan was crushed with Sadat's active support. The Sudan events strengthened Moscow's worst suspicions regarding Sadat's anti-Communist proclivities. According to Sadat himself "his attitude to Sudan coup caused the gap between me and the Soviet leaders to widen". Thus events in Sudan gave a big jolt to Egypt's relations with the Soviet Union.

Having rebuffed by the US and Israel in his efforts to seek a peaceful settlement Sadat switched over to a military approach to the problem. He was particularly concerned over the 'no war no peace' situation. Towards this end, Sadat's unilateral proclamation of 1971 as the 'Year of Decision' did

not find favor with Moscow. It was quite displeased over Sadat's deadline, because as per the 1971 treaty there had been no prior consultation on this subject.

Sadat in his determination to make his 'Year of Decision' a reality by seeking Soviet military and political support visited Moscow on October 11, 1971. Brezhnev apart from admitting that it was his "duty to make good any arms shortages" also reminded Sadat that Egypt should pursue "political efforts and continue the contacts with Nixon".9

The Soviet Union having promised Sadat offensive arms during the latter's October visit failed to deliver them. Relations with Moscow were strained. The Soviet decision not to supply the promised arms is hard to prove. However, it may be pointed out that on the one hand Moscow committed to develop its ties with the US, due to the new security threat presented by a rapid rapprochement between China and the US and on the other hand, Sadat had failed to convince the Soviet leaders of his aims. Sadat's numerous anti-Soviet postures were another factor. As the Soviets saw it, Sadat to take anti-Soviet measures and at the same time pressed hard for offensive arms. This contradictory policy perhaps explains the delay in the delivery of Soviet weapons.

At any rate, Sadat was greatly disappointed and he became increasingly impatient over Soviet delay in sending the weapons which had been agreed to by Soviet leaders in principle.

during his visit to Moscow in October 1971. The much publicised year of decision came and went without Sadat taking any decision. His hopes were shattered to pieces and he had to retreat from his decision and postpone it indefinitely. The decision was an embarrassing and humiliating one for Sadat. The year 1971 ultimately ended peacefully, but Sadat's conflict with Moscow heightened. He held them totally responsible for his failure to make war. The lukewarm Soviet attitude compelled him to take a decision which would soon shake Egyptian-Soviet friendship to its roots. The decision was his determination to teach the Soviets a lesson for letting him down and making him appear ridiculous.

Meanwhile in Egypt there was mounting criticism of the Government for excessive dependence on Moscow and calls for an evenhanded policy towards the Super Powers increased. Mohamed Heikal, the influential editor of Al-Ahram and a close confident of Sadat, also joined the group which called for a balanced relationship with the Super Powers. 10

The Nixon-Brezhnev summit took place in Moscow as scheduled on May 22, 1972. West Asia was one of the subjects discussed. But the Joint Communique issued gave a low priority to the AIC. Sadat was evidently upset by the outcome of the

10. Ibid., p. 238. In November 1971 Sadat had summoned General Okunev, head of the Soviet advisers, and in language that he must have assumed could not be misunderstood, reminded him that the Egyptian President was Stalin, and not the ceremon- nial head of State Kalinin. As if to demonstrate the point he expelled the Soviet advisers in July 1972. Heikal, n. 2, p. 156.
Moscow summit. It confirmed his misgivings about Soviet luke-warmness towards the AIC. In his own words, the reference to "military relaxation" came as a "violent shock to us because we lagged at least 20 steps behind Israel and so 'military relaxation' in this context mean nothing but giving in to Israel". 11

Sadat concluded that the Super Powers had made a deal to freeze the status quo which was detrimental to Egypt's interests. Detente was officially viewed in Egypt not merely being a harbinger of "cooperative" relationship between Moscow and Washington but the beginning of "collusion" between them. 12 Sadat had by now come to the conclusion that something drastic had to be done to impress upon Moscow the gravity of the situation. This explains his decision to order the expulsion of 21,000 Soviet advisers from Egypt. On July 8, 1972 Sadat informed the Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov that the services of the Soviet


experts had been terminated with immediate effect and that
they must leave Egypt within one week. On July 18, Sadat
publicly announced the "termination of the mission of the
Soviet military advisers". In his speech Sadat spoke of points
of differences between Cairo and Moscow and said:

The principle difference has always been with
regard to the nature of these armaments and
the date of their delivery to Egypt. Throughout
the negotiations we have always made it clear
that Cairo would refuse any restriction on the
use of military equipment whatever in its
nature.... 13

In sum, Sadat's decision to expel the Soviet advisers
was not a hasty one; it was the result of accumulated Egyptian
grievances against Moscow. Sadat would have tolerated the
enormous facilities granted to Moscow in Egypt had the Soviets
been willing to use their influence with the US to force Israel
to vacate the occupied Arab lands and deliver a diplomatic
solution. But once it became evident that Moscow was neither
prepared or unable to exert effective pressure on Israel through
the US nor willing to supply the "offensive" weapons requested by
Sadat for waging a successful war against Israel, he decided to
act. Despite this public humiliation Moscow continued to support
Egypt militarily. In fact, it supplied Egypt with more developed

13. Keesing's Contemporary Archives (5-12 August 1972),
vol. XVIII, no. 1510, p. 25397. See also R.D. McLaurin,
Mohamed Mughusuddin, Abraham R. Wagner, Foreign Policy
Making in the Middle East (New York: 1977), p. 84. Soon after
the expulsion Sadat wooed US corporate power by granting
exploration contracts to Exxon and Mobil oil and a multi-
million-dollar pipeline deal to the Bechtel Corporation.
arms than were made available earlier. A Politburo Committee was reported to have recommended:

... let the Egyptians have sufficient arms to enable them to risk a battle ... should this happen and should the Arabs win, their victory will have been achieved thanks to Soviet arms. Should they be defeated or the fighting reach a stalemate it is still to the Soviet Union that they will have to look for rescue in the aftermath of the battle.¹⁴

A high-powered Egyptian delegation headed by the new War Minister, Ahmad Ismail, visited Moscow from February 26 to March 2, 1973 and had talks with Soviet Defence Minister Grechko and on March 27. Ismail had four hours of talks with Brezhnev. According to Sadat, the biggest ever arms deal with Moscow was concluded during this visit and Egypt started getting some of the arms it wanted "promptly and in record time".¹⁵ He later also said that the Soviet Union is "supplying us with everything they can. I am completely satisfied. They are drowning me in new arms", Heikal quotes Sadat as saying that "as if all taps had been fully turned on. It looks as if they want to push me into the battle".¹⁶


The October War and Moscow's Exclusion from Peace Process

Egypt in coordination with Syria launched an attack on Israel on October 6, 1973. Egypt was able to cross the Suez Canal and storm the Bar Lev line and hold territory on the east bank of the land. Towards the end of the war the Israelis managed to cross the canal and establish their military presence on the West bank of the canal. The outcome of the war convinced Sadat that in the prevailing international situation a limited success in the war was the maximum that Arabs could achieve. Sadat seemed to have concluded that Egypt could not wage any more wars and that the October war was to be the last one as he told Heikal at that juncture. 17

He visualized that only through diplomacy the problem could be solved. He calculated that the US alone could compel Israel to vacate the Arab territories by virtue of its considerable leverage with Israel. Thus, Sadat's exclusive reliance on US diplomatic mediation, which excluded the Soviet Union from having any say, despite its military and political support, brought him into open conflict with the Soviet Union, which reconsidered its support to Sadat. So if Egypt was not going to fight, "the Russians usefulness seemed to vanish". 18 In diplomacy Sadat saw limited help the Soviets could provide in a peaceful resolution of the AIC and believed

that the US had the necessary power to influence Israel diplomatically. Sadat ensured total exclusion of Moscow from all aspects of the peace process. He fell in line with Kissinger's step-by-step approach to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. According to Heikal, the timing of his move towards US was also determined by his conviction that the problems of:

the Middle East were moving towards a solution and that in this process the Russians had nothing to offer. They had been of great assistance when a solution could only be sought through war, but now the President saw ahead a period of peace. This would, moreover, be a period in which the greatest political and economic power in the area was going to be wielded by those Arabs who were allies or friends of the US. The further therefore he succeeded in removing himself from the losing Soviet side the nearer he would come to the winning American side.19

Heikal writes that Sadat in his first meeting with Kissinger on November 6, 1973 spoke of a common strategy to oust the Soviet Union from the West Asian region. "I believe it was in these three hours that the fate of the Soviet Union in the Middle East was sealed." 20 Sadat expanded his strategic vision to conceive of a local triangular hegemony in West Asia: an axis of the three predominant anti-communist powers - Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Very soon it became abundantly clear to Moscow that Sadat was overanxious to improve his ties with the US. On top of it, Sadat appointed Ismail Fahmy - a known critic of Egypt's

19. Ibid., p. 270;
20. Ibid., p. 262-63; According to Heikal, Sadat told an astonished Kissinger that he (Sadat) regarded the USSR as "the real enemy". Sadat added: "Then I began to talk to Kissinger about matters I had never dreamed I was going to raise". Sadat did not tell Heikal what these were. M. H. Heikal, Andiwa & Fars (London: 1982) p. 67.
close friendship with the Soviet Union as his new Foreign Minister. Fahmy was fond of saying "that for 20 years Egypt had been parked in the Soviet garrage". 21

Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy brilliantly succeeding, thanks due to Sadat's active encouragement, Moscow in a determined attempt to show that the AIC could not be solved without its active participation, actively worked for the convening of the Geneva Peace Conference (GPC). The strong Soviet attachment to this conference was probably due to two reasons: (1) it would have given the long desired "equal" say with the US; and (2) to make it appear that a solution to be just and equal, was due to Soviet participation. Although the GPC was convened on December 21, 1973 it achieved nothing substantial and was adjourned as abruptly as it was called. This was primarily due to Sadat's acceptance of Kissinger's suggestion to hold trilateral talks between the US, Egypt and Israel to resolve the AIC. 22 The Soviet Union was "relegated to the role of spectator". As one of their delegates said bitterly: "we went to Geneva to act as witnesses to a marriage, what we in fact witnessed was not a marriage but an affaire!" Obviously the Americans dominated the show at the GPC talking to both the Arabs and the Israelis "but nobody


talked to the Russians". When the Soviets protested to the US, the Americans told them that "it was the Arabs who insisted on keeping them at arms length". According to Heikal:

The whole business took on elements of force when a Russian colonel announced that he was going to attend meeting of two committees - which in fact he was perfectly entitled to do. The Americans said that they would not themselves be attending because the Arabs had intimated that they wanted no outsiders there. The Russian Colonel insisted and forced his way into the meeting but as long as he sat there, none of the Arabs said anything of any substance, confining their remarks to trivalities.23

In reality, Sadat ensured total boycott of the Soviet Union in the peace talks and relied exclusively on the Americans on the mistaken assumption that there is clear change in US attitude towards the Arabs from its previous position of open support to Israel. The exclusion of Moscow was a grave error on the part of Sadat and this characterised his subsequent steps. Of course, he had many grievances against the Soviets and the Soviets in turn greatly suspected Sadat's ultimate goals but they were prepared to cooperate with him in whatever manner was possible in the search for peace. Not only he excluded the Soviets from the peace process but launched a virulent anti-Soviet campaign that baffled even the US. It can be argued that Sadat's dramatising of his anti-Sovietism might have been intended to enlist US support for the peace process.

With Sadat's active cooperation Kissinger worked out an Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement which was concluded on January 18, 1974 to the virtual exclusion of Moscow from the negotiations. The Soviet Union quite naturally was annoyed by this procedure. Moscow expressing its unhappiness retaliated by virtually cutting off arms supplies to Egypt. This was to make Sadat realize that he could not have Soviet arms and at the same time work for its exclusion from the peace process and take anti-Soviet measures. Even though Moscow was very critical about its deliberate exclusion from the peace process by Sadat, it was not prepared for an open rift with Cairo at this juncture.

Sadat's distrust and deep suspicion of Moscow, and all out support for the strengthening of Egyptian-American relations became an established tenet of his policy. In this context, he invited the US President Nixon to Egypt in June 1974 and was given a warm and enthusiastic welcome. This was the first visit by a US President to the area since the end of the Second World War. During this visit numerous agreements were concluded which took Egypt into the US camp.

As Sadat moved closer to the US, his relations with Moscow were being stretched thinner and thinner. Even though Moscow refrained from publicly answering Sadat's charges and officially the atmosphere still was one of cool amity they were clearly angered over Sadat's many anti-Soviet moves. But what
worsened the relations was Sadat's decision to vent his grievances publicly as he had done previously, but this time with much more vehemence.

According to Fahmy:

The problem was that Sadat was never able to set aside his personal resentment and cultivate good relations with the Soviet Union to counter-balance the new ties developing between Egypt and the US. Instead he seized on every occasion to vent his spleen at the Soviet Union in public and in private. His frequent anti-Soviet utterances were dutifully picked up and prominently displayed by our Egyptian newspapers, greatly complicating my task of convincing the Soviet leaders that Egypt was not moving into the American camp, but merely wanted relations with both Superpowers.24

In a sharp reaction to Nixon's visit Moscow abruptly postponed Fahmy's visit to the Soviet Union which was scheduled to begin from July 10, 1974. Subsequently, the Brezhnev visit was also initially postponed and later cancelled.25

With Kissinger's mediation, Sadat concluded yet another partial agreement on September 4, 1975 and on October 26, he visited US. According to Fahmy, after Sinai-II "there was no way of convincing Sadat that he still needed the Soviet Union".

He adds;

Sadat was even more certain that he did not need the Soviet Union and that the entire solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict could only come from the US. He thus did nothing to bring about a reconciliation with the Soviet Union. Instead, he escalated his campaign of verbal abuse against it and was answered in kind by the Soviets. Relations steadily deteriorated. 26

By now Sadat vowed not "to return to the lap of the Russians under no circumstances" and said, "I have chosen the hard course". 27 He decided to write off the Soviet Union and put all his eggs in the American basket.

All this culminated in the abrogation of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation on March 14, 1976 and three weeks later Sadat ordered the immediate cancellation of Soviet naval facilities in Egypt. By March 1976 Sadat perhaps felt sufficiently sure of the momentum of the peace drive to risk an open showdown with Moscow. According to Riad, "although the abrogation of treaty was expected to have some effect on US policy, the fact that it coincided with a presidential campaign robbed it of any possible benefit in this direction". 28

By 1976 Sadat had recovered only a small part of Sinai and since then the peace process had grinded to a halt. Added to this meagre progress on the peace front there were massive food riots in January 1977 and Sadat put the blame on

Communists. The promise of an "economic crossing" under infitah was a failure and the declining military capability of Egypt compared to Israel posed a serious challenge to the very survival of the Sadat regime. Moreover, his peace policy had led to growing isolation for Egypt within the Arab world.

By early 1977, Sadat had reached the crossroads and had the choice of either carrying forward his rapprochement with the US or to go back to Moscow. In Sadat's assessment turning to Soviet Union at this stage might get him some arms; but he also feared that there might be the repetition of previous Soviet reluctance to supply Egypt with the type and quantity of arms Egypt needed. As far as economic assistance for Egypt's mounting economic problems was concerned Sadat thought Moscow could be of no help. He was banking on infitah and on US and Saudi Arabia for assistance. Moreover, if Egypt re-opens the Moscow connection, Israel, would be the major beneficiary of increased US help. Under these circumstances, Sadat concluded that neither Egypt's military capability nor its economy would practically benefit from a patch up with Moscow. Perhaps the most important factor is Sadat's personal attitudes which strongly reinforced his opposition for any patch up with Soviet Union. According to Martin Indyk "Sadat had been there (Moscow) before and he had no desire to go back. Not only did he harbor deep distrust of the Soviet Union he also possessed a visceral belief in the efficacy of his strategy for seducing
the United States." Therefore, he rejected the notion of a reconciliation with the Soviet Union. In fact, Moscow had become Sadat's _bête noire_. Moreover, Sadat had a poor opinion about Moscow's diplomatic role in a peace settlement. He said "the Soviet Union has little in its hands and this is the opportunity for those who hold 99 per cent of the solution in their hands". He wanted the crucial parts of the negotiations for a peace settlement to be between Egypt, US and Israel and wanted total exclusion of Moscow because "he had serious doubts about negotiating substantive issues in the presence of a party he had humiliated whose position of influence in the region he had seriously undermined and who, he believed was out for revenge".

So by early 1977, Sadat was looking for a fresh drive for peace from the US. President Carter as early as during the election campaign spoke of the need to find a quick solution to the festering AIC. He talked about a comprehensive peace. Differences quickly emerged between Sadat and Carter over the role each thought Moscow should play in the peace process. These differences had ultimately serious implications for the peace process of Egypt. Carter simply did not share Sadat's view of Moscow and did not fear Soviet interference in the peace process.

30. Ibid., p. 20.
31. Ibid.
in the way Sadat did. Contrary to this view, Carter felt that if Moscow were to be sidelined from the peace process probably it will oppose and urge its supporters in the Arab world to reject an American sponsored Arab-Israeli settlement. Carter was convinced that if Moscow were given proper incentive it would play a positive role in moderating the stands of Syria and PLO, whose presence was crucial in Carter's strategy for comprehensive peace.

Sadat in his very first meeting with Carter had urged the American President to be tough with Moscow, to which Carter said: "I simply cannot bear pressure on Moscow because this would be a second political suicide for me". (The first being Israel). He also said:

The Soviet Union is a co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference. This automatically means that we should put them into the picture concerning the understandings we have reached with the Arabs and Israel. We should get their approval on all these agreements or at least some of them. 32

Ignoring Sadat's advice Carter went ahead in his determination to involve the Soviet Union in the Arab-Israeli peace process and this resulted in the issuing of a Joint US-USSR statement on October 1, 1977. This was a great blow to Sadat's strategy of conducting substantive talks between Egypt, Israel and the US and from which he had consistently worked to exclude Moscow since 1973 from the peace process.

32. Fahmy, n. 21, p. 200.
Sadat had been insisting on Carter to hold substantive talks among the three parties and then proceed to Geneva. He wanted proper preparations to be made for the GPC because he was deeply concerned over Soviet role in the Conference. As he said:

I am deeply concerned about the attitude of the Soviet Union with me, and I really make my calculations so that this attitude should not show any obstacles in the Geneva Conference. For sure, they will be creating difficulties for me ....

Thus, since the joint statement of the US-USSR for convening the GPC was issued, Sadat decided to bypass the idea of GPC and instead planned to go to Jerusalem and conclude a deal directly with Israel.

Undoubtedly Sadat wanted the Soviets to be excluded and was concerned over the joint statement but he had been very circumspect in his response. Sadat was concerned not so much with the consent of Moscow to the joint statement but its implications for the structure of negotiations at GPC. Cyrus Vance gave a copy of the new version of the US procedural working paper which contained one significant change. The plenary of the GPC where the Arabs would be represented by a united delegation was to have more than a ceremonial role at

33. Speeches & Interviews by President Sadat on the Occasion of his visit to Jerusalem (Cairo, n.d.) pp. 77-78.
the outset of the talks. It would have the power to approve any agreement reached in the bilateral sub-committee. This raised the spectre of the need for a consensus if peace agreements were to be signed. Thus, the US allowed Syria to have veto power, through the United Arab delegations role in the plenary over any agreement reached between Egypt and Israel. Worse still, from Sadat's viewpoint, a plenary with powers of approval would also naturally give Moscow as co-chairman a clear opportunity to meddle in Sadat's bilateral negotiations with Israel. Both these factors in the joint statement and the new US working paper showed US acceptance of this process. For Sadat this was something of a great disaster and concluded that Super Power coordination is undermining his peace strategy. This highly disturbing or ominous development compelled him to appeal to Carter by saying that "nothing be done to prevent Egypt and Israel from negotiating directly with (the US) serving as an intermediary either before or after the Geneva conference is convened". Later he said: "Every party should sit down with Israel and negotiate alone or bring a guardian or 'guarantor' such as the Soviet Union which is what Syria wanted for us and which I rejected outright".34

Thus Sadat had reached a dead end as far as his ties with Moscow were concerned. His anti-Soviet policy was a miserable failure because Carter was more interested in

34. Indyk, n. 29, p. 43.
cooperating with Moscow than excluding it from the peace process. Having burnt all his bridges with Moscow, Sadat was compelled to sign the Camp David accords and a bilateral peace treaty with Israel from a position of grave weakness, because the balance of power had decisively shifted against Egypt.

In sum, it must be pointed out that ever since assumption of office Sadat had believed that the US might help him recover the Arab territories. He was told so directly and also through Saudi Arabia. To enable the US to deliver, Sadat removed the Soviet presence from Egypt in July 1972 when he expelled the Soviet advisers. Even before, by removing Ali Sabri and other pro-Soviet supporters from the government in May 1971, he had indicated his preference for US. Despite this humiliation the Soviets continued to support militarily which enabled Sadat to wage the October war in 1973. Soon after the war Sadat embraced the Kissinger step-by-step diplomacy which excluded the Soviet Union from the peace process. Even then, Moscow was prepared to support Sadat politically but he convinced himself that 99 per cent of the cards in the Arab-Israeli game are with the US and hence Soviet Union is expendable. This mistaken belief and blind confidence in the US led him to launch a virulent public campaign against the Soviets which Sadat imagined would please the US and was intended to enlist American support for the peace process. The Soviet Union retaliated by cutting off arms supplies which gravely weakened Egypt's military capability. This automatically weakened Sadat's bargaining capacity with the result he was pushed by deteriorating domestic conditions to visit Israel and subsequently sign a separate peace treaty.