CHAPTER EIGHT

THE AMERICAN DRIVE
Since Nasser's military intervention in Yemen there was close coordination of policies between the US and Israel with their common goal to curb Nasser's growing influence in the area. The 1967 June Arab-Israeli war was a direct result of this convergence of interests which led to Egypt's disastrous defeat. After the war, US military/political support to Israel became an established tenet of its domestic and foreign policy and this enabled Israel to not only bypass the Palestine issue but also resist withdrawal from the recently occupied Arab lands. This was in great contrast to the US role in the Suez war and aftermath.

Nasser was soon disillusioned with Israel's refusal to withdraw which prompted him to follow a two-track policy: rebuilding his military machine with Soviet help and willingness to work with the US for a peaceful settlement with Israel. In this connection Nasser's decision to accept UN Security Council Resolution 242 despite Arab opposition and to work with Dr. Jarring was a clear manifestation of his hope and faith in a peaceful resolution of the problem in which he saw the US role to be crucial. But the US continued to ignore Nasser's peace overtures.

Even the Nixon administration continued the pro-Israeli policy of Johnson and Nasser despaired of a peaceful resolution which convinced him more than ever that only through military pressure can the Israelis be dislodged. Hence, Nasser decided to launch a war of attrition from July 10, 1969 onwards. This prompted the US Secretary of State Rogers to put forward a peace project on
December 9, 1969. He called for virtual total Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands. Nasser accepted the Rogers Plan on July 23, 1970 and the ceasefire came into effect on August 7. Soon it became obvious that Roger's peace making efforts were sabotaged by Kissinger, who did not want the US to confront Israel on the issue of withdrawal. However, it was under these circumstances that Nasser died and the US was jubilant over his death convinced that the stumbling block to peace was removed.

Sadat's First Peace Initiative

Soon after Sadat came to power in September 1970, the US, having abandoned the Rogers Plan, urged reactivation of the Jarring Peace Mission. The purpose of this move was to encourage Sadat to renew the ceasefire when it expired in early February 1971. The ceasefire which Sadat had extended in November 1970 was due to expire on February 5, 1971. In the meanwhile, on February 4, Sadat astonished the world by his first ever peace initiative. Among other things he proposed restoration of diplomatic ties with the US and to sign a peace agreement with Israel through Jarring. To that end, Sadat asked Heikal to assure the Americans, privately, that his peace initiative to reopen the Suez Canal was entirely his own and owed nothing to the Russians. ¹ Sadat expected he could thus enlist the US on his side. Over the next several weeks, Sadat repeatedly queried US on its attitude to his initiative and urged Nixon to play an active diplomatic role in

¹ Mohammed Heikal, The Road to Ramadan (Dehradun: 1981), p. 116. It appears Sadat at an early stage came to share the US objective in the area as articulated by Kissinger. "We are trying to get a Middle East settlement in such a way that the moderate regimes are strengthened and not the radical regimes. We are trying to expel the Soviet military presence". See Eqbal Ahmad, "What Washington Wants", in Nasser H. Aruri, ed., Middle East Crucible: (1978) p. 258; Saadia Touval, The Peace Breakers: Mediators in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1979 (Princeton: 1982).
the search for a settlement. In fact, he was pressing for a quick reply.2

However, Sadat was in for a disappointment. Nixon in his message of March 4, 1971 rejected Sadat's threat to renew hostilities as a form of pressure on the US and asked for more time to respond. The message also carried the hint that America wanted Israel to withdraw from all the Arab lands. Rogers added that American "policy is that the 1967 border should be the border separating Egypt from Israel ... on the condition that satisfactory arrangements can be made for the demilitarization of Sinai ... and concerning Sharm el Sheikh".3 These statements were not to the liking of Israel. Tel Aviv unleashed a particularly vehement attack on Rogers. But Nixon instead of supporting Rogers, deserted him, thereby wrecking the Jarring Peace mission as well as his own Secretary's peace efforts.

It was under these circumstances that Rogers arrived in Cairo on May 4, 1971. Rogers was the first US Secretary of State to pay calls in the area since J.F. Dulles visit in 1953, after 17 years. In visiting Egypt, he also became the first US Secretary of State to call on a nation with which the US had no formal diplomatic relations. When Mahmoud Riad told him that Israel has consistently ignored all of Egyptian peace overtures and yet the US went on supplying Israel with more sophisticated arms. Rogers replied "we

are trying to persuade Israel that her position is not sound. Pressure is a distasteful word in international relations." When Rogers said his government wanted peace but they were unable to put pressure on Israel, Riad exploded. "Is there no difference", he asked "between the US and Upper Volta or Gabon? Here is Israel giving you a flat challenge. You say you were trying to put pressure on her but she rejects your pressure. How do you explain this?"

Riad suggested that the only effective form of pressure on Israel would be an American embargo on arms. 5

Sadat who had dismissed the pro-Soviet Vice-President Ali Sabri two days before Rogers visit was optimistic of US intervention. In any case he had toned down his belligerent rhetoric but had thrown a challenge to US in his May Day speech. He said:

The country which gives Israel everything from a loaf of bread to phantom bombers claims that it cannot pressure Israel. Isn't it ridiculous? Inspite of everything we prefer to believe (what America says) and give it another and perhaps the last chance to make an effort for peace. 6

Rogers was in fact on a visit to Egypt to find out in detail Sadat's views on an interim settlement as Nixon had instructed him after Sadat's peace initiative and the latter's appeals for action. Sadat impatiently waited for good news after Roger's visit.

But Sadat found no response from Nixon who, under growing Zionist pressure, ordered Rogers to freeze peace talks. This was a time Nixon needed all the support for his re-election as President.

6. Al Ahram, May 2, 1971; Noam Chomsky, Peace in the Middle East.
He was in no mood to pick up a quarrel with Israel which would hurt his administration. Sadat who had demonstrated his deep interest in an interim agreement linked to a comprehensive settlement soon realized that the US is unwilling to exert any effective pressure on Israel. It also became very clear to him that both Rogers and the State Department had little say in the administration concerning AIC. Nixon had increasingly entrusted Kissinger the right of decision on these issues. Now Kissinger put his theory into effect, which opposed withholding arms to Israel, instead he wanted Israel to be strong to be reasonable in peace talks. The US gave additional weapons to Israel mainly because of Zionist pressures, and frustrated Sadat's hopes for a peaceful settlement during 1971 which he had declared as a "year of decision".

Sadat's Disillusionment with US

Since coming to power Sadat had set his primary goal towards the recovery of Arab lands. All other issues were relegated to the background. Initially, he was following in the footsteps of Nasser, by honouring the Roger's plan. He was quick to realise that the Roger's Plan was being used especially by Israel and the US to retain the status quo which was decisively against Egypt. To break the stalemate he came out with his February 1971 peace initiative which astonished all the parties, especially the US because of his willingness to make unprecedented concessions. The US initially warmly welcomed it and assured of its unqualified support. Encouraged by positive response by US, later Sadat risked his relations with Moscow by sacking the pro-Soviet leaders and by helping Numeiry crush a communist coup in Sudan in July 1971. Sadat who had entertained unduly optimistic hopes as far as the role of US in getting the Arab lands from Israel was concerned (for which he maintained unofficial contacts with
them, sometimes secretly) not only had he failed to win the US to his side, but the Americans signed new arms agreements with Israel. Initially some progress, although inconsequential, was made but this process was shattered by Egypt's conclusion of a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in May 1971. The Americans became extremely suspicious of Sadat's double dealings. It is true that Kissinger sabotaged the Roger's Plan, due to his disagreement with the latter's approach. Instead, he gave too vague and ambiguous formulae for a piece-meal settlement of the problem for which Sadat was unprepared. Sadat was disappointed by Washington's negative and vacillating attitude. Frustrated and humiliated, Sadat decided to abandon the interim settlement and his diplomatic search for a solution. Thus, his first policy of appeasement towards US and Israel was a total failure because Israel remained as arrogant as ever and the US made only half hearted proposals. So, Sadat who had entertained high hopes of a settlement with US good offices for a peaceful settlement switched over to the only option left to him and that was a military solution of the problem. He became convinced that force and force alone will break the dangerous stalemate. He was particularly concerned over the prolonged 'no war-no peace' situation which could have dangerous consequences for Egypt.

The October War and Shuttle Diplomacy

The genesis of the October 1973 war could be traced to Sadat's frustrations with US on the diplomatic front. He had taken several steps to induce the US to apply pressure on Israel to withdraw. Repeatedly he was misled by the US which promised help in getting peace and had never followed through. Despite
repeated rebuffs, Sadat had in vain continued to believe in US promises. In February 1973, Sadat sent Hafez Ismail, his Deputy Prime Minister, to convey to Nixon, his sense of desperation for a negotiated settlement. There was no positive response to his overtures. With his search for a peaceful settlement a total failure Sadat moved towards war for he believed that the war would put US on the spot due to its total support to Israel in order to hold on to Arab lands and that it would be forced to stand by the principle of inadmissibility of territory by conquest. He was convinced that war would compel the Super Powers to intervene and bring about Israeli withdrawal. The war finally broke out on October 6, 1973 in which Egypt and Syria, in a coordinated attack, and gained a significant psychological victory, surprised Israel and the US. Kissinger had thought that within 48 hours of the opening of hostilities the Israelis would be in a position to deliver a devastating counterattack against the Egyptian forces in Sinai. He proposed a ceasefire and withdrawal by both sides to the pre-October 6 lines which he thought would help Egypt.

Sadat launched the attack with grave apprehensions and when the Egyptians crossed the Canal, stormed the Barlev line and pushed the Israelis towards the Passes, he was surprised at the success but jubilant. Fearful of the promised "devastating counterattack" from Israel, Sadat was in direct and continuous touch through Hafiz Ismail with the US throughout the war. According to Kissinger the first Ismail's message, "inaugurated a strange dialogue with a country that had attacked our ally and whose aims were being thwarted by American arms. Throughout the war, hardly a day went by without a communication from or to Cairo". Although, Israel was able to push back the Syrians at considerable cost, they failed to dislodge

---

the Egyptians from Sinai. As both Egypt and Syria refused to accept a ceasefire, the war turned into one of attrition and if it had continued for a longer period, would have exhausted the Israeli forces. Because of these reasons as also its determination to end the war in Israel's favour the US intervened on a massive scale by supplying arms directly to Israel. In an "open message" to Nixon through his speech on October 16 to Parliament Sadat proposed a ceasefire conditioned on immediate Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders. "We are not ready", said Sadat in clear reference to his experience with Security Council Resolution 242, "to accept ambiguous promises or elastic phrases subject to all (kinds of) interpretations thereby wasting time and returning our case to a stalemate." On this very day the Israelis crossed the canal and established a foothold on the West bank of the Suez Canal. Soon the Israeli presence on the West Bank of the canal had assumed serious proportions and it carried the potential to upset all of Sadat's calculations. Sadat realized the gravity of the situation: the US had mounted a massive airlift of arms to Israel and his own air defence system was being destroyed. He concluded that the US was taking part in the war in order to save Israel. These factors led him to conclude that further continuation of war was against Egypt's interests. So he quickly decided on October 19 to accept the ceasefire. The ceasefire came into effect on October 22 but the


Israelis in violation of the ceasefire made serious advances to capture Suez and Ismailia cities and encircle Egyptian armies which had crossed the Canal. In a desperate attempt to halt the Israelis, Sadat on October 24 appealed to Brezhnev and Nixon to send their troops to police the ceasefire. But this was unacceptable to the US which was also opposed to a unilateral intervention by the Soviet Union. Nixon in his two messages on October 24 assured Sadat that he would urge Israel to scrupulously adhere to the ceasefire. He said: "I want to assure you that the US is unalterably opposed to offensive military actions by Israel and is prepared to take effective steps to end them". Israel violated the ceasefire apparently due to a green signal from Kissinger. Since Nixon was enmeshed in the Watergate scandal he appears to have given Kissinger a free hand to act during the war. This made Kissinger's job easy and was emboldened to act more favourably for Israel. This was evident from his role during the final stages of ceasefire. Before leaving Washington for Moscow on October 20 Kissinger had hinted to the Israelis that a reason for the trip was to give them more time to consolidate their position. After visiting Moscow he stopped in Israel at Golda Meir's request, again providing the Israelis with time to advance and consolidate their presence on the West Bank of Canal. Infact, the Soviet Union thought Kissinger had deceived them by hinting to Golda Meir while in Israel, that no harm would ensure if the Israeli army pressed their military advantages after agreeing to the ceasefire.


Sadat and Kissinger in Search of Peace

The outcome of the October war convinced Sadat that in the prevailing international situation a limited success in the war was the maximum that Arabs could achieve and he visualized that only through diplomacy the Arab-Israeli problem could be solved. He calculated that the US alone could compel Israel to vacate the Arab lands.

Sadat's immediate task after the war was to try to secure the withdrawal of the Israelis from the West Bank of the canal and to rescue the trapped Egyptian army on the East Bank. To that end, Sadat sent Ismail Fahmy as his special emissary to Washington on October 29. Sadat's decision to send Fahmy, so soon after the US had demonstrated with its world wide nuclear alert, to what extraordinary lengths it was ready to go in support of Israel, showed a revolution in his attitude towards US. It might be recalled that during the course of the October war on October 15 through Hafiz Ismail Sadat had invited Kissinger to visit Egypt but was rebuffed. Again when Kissinger stopped in Tel Aviv, on his way to Washington from Moscow, Sadat had invited him to visit Cairo but was rebuffed. Israel was opposed to Kissinger going to Cairo.12

The war and the consequent oil embargo had come as a big shock to the US. It shattered complacency in high places. The

12. Heikal, n. 1, p. 248; Kissinger, n. 7, p. 527, 531 & 567. The oil embargo was imposed to compel the US/West to see that it "had its interests and should care about them just as we cared about ours". Sadat, n. 9, p. 304.
US realized the need to work seriously towards Israeli withdrawal and peace arrangements. When Arab foreign ministers met Nixon on October 17 he said; "In 1967 you accused us of collusion with Israel. This time you came to talk to us: that makes a lot of difference". Kissinger also thought that Sadat's speech on the October 16 had some constructive points in it and said, "we do not consider President Sadat our enemy". Nixon and Kissinger were conscious of the moderate stance adopted by Sadat during the war.

By then the US even seemed to have acquired a stake in Sadat's survival. Kissinger wrote:

(Whereas) Israel seemed determined to end the war with a humiliation for Egypt. We had no interest in seeing Sadat destroyed - even less so via the collapse of a ceasefire we had co-sponsored ... For if Sadat fell, the odds were that he would be replaced by a radical pro-Soviet leader; Soviet arms would in a measureable time constitute the equivalent of the Third Army; and sooner or later there would be another war reviving the same dilemmas we had just barely surmounted.

It is against this background that Kissinger concluded that Sadat would be the central pillar of US policy in the area. In fact, in Kissinger's perception Sadat "represented the best chance for peace in the Middle East". Meanwhile in Washington Fahmy was told by Nixon about his determination to solve the problem justly and without any domestic pressures. He is also reported to have said that it may be necessary for the US to go to the UN and

perhaps to apply other kinds of pressure on Israel. At the same
time Kissinger assured Fahmy of his belief that the problem could
be solved in three to six months if everybody cooperates.16 Fahmy
was greatly impressed by the assurances given by Nixon as he later
wrote about what Nixon had told him:

In the history of the US, there was never a
President who could make decisions against
Israel or displeasing to Israel, except Eisenhower
and Nixon. No President of the US has been able
to resist the various forms of Israeli pressure
and harassment. Nixon said: "I don't want you
to misunderstand me, I am not against minorities
and I do not belittle the influence of Congress,
but when the supreme US national interest calls
upon me to make the necessary decisions, I will make
them up unhesitatingly irrespective of the Israeli
pressure."17

Fahmy, on the other hand, assured the Americans that Sadat was eager
for a basic change not simply toward the US but toward Israel as well.
He said, "we have no interest in putting Israel into the sea or
invading Israel, irrespective of the Palestinian situation".18 Fahmy
who was appointed as Egypt's new foreign minister while in US told
a banquet in Washington "that Egypt is the gate-way to the Arab
World. If you win the friendship of Egypt, you win the friendship
of the Arab world".19 However, Fahmy departed from US without
receiving any definite promise from Nixon, except that Kissinger
would be going to Cairo on November 7. Interestingly Fahmy wrote
that he left Nixon with a real sense of accomplishment, because the
war had drastically changed the US position towards Egypt. To him
the Americans now appreciated that the confrontation states in West

17. Fahmy, n. 11, p. 49.
Asia could no longer be ignored. As a result US interests were no longer identical with those of Israel. Washington saw that Egypt had a crucial role to play in the peace process. An optimistic Fahmy on his return told Sadat that Nixon was the only US President who could bring about a comprehensive solution of the problem as he was forceful, decisive and willing to stand up to the Jewish lobby. 20 With this encouraging news from Fahmy on October 31, Sadat announced Kissinger's forthcoming visit to Cairo pointing out that the US response to his peace overtures was a 'constructive one'. 21 It must be recalled that before the war Sadat had wooed the US many times but was rebuffed consistently. Now with the encirclement of the Third Army and Suez city, Sadat needed US diplomacy and assistance more than ever to pressure the Israelis and immediately end this encirclement. Now he perceived a 'sudden' marked improvement in US attitude after the war.

Peace according to Kissinger

Kissinger duly arrived in Egypt on November 7, 1973. Sadat whose relations with Moscow were strained now opted for an alliance with the US. Sadat had a tete-a-tete with Kissinger lasting three hours (on the latter’s arrival day) and according to Heikal both "agreed on a common strategy to expel the Soviet Union from the area". 22 In the same meeting Kissinger suggested to Sadat that instead of discussing the October 22 lines if Sadat agreed he would

work for a disengagement agreement involving Israeli withdrawal from both sides of the Suez Canal. To Kissinger's surprise Sadat agreed with Kissinger's strategy, and thus decided to defer the issue of October 22 ceasefire lines. Sadat's trust on Kissinger bore fruit on November 11 when the later worked out with lightning speed an agreement which solved Sadat's immediate problem of sending supplies to the Egyptian Third Army across the Canal.

Sadat's decision to accept Kissinger's strategy showed his interest in a peaceful settlement of the problem. It could be pointed out that this interest by Sadat was in large measure responsible for encouraging Kissinger to embark upon his step-by-step approach in the search of a peace settlement. Sadat's aim was clear, simple and bold: Israeli evacuation under pressure from Washington. As he said:

The headquarters is America, and Israel is just a branch. If we can solve our problems with the Headquarters, the Israeli problem will be thereby resolved too. Whether we like it or not, all the cards of this game are in US hands, because the US grants Israel everything, from bread to weapons. Thus, the only party who could pressure Israel is the US.23

Sadat's decision to gamble on US promises in the face of heavy opposition from his advisers including Hafiz Ismail and Heikal, was yet another example of exhibition of his preference to take chances. Those who opposed Sadat were promptly sacked.24

At the first meeting itself Sadat created a good new working relationship with Kissinger, whom he identified as the key figure in peace talks. As he told Heikal: "This man is the only person alive who can say to this woman (Golda) get out and she will have to get out". Sadat began to call Kissinger "my friend Henry". In this changed atmosphere, Sadat decided to re-establish diplomatic relations with the US and assured Kissinger that once an agreement was accomplished he would move to friendship. For the US, this was an important achievement because it had striven to achieve all through the previous five years. No wonder Kissinger was able to write: "My first visit to Cairo exceeded my hopes". He further added:

Sadat sat brooding, saying nothing for many minutes. I had given him a difficult problem. I was saying in effect that the key to peace was his acquiescence in keeping an Egyptian army cut off in the desert for weeks on end, relying on the assessment of an American he had just met and who had no experience in the Middle East diplomacy. And then he astonished me. He did not haggle or argue. He did not dispute my analysis. He did not offer an alternative, violating the normal method of diplomacy -- which is to see what one can extract for a concession -- he said simply that he agreed with both my analysis and my proposed procedure.

By agreeing on a common strategy against Moscow and making several concessions to Israel, Sadat gave away his cards cheaply and Kissinger cleverly exploited Sadat's vulnerability. He allowed himself to be trapped by assuming to be a man of superior strategy.

Being impatient for a quick settlement of the AIC, he concluded that by so becoming close to the US he would get the Israelis out from Arab lands. Sadat obviously placed too much confidence on Kissinger and on the ability of US to pressure Israel. In sum, Sadat in the very first encounter gave away most of his cards to Kissinger in return for vague promises and uncertain commitments.

With the Egyptian-Israel ceasefire having stabilized Kissinger focussed his attention on the Geneva Peace Conference (GPC) which met just before Christmas 1973 but deferring to the Israelis he ensured that its role was purely ceremonial. Sadat also was inclined to hold bilateral talks with the US and Israel to resolve the AIC. With the result, the GPC achieved nothing substantial and was adjourned as abruptly as it was called.27

Around this time Kissinger promised Ismail Fahmy that the withdrawal of Israel to the East Bank was now almost decided upon. Moreover, Sadat also received encouraging letters from Nixon and "a wave of optimism spread in Cairo circles".28 In this connection Nixon's remarks to a group of seventeen US Governors on December 13, 1973 strengthened Arab optimism:

"The only way we are going to solve the crisis is to end the oil embargo and the only way we are going to end the embargo is to get the Israelis to act reasonable. I hate to use the word blackmail, but we have got to do some things to get them to behave."

28. Riad, n. 4, p. 269.
29. Washington Post, 22 December 1973, cited in Quandt, n. 2, p. 222. Kissinger in order to help Sadat accept the concessions he was asking him to make, suggested that limitations on Egyptian forces in Sinai and Sadat's private assurances on Israeli Cargoes transiting the Suez Canal could be handled in secret memos of understanding Ibid.
Despite this bold and encouraging statement from Nixon it was becoming increasingly evident that Watergate pressures were mounting on him and that Kissinger was the real man in charge of the situation.

The Sinai-I Agreement

With Sadat's active support the focus of US diplomacy shifted to a partial agreement on the disengagement of forces between Egypt and Israel. The original conceptual framework for it came from Moshe Dayan. At Dayan's urging Kissinger presented these proposals to Sadat during his visit to Egypt on January 11, 1974 at Aswan, because "Egypt would find it easier to accept if it appeared to result from American influence, rather than to be an Israeli demand". Sadat accepted the proposals brought by Kissinger and asked him to stay in the region until an agreement was reached. As he said:

I believe that ... during the past 26 years we did not have the opportunities for peace that we now have ... the new American outlook, as expressed by the Nixon Administration, combined with Kissinger's relentless efforts, have made peace attainable after 26 years ... Our policies and strategies regarding the solution to this problem, are still valid. We certainly desire to see an end to this problem, as rapidly as possible, but we are realistic about it, and we just wish that what can be done today should not be postponed until tomorrow.

Kissinger thus embarked on his first exercise in "shuttle diplomacy", flying between Egypt and Israel with peace proposals.

According to Ismail Fahmy Kissinger did not come to Aswan with a genuine American plan, but rather carried Israeli proposals which remained true throughout Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy. He further says Kissinger brought us a "string of Israeli proposals or at best American ones already accepted by Israel always presenting them as his own". Since Sadat was anxious to get an agreement he accepted these proposals and Kissinger helped the Israelis achieve their objectives.

Kissinger was equally anxious to conclude an agreement on behalf of Israel because any delay in the negotiations would have forced Israel to maintain military mobilization which was a costly proposition. Kissinger also wanted a quick settlement to prevent Moscow from participating in the peace process. Eventhough Sadat's position was strong due to active support from the Arab world coupled with world public opinion which was impressed by military success, and also due to oil embargo which was bitting the West, Sadat could have forced Kissinger to return later with a genuine peace compromise rather than a proposal tilted heavily in favor of Israel.

Within four days of commuting between Aswan and Jerusalem, Kissinger negotiated an agreement successfully and Nixon announced on January 17, 1974 the signing of Sinai-I. What Sadat got was very little compared to his original war goals. Israel agreed to

32. Fahmy, n. 11, p. 71.

withdraw from a tiny portion of Sinai. This paltry pullback carried no promise of further withdrawal. Sadat merely got a vague assurance that Sinai-I "constitutes a first step towards a just and durable peace", and that the US would use its influence to bring about the full implementation of UN Resolution 242. As Kissinger left Aswan on January 19, 1974, Sadat kissed him and said "you are not only my friend, you are my brother". 34

After Sinai-I relations between Egypt and US developed rapidly. Sadat was successful in lifting the Arab oil embargo on March 18, 1974 removing a major irritant in their relations. Soon Sadat invited Nixon to visit Egypt, who came in June 1974 and was accorded a red-carpet 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. Concerning a peace settlement Nixon promised that he would work for the restoration of the international frontier as Egypt's border with Israel in a final settlement, a position which had not been taken since the Rogers plan in 1969. In fact, he said "Achieving complete Israeli withdrawal from Sinai is no problem. Withdrawal from the Golan Heights is also possible, but with some effort. As for Jerusalem and the West Bank, this will be the real problem, but we shall find a solution for it". 35 Nixon also agreed that the Palestinians should be brought into the negotiations at an early date. Sadat suggested that the US should secretly talk to the PLO leaders, and Nixon seemed receptive, if non

34. Hirst, n. 3, p. 185; Quandt; n. 2, p. 228.
35. Fahmy, n. 11, pp. 153-54.
committal. However, Nixon failed to adopt any step towards the realization of the pledges he made towards the resolution of the Arab-Israeli problem. In fact, he gave his blessings to Kissinger's devious step by step policy which in practical terms was confined to those steps which Israel permitted.

In fact, Kissinger deliberately aborted numerous opportunities for a comprehensive peace because the US was never interested in pressuring Israel to make it withdraw. Due to US assistance Israel was growing more powerful and more abdurate and hence the US allowed Israel to impede a comprehensive peace. At one time during KM 101 talks and subsequent peace talks Kissinger urged the Israelis not to move too quickly in peace negotiations. He reasoned that "Israel should not look weak. It was important for the Arabs to see that it was difficult for the US to influence Israel, otherwise their expectations would soar". Hence it is clear that lack of sincerity and seriousness on the part of US and Sadat's blind faith on US promises led to weakening of Egypt's position which in turn vastly strengthened Israel's position and encouraged her to adopt a rigid and uncompromising posture.

Sadat's honeymoon with the US, however, received a jolt when Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974. Sadat had anticipated Nixon's resignation over the Watergate scandal but not so soon. Even though it had become clear that Kissinger's diplomacy was mainly aimed at buying time and reducing pressures on the US and Israel, Sadat

continued to believe that only the US could help get Israel withdraw from Sinai. Meanwhile Kissinger continued to work under the new President Ford in the same capacity and adhered to his step-by-step diplomacy.

**US Works Towards Sinai-II**

Sadat not only needed a quick Israeli withdrawal but also needed to demonstrate that his turning to the US had not been an unwise move. So prior to Kissinger's departure to the area in search of yet another partial agreement Sadat publicly endorsed his efforts adding that the US now held virtually all the trump cards. He said:

90 percent, if not all, the cards of this game are in American hands, the US being Israel's supplier of bread, butter, guns and airplanes. Even Israeli budget deficits are covered by the US. Thus, Israel's very existence depends on America. Therefore, the American President if he only wants to can solve this problem. A precedent exists in this respect, that is President Eisenhower who pursued the road of Justice and truth, defying the Israeli influence. Hence, my saying that America holds all the cards of this game.38

During March 1975 Kissinger's shuttle collapsed due to Israeli intransigence on the issue of withdrawal from Sinai and insistence on non-belligerency pact from Egypt. Actually it was the lack of US pressure on Israel that accounted for its failure. Neither Ford nor Kissinger was genuinely prepared to twist Israel's arms.

It was in this backdrop of Israeli obduracy that Ford ordered a reassessment of US policy towards the area. The reassessment hardly made any impact on Israel as the US had pumped huge

38. Israeli, n. 31, p. 878.
quantities of arms during and after the October war. Moreover, with the 1976 US elections on the horizon Ford was not about to antagonize the Jewish community. On May 21, 1975, 76 Senators sent a letter to Ford urging him to be "responsive to Israel's economic and military needs" and defensible frontiers. This was a clear sign that continued pressure on Israel would be politically counter-productive. Meanwhile, Sadat journeyed to Salzburg, (Austria) to meet Ford on June 1, 1975 to stress once more to him the importance of Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders and to ask Ford to announce this publicly. In the event, Ford declined, reiterating an evasive promise that the US would strive to achieve this. But Sadat agreed with Ford to allow the US to establish and operate an early warning system in the Giddi and Mitla passes as demanded by the Israelis. Meanwhile King Faisal who had reiterated that the Arabs would reimpose the oil embargo if the US deserted evenhandedness was assassinated in March 1975 thereby giving a severe jolt to Sadat.

It was under these circumstances that Sadat decided to reopen the Suez Canal on June 5, 1975. For the reopening ceremony Sadat wanted two US battleships to take part in the convoy which would follow the Egyptian destroyer carrying Sadat, lest the Israelis attack the convoy. He told Ismail Fahmy "without American ships, I cannot cross". No wonder, Little Rock cruiser, flagship of the Sixth fleet took part in the convoy revealing the extent to which Sadat had come to depend on the US.


41. Fahmy, n. 11, pp. 80-82.
Kissinger finally concluded the Sinai-II between Egypt and Israel on September 4, 1975. Israel agreed to withdraw from Sinai Passes and hand over Abu Rudeis oil fields to Egypt. Sadat for all practical purpose gave Israel the non-belligerency pact it sought. In return for its paltry withdrawal from Sinai the US made several secret commitments to Israel which as Kissinger's own aides admitted were "mind boggling". Kissinger's commitments to Israel in the political, economic and military fields had been given the shape of an "executive agreement" that had escaped Congressional scrutiny and committed the US to unprecedented involvement on the Israeli side.

According to Ismail Fahmy, Kissinger did not inform Egypt that the US intended to sign a memorandum with Israel. It was only ten minutes before the final meeting that Kissinger thought fit to tell the Egyptians. But Kissinger had informed Sadat on this issue and the latter had approved the secret US pledges to Israel. What irritated Egyptians most was US decision to supply Pershing ground-to-ground missiles with conventional warheads (which could be converted into nuclear weapons). These missiles along with US commitment not to recognize the PLO or take any other initiative without Israeli consent, made US West Asia policy even more an extension of Israeli policy than it already was.42

Despite an openly pro-Israeli attitude on the part of the Ford administration Sadat perceived Sinai-II as a victory for Egypt even though the success was not due to any change in the position of US or Israel but due to massive concessions made by Sadat. On October 26, 1975 Sadat visited USA thereby becoming the first Egyptian President to pay an official visit to the US. Meanwhile the Jewish lobby worked hard to undermine Sadat's gains

42. Ibid. The US pledged "an uninterrupted flow of modern weapons systems to Israel". It also undertook to refrain from putting pressure on Israel for "withdrawals from the Golan or from the West Bank", as also not to recognize PLO until it had accepted 242. Moreover, Kissinger further committed the US "to consult" Israel closely in the event of a threat to the stability of the region either by Egypt or by "an outside Power", Howard M. Sachar, Egypt and Israel, (New York: 1981) p. 240.
and his popularity as also to blunt a US-Egyptian rapprochement. As the elections came closer, Ford began to play up his credentials as a strong supporter of Israel and noted that his administration had sold Israel over $4 billion in military weapons and was dedicated to the survival and security of Israel." 43

Peace According to Carter

By the end of 1976 Sadat's US connection had got him some parts of Sinai and a modest economic aid plus few C-130 transport planes, but he came under severe attack for promoting Egyptian interests ahead of Syrian or Palestinian. Moreover, Sinai-II had made it difficult for Sadat to resort again to war with Israel. Because of the January 1977 food riots, student strikes and the growing problems with Qadhafi as also to bolster his own precarious position Sadat was desperately looking for a quick peace agreement with Israel. Soon after the inauguration of the Carter administration it became clear of its interest and concern not for a quick settlement that would resolve Sadat's problems but towards a comprehensive peace settlement that would remove the threat of war, and of another oil embargo and a superpower confrontation and secure Saudi cooperation. Carter's diplomatic strategy aimed at securing agreement between all the parties to the AIC including the Palestinians. Carter believed that all the Arab parties shared a common urge for peace as he pointed out:

We see the potential for progress in 1977 as uniquely hopeful. We have strong indications that the Arab leaders want to reach a substan-

43. Quandt, n. 2, p. 281. Carter had told Rabin "that Palestinian leaders can be absorbed in an Arab delegation. And we don't know any Palestinian leaders other than the PLO". Quandt, n. 49, p. 46.
tial agreement. I think compared to previous periods, they are very moderate in their general philosophy and in their attitude towards Israel at this point. 44

Whereas Carter emphasized comprehensive negotiations at Geneva, for Sadat a formal Geneva Peace conference was only good for rhetoric and ceremonies. For Sadat Egypt would go to Geneva only to sign the agreements, as the real talks should be conducted bilaterally under American auspices. Because of his long experience in inter-Arab politics Sadat had grave doubts about the ultimate willingness of all Arab parties to negotiate in good faith. Now because of urgency Sadat had no patience for detailed negotiations and no time for a conference that might drag for ten years and from which Egypt might get nothing. For Sadat Geneva was merely to be the climax of the entire peace process.

It should be stressed that Sadat's peace strategy was based on his conviction that only the US could exert pressure on the Israelis to withdraw from Arab lands. In his perception the US was Israel's lifeline and was therefore capable to securing territorial concessions from Israel. As Sadat so often pointed out: "There is nobody other than the United States who can exert pressure on Israel because the Americans supply it with everything from a loaf of bread to a Phantom aircraft". 45 Although he didn't envisage the abandonment of Israel nor to the end of special ties between Israel and US, he merely wanted Carter "to bring Israel to reason". He explained on the eve of his April 1977 visit to

44. Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents (WCPD) 13(14), 25 March 1977. See also Time August 8, 1977; Carter wrote to Vance that if the parties did not accept US proposals, "we need enough public support so that, with the USSR, we can marshal world opinion against recalcitrant nations". He also informed him of the "need to make arrangements for Geneva" and to "arrange for the PLO to attend together with Arab nations of UN resolutions 242 and 338". Quandt, n. 49, p. 86.

Washington: "No Israeli leader now is capable of convincing his people that they should evacuate the land ... The Israelis want an electric shock to tell them 'you should behave for peace'. That's what I am asking from America".46 When the US applied this electric shock treatment, he believed, it would be possible to establish peace "in one month only".47 The tactical method Sadat had in mind for the achievement of this result was precisely the same method he had recommended to Kissinger during the Sinai-I and II talks - the generation of the US plan.48 Sadat during his talks with Carter on April 4, 1977 asked for an American proposal. He pleaded that there was no mutual confidence between Israel and the Arabs and that, in any case the US held 99 percent of the cards.49 Thus, for Sadat the US plan was crucial for serious negotiations with Israel.


48. In his numerous interviews Sadat pointed out that during the Sinai talks Kissinger had resolved the deadlock by putting forward an American Compromise Plan. Whereas the truth was that it was Sadat himself who had suggested the idea of an American plan to Kissinger in order to break the deadlock especially in January 1974. As Fahmy pointed out the American plan was infact an Israeli approved plan. Fahmy, n. 33, pp. 167-68, Henry Kissinger, n. 7, p. 825.

49. William B. Quandt, Camp David: Peace Making and Politics (Washington: 1986), p. 50. It must be stressed that Sadat should have made a much more objective assessment of the US-Israeli ties, especially US unwillingness to coerce Israel instead of being overly optimistic. Having weakened militarily due to poor ties with USSR, and contemptuous of the Arabs, Sadat hoped to drive a wedge between US and Israel by offering Egypt as a strategic partner to US. His blind faith on the US as far as Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands was concerned, was not only attacked by Arab radicals, but even moderate Arab states expressed reservations. Many in Egypt also did not share Sadat's optimism and his decision to put full faith in US instead of retaining bargaining levers.
The Working Group Idea

It is in this context that Sadat wanted the establishment of a working group which would make "proper preparations" for the Geneva Conference. By proper preparations Sadat in reality expected the US to introduce its peace plan which both sides would then have to accept. He expected, on the basis of successive US pronouncements since 1968, that this US peace plan would be close to Egypt's position on the key issues of Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian rights. Instead of a US peace plan, Carter, told Sadat: "I can see the possibility that ten years from now our ties to you in the economic, military, and political spheres will be just as strong as the ties we now have with Israel". But, he cautioned, this would require a strong Egyptian-Israeli relationship.50 Whereas Sadat wanted to negotiate substance and he wanted Carter to come up with an American plan, the Carter administration was busy with the format and procedures for reconvening the Geneva conference. There are only two statements from Carter which came close to Sadat's conception. In his book Keeping Faith Carter points out from his dairy on April 25, 1977: "My basic plan is to ... put together our own concept of what should be done in the Middle East, let Cy Vance make a trip around the area to consult with leaders, listening more than he talks and then put as much pressure as we can bring to bear on the different parties to accept the solution that we think is fair.51 In the following statement Carter was much more forceful on US role. He said, "I would not hesitate if I saw clearly a fair and equitable solution to use the full strength of our own country

50. Ibid, p. 52.
and its persuasive powers to bring those nations to agreement. I recognize, though, that we cannot impose our will on others, and unless the countries involved agree, there is no way for us to make progress. Carter's national security adviser Zbigniew Brezezinski also said "the US has a legitimate right to exercise its own leverage, peaceful and constructive to obtain a settlement. And that is exactly what we will be doing." It must be added that despite these welcome statements Sadat remained unimpressed.

Not satisfied with these pronouncements Sadat by mid-May 1977 publicly expressed concern and urged the US to "throw in all its weight" and "formulate some definite ideas." By mid-June Sadat emphasized that the US form a working group and declare its stand to prevent the peace process from collapsing. In an interview to BBC Sadat said: "I am requesting President Carter to form a working group to adopt the necessary measures for holding the conference. The preparation itself is much more important than the conference because it would mean that the United States intended to do something which all sides could approve. We could then sit together." On July 2, he expressed his first direct criticism of the US approach. Arguing that not a moment should be wasted he said that Carter wanted to be a catalyst but this was not the role he felt the US should play. Rather the "core of the operation" was for the US to assume full responsibility for Israel's behaviour and for peace in the area. On July 13, Sadat explained in detail what he meant by "proper preparations." Sadat told a US Congressional

---

52. WCPD, 13(9), 5 May 1977, p. 637.
53. Indyk, n. 46, p. 48; Quandt, n. 49, p. 145.
54. FBIS, DR - MEA, 19 May 1977.
delegation -

I urge the formation of a working group so as not to lose time in convening the Geneva Conference and in making proper arrangements. By "proper arrangements" I mean that a specific course of action can be achieved before going to Geneva, otherwise we would go to Geneva and go on negotiating there for ten years .... The working group could make contacts with all the parties concerned, including the Soviet Union, and prepare a course of action of some kind. Proper arrangements for the Geneva Conference mean success, and improper arrangements mean utter failure and complete disappointment.57

When Sadat met Vance in August 1977 he spelt out the details of his idea. The working group would be chaired by Vance and it would include the foreign ministers of Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Syria. He wanted the exclusion of PLO and Soviet Union. In this working group all the parties would sit together i.e. there would be face-to-face talks with Israel and it would discuss substance not procedure. The first item on the agenda would be Sadat's proposal for a link between Jordan and the Palestinians which he had put forward to Carter during his April 1977 visit to White House.58 It was during this meeting Sadat gave Vance the secret draft peace treaty which he was ready to sign. The plan was mainly based on the Roger's Plan of 1969. Sadat urged Cyrus Vance not to tell anyone of this plan except Carter. He also asked Vance to get similar plans from Israel, Jordan and Syria and then the US should come up with a compromise version. He also told Vance what his fallback positions would be. Sadat also objected to a single Arab delegation at Geneva. He said, "if there is one delegation we shall explode" because each party would have a veto over the others.

57. FBIS-DR-MEA-14 July 1977.
58. Quandt, n. 49, p. 51; For text of Sadat - Vance Press Conference, 2 August 1977 see, Department of State Bulletin (DSB) 12 Sept-
Sadat did not want anyone else dictating Egypt's position.

According to Carter, Sadat at this stage expressed his desire to meet M. Begin. This together with his working group proposal indicated his desire for direct negotiations with Israel under US auspices before Geneva. Sadat calculated that if a working group is established Syria and Jordan would refuse to attend because of the absence of the PLO and the presence of Israel, then Egypt and Israel would be left alone to negotiate under US auspices. Sadat's secret peace proposal confirms this intention. It also shows his desire to get down to negotiating substance. By telling Vance his fall back positions he was laying the ground work for the production of the US peace plan so basic to his negotiating peace strategy.

Not only Syria attacked Sadat's working group proposal but Vance also was cold. He was not yet prepared to follow the Kissinger model of proceeding on only one front at a time. It was unclear to him what it would do that could not better be done at Geneva. He was also aware that it would be difficult enough to arrange direct negotiations at Geneva, let alone beforehand. To the end Carter believed that a comprehensive settlement could be negotiated only if all parties attended the Geneva conference. It is towards this end that the joint Soviet-American communique of October 1, 1977 should be seen. Ironically instead of bridging the


gap, Carter's diplomacy had widened the differences, with Israel openly attacking the communique. The US-Soviet communique came at a time when Sadat was greatly concerned with the rigid Israeli position and was devising various strategems to overcome Israeli designs to obstruct the peace process. In this process Sadat, who was banking heavily on the US, was given a rude shock when Carter bluntly told Fahmy that he could not put pressure on Israel, and to do so would be "political suicide". It soon became clear to Sadat that Carter was unwilling to confront Begin and the pro-Israeli lobby. What shocked him even more was Carter's statement "that the Middle East problem would be solved without the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank ... A lasting settlement to the Arab-Israeli problem (he added) would "not require complete withdrawal from the occupied territories" and "that the most important consideration in his policy was -- and would continue to be -- Israel's security above everything else". Sadat was aware of the rigid Israeli position especially of Begin, but what shocked him most was the unwillingness of Carter to put any pressure on Israel. Moreover, in the face of fierce opposition from Israel, Israel's supporters in the Congress and the US Jewish community, Carter virtually repudiated the October 1, 1977 statement with USSR and soon a new working paper was produced which was very sympathetic to Israel. Sadat, however, rejected the new working paper. To break the deadlock Sadat subsequently was prepared to

accept the new working paper provided some basic changes are made but the US simply rejected it.

By October end 1977 Sadat had become greatly disillusioned with US policy and this to a certain extent explains his decision to promote covert talks with Israel in Morocco. Sadat wanted to negotiate with Israel directly on substance and then go to Geneva to finalize the peace settlement.

Sadat was now at an important crossroad in his search for peace. His whole strategy which depended upon US ability to persuade Israel to withdraw was in shambles. He felt greatly frustrated because he had no leverage on any party. His anti-Soviet policy had failed because Carter was more interested in cooperating with Moscow rather than containing it. His willingness to make real peace with Israel had made no difference because Carter was intent on wooing the Syrians. Now his personal friendship with Carter was being turned against him in an effort to persuade him to take action which would damage Egypt's interest. Moreover, by this time Sadat had become isolated in the Arab World and Key Arab, non-aligned and Islamic nations had expressed grave reservations about the wisdom of Sadat's moves.

On November 6, 1977 Sadat made one more last attempt to find out if the US had any new plan to break the deadlock. Sadat asked US ambassador Eilts on this issue who had no new instructions from Carter. A despondent Sadat then observed that peace was slipping through their fingers because of the procedural problems for Geneva meeting. In fact Sadat in a message to Carter argued:
I have been evaluating the evolution of the peace process since the first meeting of the Geneva Conference up to your efforts since you have assumed the Presidency. Now, I am fully convinced that much time and effort were spent on issues of procedural nature to the extent that the procedural aspects overshadowed the substantive essentials for peace. However, I believe that if this situation is to continue unchecked, it would jeopardise the prospects of peace through endless bickering over procedural issues. 63

It was under these circumstances that Sadat finally decided to visit Israel in the hope of persuading the Israeli leaders about Egypt's sincere desire for peace, and to thus administer the "electric shock" to both Israel and the US.

Road to Jerusalem

Many have argued that Sadat decided to visit Jerusalem after the Super Power's statement and especially the Israelis argued this way but it would be wrong to attribute his visit to alone the Super Powers statement/. What is nearer to truth is that Sadat decided to visit Jerusalem after the sudden and unexpected collapse of Carter's position and concessions to Israel in the face of criticism from the Zionist lobby in US and the Begin government. It was clear to Sadat that Carter had quickly and without demur abandoned the position it had just worked out with Moscow. Thus, Sadat seriously embarked on the direct Israeli channel in order to avoid heavy reliance on the US to solve his problem quickly. It was a turning point in his disillusionment with the US and a

clear recognition of the Israeli power both military/diplomatic and its overwhelming influence over US decisions concerning its security and policies in the area.

In the backdrop of his increasingly strained relations with Syria and PLO Sadat received a letter on October 21, 1977 from Carter which sought Sadat's help in breaking the impasse. In the letter Carter reminded Sadat of the commitment he had made never to let Carter down and urged Sadat to make a "bold and imaginative" step by endorsing his proposals. Carter's grand strategy had produced an impasse again. Carter instead of announcing a US peace plan and making Israel withdraw from Arab lands wanted further concessions from Sadat. Sadat was shocked to learn that instead of confronting Israel, the US was simply caving in to Israeli pressure.

In this backdrop it becomes clear that Sadat's decision to visit Israel was not taken at the spur of the moment. He had clearly and carefully prepared the ground. It was known that Sadat urgently wanted to negotiate a substantive agreement with Israel and had tried through Cyrus Vance to launch this process but when he failed he started covert talks with Israel in Morocco. By going to Jerusalem, Sadat could claim that he was doing Carter's bidding in response to his October 21, letter urging him to take a bold initiative to break the deadlock. In fact, Sadat calculated that he could present his visit to Jerusalem not as an alternative to GPC but instead as a constructive step toward that end. Thus, he stated upon his return from Jerusalem "my primary objective at

63a. Sadat revealed that Carter's letter "directed my thinking for the first time toward the initiative I was to take two months later", Sadat, n. 9, p. 302.
this stage is to try to pave the ground for Geneva”. Sadat designed his strategy in such a manner that it was impossible for Carter to complain and essential to American interests to support it.

Furthermore, it must be stressed here that in deciding to visit Jerusalem Sadat was persuaded by what Carter had told Ismail Fahmy on September 21, 1977, namely, that he (Carter) could not put pressure on Israel because "it would be a personal political suicide for me". Carter had in clear terms admitted the constraints in dealing with the Israelis.

It is important that you do not forget that my influence on Israel is proportionally related to the scope of support which I get from American public opinion, Congress and the Jewish circles in this country. I want to be abundantly clear that in the absence of such a triangular support my ability to influence Israel is minimal.

Sadat finally visited Israel on November 19, 1977 and next day gave a speech before the Knesset. He explained in great detail the concessions which Egypt and Arabs would give and appeared to have believed the Israelis would respond with similar concessions. Soon he discovered that this was not the way Begin would behave. Sadat was deeply disappointed as no concessions were forthcoming from Israel. This negative stance of Begin forced Sadat to appeal to Cyrus Vance to urge the Israelis to make a public statement on


full withdrawal and on the need to solve the Palestinian problem in all its aspects.

Despite a personal plea from Carter, Begin was adamant in his refusal to meet Sadat's request for a statement on withdrawal. Sadat's grand gesture of travelling to Jerusalem would not shake Begin's lifelong commitment to Eretz Israel, though it might well have convinced Begin to be forthcoming on Sinai. Instead of meeting Sadat's request, Begin presented his "home rule" for the Palestinian Arabs in occupied Arab lands, which Carter had termed "constructive". Carter intervened to revive the peace process which remained deadlocked despite the Ismailia summit. On January 4, 1978 during a brief stopover in Aswan to see Sadat, Carter spelled out his wellknown views on the need for real peace and on withdrawal in the context of security and normal relations. He then added: "there must be a resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects. The solution must recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and enable the Palestinians to participate in the determination of their own future". This came to be known as "the Aswan Formula or Declaration". But by now it had become abundantly clear to Sadat that Carter would make grandiose statements in favor of Arabs and soon pour cold water due to Israeli pressure.

Sadat never underestimated the importance of US role in the peace process especially after his unproductive meeting with

Begin in Ismailia and the failure of talks in Jerusalem of the political committee. Geneva was now out of question, but the prospects of direct talks with Israel also seemed break. Soon the US invited Sadat for talks in early February 1978 and Carter urged Sadat not to break talks with Israel because Begin would blame Egypt and point out that Sadat is not serious towards peace and use this pretext not to move. In fact, Carter told Sadat, "But if President Sadat decided to terminate the negotiations, Begin will say, "we were willing but Sadat was not", and the argument that you want peace while they do not will sound rather hollow". After telling Carter that everything now depended on the American position and that Israel would listen only to the US, what he wanted now was a US proposal to break the stalemate. To which Carter answered in the affirmative. But he also added that it would be a mistake for the US to put forward a position soon after talks with Egypt. That would look like collusion and promptly the American Jewish Community, public opinion and Israel would reject it. Carter wanted first to talk to Begin and then would a US peace proposal be tabled. It was agreed that after Egypt's plan is rejected by Israel, the US would come forward with its compromise peace proposal to break the deadlock. Not only Egypt but the entire Arab world had pinned its hope on the goodwill of Carter but this crumbled when Israel began a large scale invasion of Southern Lebanon on March 16, 1978. Carter has assured Sadat and other

69. Ibid, pp. 85-86; Quandt, n. 49, p. 174 Carter's faith in the Israelis was shaken and he described negotiations with them as "frustrating". Two incidents were responsible for this situation. Despite a promise not to build new settlements Israelis established thirteen new ones. Begin claimed Carter's approval for his home rule project. The project he had shown Carter was quite different from the one submitted at Ismailia. Ibid, pp. 86-87.
important Arab leaders that it would not allow Israeli military attack on Lebanon. Begin defiantly rebuffed Carter at every turn. Not only did Carter fail to persuade Israel not to attack Lebanon, he also failed to pressure Israel to implement the UN resolution on Lebanon to which US had supported.

Carter for Separate Peace

It is true that Carter initially favoured a comprehensive peace but after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and more particularly after the latter's US visit in February 1978, he began to favor a bilateral peace between Egypt and Israel.\(^70\) It must be stressed here that though Sadat favored like Carter a comprehensive peace, but now in view of the changed position of the latter, began to think in terms of a bilateral peace with Israel but within a framework of general principles that would apply to all the fronts. In his perception Egypt should establish a model on which peace could be reached between Israel and each of its Arab neighbours. The key components were Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands and Arab recognition of Israel and acceptance of mutual security arrangements. In sum, for Sadat the starting point was Israeli commitment to withdrawal. Having rebuffed Carter at every stage on the peace process, and now having defied the US openly by sending his army into Lebanon, Begin visited US and had a meeting with the US President on March 21, 1978. In this stormy meeting Begin reiterated Israeli stand on peace. Carter summarized it in the following words:

\(^70\). Quandt, n.49, p. 177.
Carter said that even if Israel was not required to withdraw completely from the West Bank, and even if there were no Palestinian state, Begin would still not show flexibility. He would not stop settlement activity; he would not give up the settlements in the Sinai; he would not allow the Sinai settlements to remain under UN or Egyptian protection; he would not agree to withdraw politically from the West Bank even if Israel could retain military outposts; he would not recognize that 242 applied to all fronts; and he would not give the Palestinians the right to choose, at the end of the interim period, whether they wanted to be affiliated with Jordan or Israel, or to continue the self-rule arrangements. Begin agreed that Carter had accurately described his views but claimed that the six points had all been put in the negative. There was a way they could be stated in the positive.71

Thus, Carter unable to change Begin's view on withdrawal and settlement began to feel that almost any agreement was better than none at all. As time went by he came to believe that the primary strategic goal for the US was to conclude a bilateral peace treaty between Egypt and Israel and not to resolve the Palestinian issue - a policy advocated by Begin.

Now Carter went out of his way to identify with some of Begin's views. In an interview to New York Times, he said:

My belief is that a permanent settlement will not include an independent Palestinian nation on the West Bank. My belief is that a permanent settlement will not call for complete withdrawal of Israel from occupied territories. My belief is that a permanent settlement will be based substantially upon the home-rule proposal ... Begin has put forward.72

---

71. Ibid, pp. 179, 185-86.
Sadat who had expected Carter to put pressure on Israel was deeply disappointed on this score as the US was unwilling to confront Begin and the Jewish lobby. To Sadat's dismay Carter under Israeli pressure began to side almost on all issues with Israel. More significantly, Carter was also not in favour of any legal linkage between a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel and the Israeli autonomy plan for West Bank and Gaza. He even began to speak of the possibility that Israeli forces would remain even after the five-year transition in West Bank and Gaza. Further more, on July 15, 1977 the US ambassador to Cairo Eilts asked Kamel what Egypt's reaction would be if events obliged it to postpone the search for a solution of the Palestinian issue to a latter stage.

73. Quandt, n. 49, p.183; Carter told Begin that Sadat would go ahead with talks for a peace treaty once a declaration of principles was reached even if Jordan refused to join the talks, Ibid, p. 194. Around this time Harold Saunders said that the US did not intend to exert pressure on Israel. He said that Cyrus Vance would not be "playing into anybody's hands, particularly Sadat's hands". He also acknowledged that Begin was not ready to change his hardline stance. He "insisted that the issue regarding the sovereignty of the West Bank should be shelved ... The US for its part, considered the Israeli attitude ... more in line with the American way of handling things". He added: "It is common knowledge that the Israelis are looking for a separate settlement and we have not sought to impose our views in this matter", Cited by Kamel, n.62, pp. 257-60. The US wanted Egypt to take over the responsibility if Jordan refuses to take part in the autonomy talks for West Bank. Sadat said: "I cannot have the initiative depend upon the humour of King Hussein". He answered that if Jordan refused, he would take over that role and if PLO were to object "I shall send Egyptian troops to the West Bank. I am aware that we shall lose some men, but they will kill ten men of the Organisation (PLO) for every Egyptian who is killed". Ibid (Kamel), pp. 334-5.
and instead focus attention on a partial settlement between Egypt and Israel on Sinai. When Kamel showed skepticism Eilts asked Kamel what Egypt's reaction would be if events obliged it to postpone the search for a solution of the Palestinian issue to a later stage and instead focus attention on a partial settlement between Egypt and Israel on Sinai. When Kamel showed skepticism Eilts answered: "what if President Sadat were to consider it best to attain this goal in stages?" 74

On July 26, 1978 Sadat sent a lengthy letter to Carter saying that an important and crucial cross-roads had been reached. He expressed profound disappointment in the Leeds talks and told Carter that further meetings with the Israelis could not be continued. In fact Sadat who had broken off talks with Israel was strongly urged by Carter to resume the dialogue. As Sadat told Kamel:

President Carter was most insistent that I agree to his proposal, and you know how much importance I attach to an United States role and how eager I am for the US to assume the role of a full partner in the negotiations. So I don't want to upset President Carter ... I told President Carter that my agreeing to a tripartite foreign ministers' meeting was a concession and a special favor to him on my part. 75

It is clear that Carter unable to put the blame on Israel for the breakdown of negotiations turned to Sadat for resumption of talks and squeezed him for further concessions. This was to be repeated over and again and on a bigger scale at Camp David. It

must be noted that the purpose of the US in doing all it could to encourage and sustain direct talks between Egypt and Israel was to postpone the moment of truth, when it would be obliged to face Israel with its proposals as Carter had promised Sadat in February 1978.

The Camp David Accords

When Carter learnt about Sadat's adamant refusal (after the failure of Leeds conference) to a further meeting with Israel, he decided (on July 30, 1977) on a Camp David summit with Begin and Sadat. Without any change in Israel's attitude Sadat accepted Carter's suggestion for a summit and again without consultation with his advisers. Sadat believed that Carter would force Begin to make vital concessions or pressurize Israel and "cut Begin down to size", at Camp David as the US President "has put his career on the line". Moreover, for Sadat, if Carter failed to exert pressure on Israel he would return to Egypt immediately and prepare for the next step. 76 Whereas the reality was that Carter was in no position to put effective pressure on Israel, especially with the mid-term elections to Congress so close at hand. Sadat told Kamel that Vance had told him that Carter was prepared to go all the way, even if that meant he would not be re-elected for a second term. Sadat further added: "He is convinced that if he were to succeed in achieving peace, he

---

76. Ibid, p. 265, 286 and 298: Vance told Kamel that the conference must be successful, or it would mean the end of Carter's political career, Ibid, p. 264; H. Sieberman, Broker or Advocate? (Philadelphia: 1978).
would, by all accounts be an international hero". 77

At the Camp David talks Begin from the outset remained adamant, with the result Carter wanted Sadat to agree basically to Israeli demands particularly the deferral of the consideration of main issues such as sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza to a late stage. It became clear to the Egyptians that Carter openly favoured a bilateral peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. Moreover, he pointed out that "if there are any delays in negotiation of the West Bank/Gaza agreement, that is somebody else's problem ... if nothing happened in the West Bank for ten years he would not really care very much". 78 In fact, during the talks it was Begin who was calling the shots and used threats against Carter. Sadat was relying on a US President who had publicly confessed his inability to influence Begin's policies.

77. Ibid, p. 298.

78. Quandt, n.49, p. 228. During the talks when the clause in Resolution 242 about "non-acquisition of territory by force" came up, Begin said "we will not accept that (clause)". "Mr. Prime Minister", Carter replied, "that is not only the view of Sadat, it is also the American view - and you will have to accept it", Begin said tersely "Mr. President, No threats, please". Ezer Weizman, *The Battle for Peace* (London: 1981) pp. pp. 364-6. In reality all the American proposals which were submitted to Sadat had been prepared in "Consultations" with Israel. According to Secretary Vance: "The Israelis had crossed out all the language in the preamble drawn from Resolution 242, in particular the language dealing with the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war. They also deleted references to the "Palestinian people..." They eliminated reference to a peace treaty to settle the final status of the West Bank and Gaza ... (and they) flatly refused to discuss our proposed language calling for a freeze on settlements while negotiations were in progress." Vance, n. 64, pp. 220-21. The US peace proposal whose presentation was being likened to something very great step, "was changed beyond recognition". Ezer Weizman, *The Battle for Peace* (New York; 1981), pp. 364-6.
Despite this negative stand from Carter, the Egyptians were hoping for a US compromise peace proposal. The US which had promised its proposal on Sunday September 10, 1977 could not do so because as Eilts told Kamel:

I am sorry, Mohamed, but something unexpected has happened. Begin has produced a written pledge to the Israeli government, signed by Kissinger in 1975. This commits the United States to abstain from presenting any project on the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict without prior consultation with Israel. Consequently, we shall be unable to give you a copy of the project we have prepared. Interestingly, Sadat's initial reaction was generally positive, whereas Kamel argued strongly that the US proposal was not reasonable and in protest resigned.

However, Sadat remained adamant in his refusal on the issue of Israeli settlements and bases in Sinai. On these issues a crisis took place basically due to Begin's intransigence and Carter's reluctance to confront him on this issue which made Sadat decide to quit the talks. Expectedly Carter was alarmed at Sadat's decision and according to Brezezinski when Carter went to see Sadat the former was very rough with Sadat. Carter reportedly warned of these results if Sadat quit Camp David talks.

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 an end to 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. Why are you doing it?80

Sadat told Kamel that Carter had said that he needed an agreement at Camp David to ensure his re-election. Once that hurdle was passed, he could turn his full attention again to Middle East peace negotiations. Sadat told Kamel:

President Carter has told me that the language and formation of the project may be vague, but this is unimportant. What matters is that he is going to be with us as a full partner in the negotiations on self-rule. President Carter has affirmed to me that when he is re-elected for another term, he will be in a very strong position and will be able to put pressure on Israel. And he will then be in a position to correct any flaws and shortcomings in the language and formulation which he is at present unable to improve in view of Begin's rigidity and his (Carter's) desire to ensure that the conference does not end in failure and so lead to the termination of the peace process between Egypt and Israel and a resuscitation of conditions which might result in the eruption of a new war. Carter has again assured me that he feels a moral obligation to do something for the Palestinians, and that he will be in a position to do this when he is re-elected. (If Camp David conference succeeds) ... he (Carter) will be certain to achieve an easy victory in the forthcoming elections. And I am

80. Zbigniew Brezezinski, Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981 (New York: Passar et, 1983). p. 272, see also Carter n. 51, pp. 292-93, Ismail Fahmy argued that Carter, in a bid to convince Sadat to stay, after warning him of the severe consequences, promised Egypt a massive aid program equal to Israel's. Al Wafd, (Cairo) ... 1986. Sadat had told Kamel, "Don't you know what I am going through? If you don't bear with me, who will? Kamel, n. 62, p. 353. At the same time during the talks Carter's anger flared and he virtually shouted at Begin: "what do you really need for your defense"? It is ridiculous to speak of Jordan overrunning Israel! ... You are as evasive with me as with Arabs". Carter, n. 51, p. 349. See also 319-403; Towards the final stages of the talks Dayan warned that if Carter insisted on "setting out in detail the American position on East Jerusalem, Begin would simply pack his bags and go home" Cyrus Vance a visibly upset person wrote: "we were very angry. Carter furiously demanded to know if Israel meant to tell the US it could not even publicly state its own national position". Vance, n. 64, p. 226.
confident he will carry out his promise to me because he is a man of principle.81

After his half an hour meeting with Carter, according to Kamel, Sadat was a "changed man" and is reported to have said: "I shall sign anything proposed by President Carter without reading it".82 In the face of an unyielding Begin and with Carter unwilling to put any pressure on Israel, Sadat accepted US peace proposals largely based on the Israeli autonomy plan submitted by Begin at the Ismailia Summit in December 1977. Carter applied pressure on Sadat to accept an ambiguously worded formula for West Bank and Gaza with a very weak linkage with the treaty between Egypt and Israel. Carter wrote: "I had a lot of latitude in dealing with the West Bank/Gaza questions".83 Meanwhile, Carter assured Sadat that Begin had agreed

82. Ibid, p. 357; According to Kamel, after this private meeting with Carter, every hour brought "reports of further concessions", p. 372. Sadat told Kamel that if the expression "self-determination" was vaguely and indistinctly formulated it was because Carter had confided to me that this phrase would "cost me (Carter), my job". Ibid, p. 371. Sadat told Kamel, "I wished to help Carter by ensuring that the failure of the conference would not be attributed to him ... It should be understood that the concessions I have made were for the sake of the United States and President Carter personally ..." Ibid, pp. 335-6. Dr. Nabil el Araby, Director of the Legal Department; in the Foreign Ministry tried to reason out with Sadat over the letters the latter had accepted on Jerusalem as having no legal value. Sadat was furious and shouted at Dr. Araby: "You people in the Foreign Ministry are under the impression that you understand politics. In reality, however, you understand absolutely nothing ... I am a man whose actions are governed by a higher strategy which you are incapable of either perceiving or understanding ... Now be so good as to leave and do not come back to waste my time with futile legal arguments!" Kamel, n. 62, pp. 374-5.

to a freeze on Israeli settlements in West Bank and Gaza during the course of the negotiations to establish self-government there. Even on this issue Begin challenged Carter and said Israel would build no more settlements on this territory only during the three months envisaged for the negotiations of an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. 84 According to Quandt, "A red flag should have gone up for Carter when he read the Begin letter on settlements ... instead of pinning Begin down on this admittedly crucial issue, Carter turned his attention to ensuring that Sadat was ready to conclude the agreement. Then, he could think about how to announce it to the world." 85 The American collusion with Israel became so open at one stage during the talks, that the US tried to persuade Sadat to let the US take over the Israeli air bases in Sinai as a training facility which Sadat rejected.

Unable to pressure Begin, Carter turned to Sadat for further concessions. One should also note the attitude of Sadat who ignored the advice and suggestion from the Egyptian delegation. Its interesting to note what Sadat told the members of Egyptian delegation "... I shall not pay the least attention to either your words or your memos. I am a man whose actions are governed by a higher strategy which you are incapable of either perceiving or understanding. I do not need your insignificant and misleading reports ... President Carter is my trump card for the establishment of a comprehensive peace?" 86 Thus, to the end Sadat placed greater trust in Carter than in his own ministers.

Soon after the Camp David accords, Sadat came under mounting Arab attack. The Palestinians especially attacked him bitterly.


85. Ibid, pp. 252-3.

86. Kamel, n. 62, pp.374-75. According to Adel Safty, the outcome of the Camp David talks reflected the relative balance of power between the three parties, but what is remarkable about Egyptian decisions and negotiating strategies is that they were largely the result of one man's political-psychological perceptions/beliefs and did not necessarily reflect a realistic assessment of the operational environment. International Studies. Vance wrote that: Right to the last moment, some of Sadat's advisers were still arguing that the agreement slanted toward Israel's positions. But Sadat trusted President Carter and gave his consent". Vance: n.64. p.226.
Having failed to establish the principle of linkage between the autonomy and treaty, he now tried to repair that mistake. Israel rejected any linkage. In fact, Carter also argued that Sadat should not try to speak for the West Bank. At any rate, Carter stated clearly that he did not want a public confrontation with Israel. Thus, both Israel and US, focussed their attention towards progress on a bilateral peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. Soon after the accords Carter sent Brezezinski to Cairo to see Sadat. He wanted Brezezinski to have a broad strategic review with Sadat, and to inform him of the new proposals and ask for his support of them, and to tell Sadat "very privately that the President's domestic political situation was becoming more difficult and that Begin might even wish to see the President defeated". Carter himself visited Egypt on March 7, 1979 to negotiate the final treaty. Even now Sadat promised to do everything possible to make Carter's attempt a success. Carter told Sadat before going to Israel that "once a treaty was a reality the US and Egypt could plan for a "massive" government-to-government relationship in the military and economic fields". Carter also expressed the hope that the American private sector would invest in Egypt after the peace treaty was signed. While in Israel instead of persuading the Israelis to make some unilateral gestures to the Palestinians and atleast give Gaza to Egypt, he revealed them that he essentially had carte blanche from Sadat to conclude an agreement. As Carter later wrote, "once more, I wanted Begin to

88. Quandt, n. 49, p. 302.
have his way with particular phrases and depended on Sadat to be flexible on language and to take the long view concerning the effect of the agreement.90

No wonder Sadat signed the peace treaty with Begin on March 26, 1979. On the same day, Vance and Dayan signed a 'US-Israel' memorandum of agreement! It put the weight of the US behind Israel in the event that Egypt violated the treaty. The agreement was extensive in its nature and it amounted to a virtual alliance between US and Israel against Egypt. The Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Khalil, who was not informed of the US-Israeli memorandum until the last moment, protested to Vance and stated the reasons why Egypt rejected it. Carter and Vance went ahead with these agreements because there was no criticism from Sadat. Even if he became aware of the US-Israeli agreement, especially "the US perfidy and double-dealing Sadat could hardly have done anything because he had reached the end of a road of no return".91

To sum up, Sadat's entire strategy was based on American ability to persuade Israel to withdraw from Arab lands. He considered the US to be Israel's life-line and hence in a position to help secure Israeli withdrawal. Sadat always gave the example of Eisenhower's role in the Suez War. After assuming power he made many moves to please the US. Following the October War, he even volunteered to promote American interests and exclude Soviet influence from the area. He promised to promote regional stability by

December 1979, pp.11-17.

91. Riad, n. 4, p. 340; Mustafa Khalil's letters are published in White Paper on Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel (Cairo: 1979), pp. 155-57. Khalil wrote to Vance on March 26, 1979 complaining: "The American-Israeli Memorandum assumes that Egypt is the side liable to violate its obligations. The US is supposed to be a partner in a tripartite effort to achieve peace and not to support the allegations of one side against the other". Sadat dismissed Khalil's two letters to Vance on this issue as "unimportant, reflecting Khalil's personal views rather than the stand of the Egyptian leadership". Fahmy, n. 11, pp. 298-9; E.L. Sullivan, "The US and Egypt," Worldview, Vol. 12, 1979, pp. 18-25; M.I. Hakki, "US-Egyptian Relations," AAA, 1983, p. 28.
concluding peace with Israel and by concentrating on internal economic development. He met with some success when Kissinger had persuaded Israel to withdraw from the Suez Canal in 1974 and from parts of Sinai in 1975. But in the process he had also weakened his position by pledging under Sinai-II not to use force against Israel.

Thus coupled with the removal of oil embargo, reopening of Suez Canal, US control of Sinai stations, weak military leverage due to quarrel with Moscow, vastly diminished Sadat’s bargaining power at Camp David. On the other hand, as a result of massive supply of arms by the US to Israel and the restraints introduced by Kissinger on US policy in the area made Begin much stronger. Sadat’s belief that 99 percent of the cards in the Arab-Israeli conflict are with the US was demolished by Begin. Sadat wanted US to be a full partner in the search for peace. But in the Camp David negotiations, it became obvious that the US indeed became a full partner only of Israel. Whatever Israel submitted was made by the US the basis for a settlement. Sadat was hoping for a confrontation between Israel and the US but Carter had no stomach for that. Instead he decided to work with Begin. Thus, American credibility as an honest broker was greatly undermined by the Camp David settlement in the eyes of Egyptians as well as other Arabs.