CHAPTER FOUR

THE MILITARY COMPULSIONS
Nasser's assertion of Palestinian rights, defiance of the West, and determination to carve for Egypt an autonomous role in regional and world affairs with Soviet help put him on a collusion course with the West as well as Israel. Assured of US backing Israel dealt a devastating blow to Egypt in the 1967 war and enhanced its own strategic value in the eyes of America. Israel's military superiority remained unchallenged until October 1973 when Egypt in a surprise attack crossed the Suez Canal. Towards the end of the war Israel gained an upper hand, with US help. Sadat was badly shaken by the setback and this in part explains, his decision to conclude two Sinai agreements. It ultimately led him to formally end the thirty years of armed confrontation and conclude peace with Israel in 1979. This chapter focuses on how the position of relative strength which Egypt had enjoyed in the 1973 war was eroded as time passed to one of abject weakness and desperation. Sadat's shift to a diplomatic settlement with Israel against the backdrop of Egypt's diminished military strength forms the subject of this chapter.

The emergence of Israel in May 1948 and its military victory over the Arab States in the first Arab-Israeli Conflict (AIC) posed a great military challenge to the Arabs. The United States, Britain and France under the Tripartite Declaration, concluded in 1950, came to an understanding to regulate their arms sales to the Arabs in a manner that would safeguard the security and survival of Israel.

One of the major reasons for the coup d'etat in July 1952 against the monarchy in Egypt was the defeat and consequent humiliation imposed by Israel in the 1948 war. On February 28, 1955 Israel launched a commando military raid in what came to be known as the 'Gaza raid'. Nasser became convinced that Western Powers will never
supply the arms Egypt needed to safeguard her security against Israeli attack. Consequently he approached Moscow which agreed to supply arms to Egypt. The arms deal gave a revolutionary turn to the conflict and it sent shock waves into Israel. It greatly enhanced Egypt's prestige in the Arab World and Nasser began increasingly to emphasize the Israeli threat to the Arab world. Israel joined the Anglo-French attack against Egypt on October 29, 1956 which clearly exposed its links with the imperial Western powers. Its main aim was clearly to destroy the newly acquired arms by Egypt and also to deal a blow to Nasser and his revolutionary regime which asserted the Palestinian rights in world forums. In the aftermath of the Suez war, Egypt assumed the leadership of the Arab world and Nasser became its spokesman.

Since then the Arab world expected Egypt to help the Palestinians recover their rights. It became an Egyptian burden primarily. The recovery of Palestine was always highlighted by Nasser in his speeches but at the same time he was opposed to any hasty action on this front. He urged caution and advocated patience in this regard. It was his conviction that the Arabs should wait and build up their capability in all fields to be in a position to challenge Israel. While urging caution and patience Nasser used to give the instance of the crusades.¹

The Road to 1967 War

Nasser's challenge to Saudi Arabia through his military intervention in Yemen in 1962 persuaded the US to shift the balance of military power in favor of Israel. Thus, Israel started getting

massive quantities of sophisticated arms from the US which, at the same time, stopped its food and economic aid to Egypt.

Though Nasser was taunted by his Arab rivals for his cautious response to increasing Israeli threats to Syria and Jordan in 1967, he remained cautious until mid-May. But soon after, for a variety of reasons, he took steps which ended in his disastrous defeat for Egypt on June 5, 1967. Israel once again occupied the Sinai peninsula.

In fact, the 1967 war had badly shaken the very edifice of the Egyptian regime. Nasser had not anticipated such a thorough and shattering defeat. He was shocked to see his military machine being knocked out and the men struck with demoralization. Taking stock of the situation after Egypt's disastrous defeat Nasser realized that the only course left to him was to rebuild his military strength. To rebuild his armed forces Nasser needed the Soviet help. The Soviets were willing.

In order to give political solution a chance Nasser accepted the UN Resolution 242. But all his efforts towards a peaceful settlement were frustrated by an arrogant and stubborn Israel which was backed by the United States.

In order to put pressure on Israel Nasser launched a war of attrition along the Suez Canal in early 1968. In response the Israelis bombed factories, military airfields, schools, hospitals and whole towns, especially Ismailia, Suez, Port Said. The undeclared war took a heavy toll of Egyptian life and property. This prompted Nasser to seek additional help from Moscow and promptly the Israeli bombing ceased whose aim was to discredit Nasser and ultimately bring down his
regime. While, Nasser was effectively strengthening his military capability he also officially accepted the Roger's Plan on July 23, 1970. This led to a ceasefire from August 7, 1970.

To sum up, Nasser who had planned to concentrate on Egypt's economic development was provoked by Israel's 'Gaza raid' to seek Soviet arms. Despite the military defeat and loss of arms in the Suez war he was able to build a strong military machine with Soviet help. But the 1967 war clearly showed that Egypt was no match for the superior Israeli military machine and the result was the disastrous defeat of Egypt and the loss of Sinai. Frustrated by the negative attitude of Israel on withdrawal from Arab lands Nasser started the war of attrition to compel Israel to accept Resolution 242. But this led to more destruction and loss of life for Egypt. Finally, against Soviet wishes, Nasser accepted the Rogers Plan and US mediation in the conflict.

Sadat's Diplomatic Offensive

Soon after coming to power, Sadat astonished the world by his first ever peace initiative on February 4, 1971. Among other things, he agreed to sign a peace agreement with Israel under Dr. Jarring's mediation. He candidly admitted the compulsion: "I believe that as military action was ruled out at the time, a diplomatic offensive had to be launched". 2

Meantime Vice-President Ali Sabri and several of his colleagues opposed Sadat's decision to extend ceasefire as well as his peace proposal. The war Minister Mohamed Fawzi accused Sadat of preparing a surrender to Israel and the US. Sadat with the support

of the chief of staff General Mohamed Sadiq was able to remove Ali Sabri and his supporters from power. Anyway, in order to remove the doubts in the minds of Soviet leaders after the removal of Ali Sabri and others, Sadat signed a friendship treaty with Moscow in May 1971. Sadat treated the treaty as a guarantee for supply of adequate arms (including offensive) in his struggle against Israel.

Sadat's Year of Decision

Sadat had set as his primary goal the recovery of occupied Egyptian territory. Not only was his peace initiative ignored but the US continued to supply arms to Israel including large numbers of sophisticated planes which angered Sadat. He 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. In this connection he said on July 23, 1971 that "I shall not allow 1971 to pass without this battle being decided. 1971 will be a decisive year". So Sadat embarked on a policy which was unequivocally a military one. He had set a deadline to break the stalemate which was pernicious to Egyptian interests. Evidently, he set about planning his military strategy and course for the inevitable battle with Israel. In this connection Sadat visited Moscow twice in March and October 1971 and urged the Soviets to supply offensive weapons which would put Egypt on par with Israel. But Moscow due to a variety of reasons withheld offensive arms.

Around this time, Sadat convened a meeting of the Armed Forces Supreme Committee and asked his commanders for their assessment of Egypt's military position. Most of them emphasized the need for offensive arms. Summing up the discussion General Sadiq, the War

Minister said: "We are all ready to fight. But we must not decide on war unless victory is guaranteed. The country could not take another defeat. Our forces have many deficiencies. These we must remedy before going into battle".4

It became abundantly evident to Sadat that by delaying or holding up the arms supply which had been agreed in October 1971, Moscow was indirectly refusing to give the "green signal" for Sadat's proposed military move against Israel. This is not to suggest that Moscow was in principle opposed to Egypt going to war against Israel to recover occupied lands which they had been all along supporting. But the timing and the idea of a deadline fixed unilaterally by Sadat was disapproved by Moscow.

Sadat made yet another visit to Moscow on February 2, 1972 to persuade the Soviet leaders to release the necessary weapons to break the 'no-war no peace' stalemate. He told Brezhnev: "What I want this time is a strategic decision, a decision that you will give us the opportunity to be equal to Israel. We do not want supremacy, but equality. This is a strategic decision".5 In return for arms Sadat even assured them that he would remove General Sadiq, a known critic of the Soviet Union.6

Moscow basically to preserve its position in the area in anticipation of the Super Power summit in May 1972 in Moscow partly resumed the arms deliveries which it had earlier withheld. But the offensive weapons which Sadat needed for Suez crossing were still not supplied. According to Sadat the arms supplied by Moscow after his

5. Cited in Rubeinstein, n. 3, p. 171; see also Sadat, n. 2, p. 228.
visit "were not the essential weapons I wanted but they were better than nothing".  

Soviet tardiness necessitated another visit by Sadat to Moscow in April-May 1972 partly to plead again for arms and partly to forestall a Soviet-American deal over West-Asia in view of Nixon's proposed visit to the Soviet Union. Sadat was upset by the outcome of the Moscow summit especially when it called for "military relaxation" in the area. At this stage Brezhnev said that the presence of Soviet advisers in Egypt was "an international necessity". 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 on July 8, 1972 to order the expulsion of Soviet advisers from Egypt which was publicly announced on July 18.

The Road to October War

Despite this setback, to the great relief of Sadat, the Soviet Union decided to send the arms needed but still withholding the offensive weapons. Sadat had originally decided to launch an attack on Israel in May 1973 but had to postpone his plan of action due mainly to delay in sending the deterrent weapons like missiles and more significantly Israel's premonition about the impending attack.

Meanwhile Sadat sacked Sadiq as War Minister and appointed Ahmad Ismail Ali as Egypt's new War Minister. Sadat and Sadiq had long failed to see eye to eye on many issues. They had fundamentally divergent views on how the war with Israel should be conducted. Instead of planning for a war to recapture the Sinai, Sadat decided

7. Sadat, n. 2, p. 228.
8. Ibid., p. 229.
on a strictly limited one to establish a bridgehead on the East Bank of the Suez Canal as a way of breaking the Israeli grip on the occupied lands and paving the way for peace talks under US auspices. Sadiq was not convinced of the limited war which Sadat believed capable of paying such large political dividends.¹⁰

Even though Sadat wanted only a limited attack involving the crossing of canal but as early as April 1973 chief of staff Shazly was asked by War Minister Ismail to develop plans for an assault on the Sinai Passes after the crossing of Suez Canal. He frankly admitted that it was a "political instruction". Sadat realized the pitfalls in Egypt attacking Israel alone, and hence was keen to coordinate war strategy with Syria. Mainly to overcome probable Syrian reservations Sadat wanted a plan which would involve more than a limited attack. When Shazly told Ismail of "the present military impossibility" of the plan for Passes known as "Granite Two", Ali proposed a solution. He wanted a separate plan from the canal crossing plan which would include developing a limited attack towards the Sinai Passes. This was merely "to satisfy the Syrians". President Assad agreed to cooperate with Egypt in this venture.¹¹

With Syrian cooperation assured, Sadat finally opted to discuss "battle or no battle". He made his views clear that in favor of war.¹² Sadat who favored a limited war was actually aiming to challenge Israel's military superiority. As he said:

I believe that if the enemy's theory of the permanent superiority of its forces can be successfully challenged both the short term and the long term repercussions will be incalculable.

¹⁰ Heikal, n. 6, p. 180.
¹¹ Shazly, n. 4, pp. 30-31.
¹² Heikal, n. 6, p. 25.
In the short term it should make possible a peaceful and honourable solution to the Middle East problem and in the long term it will create a cumulative modification in the aggressive psychology of Zionism.  

In any case Sadat thought this was Egypt's last chance: "If we do not seize it we should have finally missed the bus, for one thing Egypt was not going to receive any more arms than it already had, so was at the peak of its military capacity".  

The October War  

It was under these circumstances that Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel on October 6, 1973. The supposedly impregnable Bar Lev line was smashed in record time and Egyptians held a strip of land on the East Bank of the Suez Canal. The Egyptian General Command had estimated casualties in the crossing of canal and taking Bar Lev line at 26,000 soldiers. But the actual losses were five aircraft, 20 tanks and 280 soldiers killed - 2.5% of the aircraft, 2% of the tanks and 0.3% of the combat troops. According to Shazly "we expected far bloodier resistance than we met". The Israelis were taken completely by total surprise and their forces defending the Bar Lev line had been virtually annihilated: 300 of the Israelis 360 tanks were destroyed; thousands of Israeli soldiers were killed within 18 hours of the Egyptian crossing. Egypt had put across the canal 90,000 men, 850 tanks and 11,000 vehicles. This massive crossing "was the largest crossing in military history".  

When it was all accomplished so quickly and painlessly everyone felt as  

if they were in a dream. "The whole operation was a magnificent symphony played by tens of thousands of men".17

The Israelis launched many counter-attacks to repulse the Egyptians but were unsuccessful in all their attempts. The Israeli position was so precarious that according to Dayan, the Israelis could not hope to push the Egyptians back by a single inch and that the road to Tel Aviv was now open.18 It also prompted the Israeli Premier Golda Meir to plead for US arms.

Meanwhile the Egyptians remained in the defensive positions until October 13 and this operational pause was broken only in the evening of 13th October, when Sadat ordered the army to drive towards Sinai Passes. At this stage Sadat rejected a proposal for a ceasefire in place. According to Ismail Fahmy Sadat's rejection of the ceasefire in place on October 12 when Egypt's position was comfortable "was a mistake". The US decision to send massive quantities of arms to Israel changed the situation and Egypt's position deteriorated on ground.19

The relatively easy victory over Israel intoxicated Sadat who now decided to implement the second part of the military strategy.


18. Sadat, n. 2, p. 255 & 7; At 10.00 p.m. on 8 October, The Israeli Commander on the northern front, Major-General Yitzhak Hofi told General Elazar, the Chief of Staff, "I am not sure we can hold out much longer". This message was passed to Dayan who went to Golda Meir and asked for permission to activate the nuclear bombs. He told her "This is the end of the Third Temple", in James Adams, The Unnatural Alliance: Israel and South Africa (London: 1984), p. 163.

According to Shazly, the war minister had said as early as October 11: "Could we not built on our success to develop our attack to the passes?" In Shazly's perception, this was the "first catastrophic blunder" made by Sadat and Ismail Ali "from which all other blunders followed"! The attack towards the Sinai Passes was launched when Sadat had sent bulk of the armour to the East Bank of the canal "at the expense of our strategic reserve". Moreover one week's war had led to the loss of nearly 240 tanks. Despite Israel's losses it had more tanks than Egypt in Sinai. Egypt thus simply lacked "the superiority needed for attack" and would have been better to remain content with maintaining the defensive postures.20

In ordering the new plan towards the Passes Sadat was under pressure from Syria. Assad called on Sadat to draw off Israeli pressure and according to Heikal the message from Damascus "took on a sharper note". They appealed to the Egyptians to begin an offensive, so as to reduce Israeli pressure in the north.

Since that moment Sadat was determined to push the offensive while a reluctant Ismail ordered the commanders to carry forward the plan and overruled their objections. Ismail said, "it is a political decision".21 In launching an attack the presence on the East Bank was not to be weakened, rather the operational reserves were to be pressed in action. The total reserves on the West Bank of the canal guarding the armies which crossed the canal were reduced to a single brigade of tanks. According to Shazly the decision to

commit reserve tanks into the offensive

was a grave error. So was the plan, devised by Ismail, we were now ordered to adopt. Barring a miracle, the attack had no chance of success whatever. The enemy had 900 tanks in his operational zone. We were attacking with 400 ... we were condemning our tank crews to attack over open terrain dominated by enemy air power and against well prepared positions. 22

The offensive launched on October 14, was badly crushed by Israeli planes after the Egyptians went beyond the SAM umbrella and were further punished by Israeli armour and paratroop counterattacks in which US supplied ATGM's were used. It was a big disaster for Egypt. In a single day it lost 250 tanks and made no significant advances. The losses were more than what Egypt had lost in the entire war. Israeli losses were less than 30 tanks. In the face of such fierce resistance and heavy losses the soldiers were asked to return back to their original positions. In the words of Sahzly the Egyptian offensive "was a collosal waste", and he is still unable to explain "why that attack was mounted. It was of course President Sadat's decision". 23

Clearly it was a grave error to commit the strategic reserve armour to the offensive, but what ultimately led to its failure was the massive US intervention. By now the US was supplying huge quantities of sophisticated arms to Israel. Moreover, through its space satellites the US learnt that Egypt's strategic reserve had been committed to the battle. This information was passed to

the Israelis which enabled them to launch their own crossing of the canal making a breakthrough of the Egyptian lines. 24 On October 16, the Israelis crossed the canal and by October 19 Israel had established a formidable presence on the West Bank of the canal. Heavily outnumbered by the Israelis, the Egyptians were ordered to contain the rapidly expanding Israeli presence. Although they succeeded in destroying several enemy tanks, but when the troops almost reached the canal they came under intense Israeli firing. With casualties rapidly mounting it was called back. Similarly the commanders of Second and Third armies also were ordered to withdraw to avoid creating a salient. So the counter-attack was a great flop. 25

This serious challenge by the Israelis on the West Bank of the Canal created a situation of near panic within both the military and political leadership in Egypt. The War Minister now realized the grave threat to the Egyptian military and advised Sadat to accept ceasefire. 26 Thus the rapidly expanding Israeli presence on the west bank of the Canal, Egypt's inability to contain them and the threat of loosing whatever Egypt had gained, pushed Sadat to accept the UN ceasefire on October 22. The Israelis in a determined attempt to improve their position violated the ceasefire to complete their encirclement of the Third Army and capture the town of Suez. Not only Israel violated the ceasefire but also refused to return to October 22 ceasefire lines ordered by the UN Security Council Resolution 339.

Reasons for Egyptian Setback

How did this dismal situation come about? What were the factors responsible for such disastrous turn-about after a successful crossing of the canal. There were principally three crucial factors

25. Ibid, pp. 174-5; Heikal, n. 6, p. 234. According to Shazly this was blunder number three.
which throw some light on it. Firstly, it was the Israeli determination to regain the initiative after their initial shock and heavy loss at the Egyptian hands early in the war. Although the Israelis made determined assaults but "their progress was slow and cautious." Soon, Israel improved its position on the west bank of the canal and were in a position to force the surrender of the Third army mainly due to ceasefire violations and cheating. In the words of Edgar O'Ballance "Israeli blatant disregard of the various ceasefire agreements enabled them to advance and seize territory they might well have been unable to gain if it had been contested in battle".28

Secondly, it was the massive US support to Israel by way of arms and intelligence data through space satellites that enabled the Israelis to halt the Egyptian advance towards Sinai Passes and also to cross the Canal. As Sadat said: "The US opened its arsenal. The supply of TV guided bombs was officially announced ... Nothing was hidden ... the American arsenal was widely and abundantly opened ..."29 Sadat in his memoirs pointed out that it was the US which advised the Israelis to launch the counter-crossing to save the dismal situation of their force in Sinai, by giving hourly transmitted information by satellites and by establishing an air-bridge to save Israel. He further adds: "There had come a point in the battle when I noticed that everytime I destroyed a dozen tanks, more tanks were to be seen on the battlefield. The US was taking part in the war to save Israel so as to turn Israel's defeat into victory".30 Besides this massive military intervention the US Secretary of State Kissinger on

27. Shazly, n. 4, pp. 180-81.
29. Quoted in Hirst, n. 17, p. 176.
his way from Moscow (where he had gone to arrange for a ceasefire) to Washington stopped in Israel and gave a signal to the Israelis to continue their offensive on the West Bank of the Canal. He kept silent when Israel repeatedly violated the October 22 and 24 ceasefire "no doubt, pleased that the Arab world should at last have a demonstration of what American power could achieve in the Middle East". Lastly, the Egyptian reverses in the second half of the war was due to the determination of Sadat, after the initial successful crossing, to run the course of "his" war "his" way, contrary to the views of military commanders, and in defiance of all military logic. That at least is the conclusion of Shazly:

I believe that we could have done much better than we did during the war if Sadat had not so frequently interfered in military decision. Egyptian soldiers and Egyptian commanders were of a high standard and they fought well. They were let down by their political leaders.

Despite the setback towards the end of the war which surely eroded the Egyptian position, the war brought Egypt a sufficient measure of military victory to secure the political objectives for which the country entered the war. In psychological terms the war transformed Egypt's reputation in the world, morale at home and potential power at the conference table due to gains on both the regional and global levels. Egyptian political analysts have stressed the global strategic advantages that accrued to Egypt as a result of the October war. Sadat they reason, demonstrated that Egypt had a last-resort capability to seize the initiative in pursuit of its own interests. Illustrative is the thinking of Ahmed Bahaeddin the respected Al-Ahram political commentator. In April

31. Shazly, n. 4, p. 190; O'Ballance, n. 28, p. 206 and 223.
1974 Bahaeddin observed Egypt had "upset the scales" which had been frozen since the June 1967 war. Sadat stressed that the October initiative was a "100 percent Egyptian decision against the will of the two Super Powers". Moreover it broke the barrier of fear and inferiority. He further adds:

It was a thousand times more honourable that I die in this battle, that I am defeated after I have fought and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy - better this than to remain alive, in a cringing posture of no war and no peace ... with the whole world convinced that we are nothing but a lifeless corpse.

Thus, the war had shaken Israel. Israel's military superiority had been successfully challenged and for the first time since the creation of Israel the Arabs came very close to success. Ultimately, it was the massive American military support and strong commitment to Israel that saved it and finally contained the Arab offensive.

The Impact of War on Sadat's Quest for Peace

After the war Sadat came to be referred as "The Hero of the crossing" and the "Leader of the Liberation Struggle". It was the prestige conferred by the crossing that enabled Sadat to launch his peace moves on the diplomatic front. As Sadat told the Peoples Council on December 16, 1973 "we have fought for peace". For him the real momentum of the peace process began from the October war. Sadat now concluded that the war had changed the Israeli rigidity and also a marked improvement had taken place in US attitude.

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 urged Kissinger to intervene, besides agreeing to a meeting between Egyptian and Israeli military officers at KM 101 in order to persuade Israel to withdraw to the October 22 ceasefire lines. This was the first direct bilateral meeting between Egypt and Israel and "became the first landmark on a journey whose final destination was to astonish the world". 36

At the KM 101 talks the Israelis adopted a tough posture and refused to return to the October 22 ceasefire lines. Moreover, they also continued to create problems to send vital supplies to the Third Army. By such tactics the Israelis kept the Third Army on the brink of collapse in order to use it as a hostage against the conditions they now wanted to impose on Sadat. Sadat mainly due to pressure from the military to the plight of the Third Army was so desperate that he appeared ready to accept Israeli conditions like releasing their top spy by name Avidan who was serving a long prison sentence and more significantly by releasing their POW's captured in war. Now they wanted the naval blockade to be lifted at the Bab el Mandeb to which Sadat again readily agreed. 37

Meanwhile Kissinger arrived on November 7, 1973 in Cairo and Sadat insisted in his talks with him that the swiftest way to peace was on immediate implementation of the UN Resolution 242 and more immediately to October 22 ceasefire line. Kissinger flatly refused and said "Nobody knows where the lines of October 22nd are". He suggested that instead of wasting time on the October 22nd lines, "why don't we try for something bigger?" 38 Since Sadat was under heavy

37. Shazly, n. 4, p. 193.
pressure from the military to rescue Suez city and the Third Army.

he accepted Kissinger's suggestions. On November 21, 1973 Sadat convened a meeting of the AFSC to discuss the situation. According to Shazly, "It was clear that most of us round the table were furious and humiliated by the Israelis incessant demands at KM 101 and the plight of the Third Army which forced us to accede to them". Mainly due to Israeli intransigence in its refusal to withdraw to October 22 lines the KM 101 talks were suspended. It later transpired that Kissinger had intervened with Golda Meir to sabotage the negotiations. Kissinger felt that if Yariv and Gamassy achieved a disengagement at KM 101 quickly there would remain nothing to negotiate at Geneva. Frustrated at lack of progress in direct talks with the Israelis Sadat agreed to attend GPC on December 21, 1973. The only tangible outcome from the GPC was the creation of a separate Egyptian-Israeli military Committee on disengagement and it did continue to meet in Geneva later, but without the weight of Kissinger behind it, it was mere "chattering".

Feeling cheated by the Israelis and betrayed by the US, Sadat now began to speak publicly of the feasibility of destroying the Israeli pocket, but Kissinger warned Sadat that "if you do this the Pentagon will strike at you".

Despite US warning, Sadat convened a meeting of the Egyptian commanders on December 24. The plan to liquidate the Israeli pocket was discussed for over seven hours and Sadat approved it. But it remains a mystery as to why Sadat did not implement his decision. It could be because (a) Kissinger had promised him to work out a disengagement under which Israel would withdraw from the West Bank of

39. Shazly, n. 4, p. 194.
Canal; (b) he feared that a resumption of fighting might go against him and the Third Army might not only be destroyed but much worse could happen; and (c) since he believed that only the US could put pressure on Israel for withdrawal from occupied lands, Sadat did not want to antagonize the US at this stage. Moreover, his whole position as "Hero of the Crossing" was at risk if he lost his Sinai foothold. However, Shazly calls Sadat's determination to wipe out Israeli pocket as "total lies". And he may be right because Sadat had told Heikal as early as in November 1973 itself that the October war will be the last war as far as Egypt is concerned.

The Road to Sinai-I

Kissinger again came to the area early in January 1974 with the intention to mediate between Egypt and Israel for the general principles of a disengagement and then defer to the Egyptian-Israeli military committee to resolve the details at GPC. Since Sadat's position had deteriorated badly due to constant Israeli interference on West Bank of the Canal, now he wanted a quick settlement. "Why Geneva", Sadat asked, "You can do it all here". In principle Sadat accepted the Israeli conceptual framework of five zones and force limitation idea brought by Kissinger after visiting Israel. In Washington and in Israel, Kissinger had already determined the scope of the Israeli withdrawal and only the problem of limitations of force

42. Shazly, n. 4, p. 199.
43. Mohamed H. Heikal, "Egyptian Foreign Policy", Foreign Affairs vol. 56, no. 4, July 1978, pp. 714-27; Fahmy says that the Pentagon itself denied it had ever planned operations in Egypt. Fahmy, n. 19, pp. 51-5. Sadat also said "I am doing my best for a political settlement. After 1973 it has become evident that the Arab-Israeli Conflict cannot be solved by military means or by force. Thus, I believe that we ought to seek a peaceful solution". Israeli, n. 35, p. 772.
remained. To this Sadat told Kissinger: "It's difficult for me to sign a document which limits the forces in my own territory". To bail out Sadat, Kissinger proposed - a formal and a secret agreement to which Sadat readily agreed. Thus on January 18, 1974 Gamassy and Elazar signed the Sinai-I at KM 101. It contained all of Dayan's essentials - indeed Dayan has been called its secret father.

Under the agreement Israel agreed to withdraw from the West Bank of Canal and into Sinai to a line roughly 15 miles from the Canal protected by a UN buffer zone, leaving the Egyptians a thin line of territory on the East Bank. But Sadat got no promise of a further Israeli withdrawal but only assurance that the agreement "constitutes a first step towards a just and durable peace ..." In return for this paltry withdrawal several far reaching concessions were made by Sadat. He agreed to reduce Egypt's presence from 60,000 to a mere 7000 men on the East Bank; with no missiles on either line for 30 kms. He also secretly promised that Egypt would keep no more than 30 tanks in Sinai and then in a gesture of good will towards Kissinger and Israel he said these could also be withdrawn. Moreover he agreed to withdraw all Egyptian artillery from Sinai except for 36 small guns. The SAM's were banned. He pledged that there would be no fedayin raids from Egypt into Israeli occupied territory and that there would never be a blockade of the Straits of Bab el Mandeb and Cargoes for the Israeli port of Eilat were to be allowed through the Suez Canal. Egypt also agreed not to initiate or take part in any propaganda hostile to Israel. Finally Sadat prompted by his concern over renewed fighting conceded two additional US demands secretly:

45. Ibid., p. 109.
46. Hirst, n. 17, p. 183. The day Sinai-I was signed Sadat in the presence of Kissinger dramatically announced that he was taking off his military uniform 'never to wear it again except for ceremonial occasions'. That, he said, was his response to Golda's letter stating her hopes for a permanent settlement. According to R. Israeli, "that too was Sadat", The Man of Defiance, p. 145.
(1) the rebuilding of the devastated cities on the West Bank of Suez Canal to begin immediately; (2) to reopen the Suez Canal. The Israelis especially insisted on the reconstruction of destroyed cities as they would become hostages against a resumption of war. These measures represented added guarantees for the Israelis. To cap it all, Sadat also assured Kissinger that Egypt would resume peacetime activities in the region.

Besides extracting these key concessions from Sadat, US and Israel signed a memorandum of understanding which specified US commitments to Israel. (This was to be repeated after Sinai-Two and Camp David Accords). The US agreed in the memorandum to insist in the UN Security Council should the issue arise, that the withdrawal of the UNEF from the buffer zone required the consent of both parties in view of the 1967 experience. More significantly the US assured Israel that it will make "every effort to be fully responsive on a continuing and long-term basis to Israel's military equipment requirements".47

In the light of his original war aims Sadat got very little out of Sinai-I. Despite the unconditional release of Israeli POW's, Sadat still had major bargaining chips and Egypt's political position was still unassailable. The Arab oil weapon and Arab support were still there and it was affecting the US and West Europe. Besides, Israel's image had suffered due to the military reverses inflicted by Egyptians. In fact, according to Fahmy a further delay in the negotiations would have imposed further strain on Israel as it would have caused grave economic repercussions to keep their troops on West Bank of Canal and also to maintain their military mobilisation. But

Sadat's negotiating strength had been badly affected due to the Israeli crossing and "he entered the negotiations ready to make concessions".48

Looked at it from the military angle Sadat had made undeniably sweeping and unnecessary concessions to the US and Israel. The scale of the military concessions should normally reflect the deployment of the opposing armies. According to Ismail Fahmy "Our concessions would only have been justified if our troops had not been in a position to stand up to Israel. However, in the end the concessions reflected not our military capability but Sadat's aversion to any military confrontation with Israel."49 By agreeing to keep only 30 tanks in Sinai and later saying they also could be withdrawn too, Sadat had astonished not only Kissinger but the Israelis as well. In fact Kissinger had argued all along with the Israelis that Sadat could not possibly settle for less than 250 tanks. Besides, by agreeing to such unbelievable reductions Sadat astonished General Gamassy who could not believe his ears. He said "what a heavy price we paid to get our tanks into Sinai. Thirty tanks was ridiculously low figure, but to reduce that to none ... !"50 Eventhough Sadat

48. Fahmy, n. 19, pp. 70-71; As far as Sadat's performance during the First DRA, Kissinger told the Israelis that Sadat had proved more yielding than his strategic position demanded. The Israelis aware that they could not long maintain the mobilization needed to keep their foothold on the West Bank of Canal and convinced that control of Canal by ensuring Egypt's continuing involvement in wars had been a mistake, would probably have been prepared to accept an agreement more favourable to Egypt and the Arab cause. Ibid, pp. 70-75; Golan, n. 40, pp. 146-54 and 164; Raymond A. Hinnebusch Jr, Egyptian Politics under Sadat: The Post-Populist Development of an authoritarian - Modernizing State (New York: 1985) p. 304.

49. Ibid, p. 79, As a consequence Sadat accepted a virtual return to the pre-war situation.

50. Heikal, n. 47, pp. 70-72. R.Israeli wrote:"He(Sadat) must have felt that it would be more degrading for him to fight for the positioning, with Israeli consent, of a mere thirty tanks in Sinai than to put on a show of largesse by offering to put no tanks there at all. That was Sadat." n.46, p.145.
argued that Sinai-I was a purely military document "which should not be given any other interpretation", but he had not allowed his Minister of War, General Ismail, to come to Aswan because he had not wanted him to be present. 51 Gamassy, who had also been not consulted was very upset, feeling that he and the Egyptian army had been humiliated.

Thus, Sadat had single-handedly given away all that the Egyptian military had achieved with great pains, efforts and sacrifices. Without consulting anybody he had caved in to the US-Israeli pressure. According to Kissinger Sadat was surprised at the attitude of his senior commanders and is reported to have said: "My army! First I had trouble convincing them to go to war. Now I have trouble convincing them to make peace". 52 Soon after Sinai-I, officers of the formerly beleagured Third Army held a public demonstration in Cairo and condemned the agreement. The most outspoken criticism of Sadat was voiced by no less a person than Shazly, but the support of most of the top

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51. Israeli, n. 35, p. 446; Fahmy, n. 19, p. 71, Sadat told Fahmy that he preferred to put the responsibility to Gamassy because he was more professional in his attitude and easier to work with and in fact he was planning to appoint him as war Minister. Not only Sadat had not taken his war minister into confidence but had also ignored his Chief of Staff; see also Shazly, n. 4, p. 195.

52. Fahmy, n. 19, p. 74 and 44; Not only Sadat ignored his military advisers and commanders and negotiated a military agreement himself i.e. a military agreement negotiated by a political man but he refused to listen to his own foreign minister. According to Fahmy: "I had not been involved in the military aspect of the talks but the magnitude of the concessions forced me to intervene once, in an effort to change the location of the Egyptian missile sites, bringing them closer to the Canal. My efforts were unsuccessful because Sadat forcefully instructed me not to insist on this point". Ibid, p. 79; N.A.N. Ibrahim, "Domestic Determinants of Egypt's foreign policy", Ph.D. Emory (Georgia), 1978.
military brass for Sadat neutralized him.53

Besides making unprecedented concessions in the military field to Israel and US, Sadat worked hard to lift the oil embargo. In fact, even before Sinai-I, Sadat had assured Kissinger secretly that he would get the oil embargo lifted during the first half of January 1974. Shazly attributed Sadat's eagerness to the calamity at Suez: "The whole Arab world was now to pay the price for the encirclement of the Third Army".54 Upon Sadat's specific requests OAPEC lifted on March 18, 1974, the oil embargo on US and other countries. The Soviet Union, excluded from peace talks at Sadat's behest, was quite naturally annoyed and retaliated by virtually cutting off arms supplies to Egypt. This Soviet decision in the face of massive supplies of US arms to Israel, greatly reduced the military capability of Egypt and hence Sadat's already

53. Hinnebusch, n. 48, p. 60: R. Michael Burrell and Abbas R. Kelidar, Egypt: The Dilemma of a Nation: 1970-77 (London:1977 p. 25, On leaving London Shazly expressed his gratitude to Moscow in the following terms: "we can never forget the Soviet help to us before during and after the war. Before the October War Moscow armed the area in an unprecedented manner sending tanks to Egypt, Syria, Algeria and Iraq and even Rabat by the thousands rather than the hundreds on each shipment". Shazly went on to declare that Soviet military aid was absolutely indispensable for the Arabs and that it would be a mistake to imagine that the US could be a viable alternative. There is little reason to doubt that Shazly was expressing the sentiments of a considerable number of senior officers in the Egyptian armed forces. Ibid, p. 25. Around this time Sadat declared his new policy over arms supplies called "diversification", but in fact it meant replacing Moscow as the main source of Egyptian armaments by the West and particularly by US. After October war Moscow gave Egypt 250 T-62 tanks and 3 squadrons of MIG-23's. Heikal, n. 47, p. 70.

The Sinai-II Agreement and the Change in balance of Power

After successfully concluding Sinai-I Kissinger prepared the ground for a visit by Nixon to Egypt which took place in June 1974. But soon the US President was forced to resign in August 1974 over the Watergate affair. President Ford who succeeded him retained Kissinger as his Secretary of State and National Security Adviser. In Egypt, after the death of Ismail Ali, Sadat appointed Gamassy, in December 1974, as Minister of War and commander-in-chief. With two major war heroes Ismail and Shazly out of the scene Sadat was now free to decide on military matters. Kissinger resumed his shuttle diplomacy in March 1975 but could make no progress as the Israelis demanded non-belligerency from Egypt. Sadat rejected this demand but offered the less binding concept of "non-recourse to force" to which Israel would withdraw from only half the Sinai Passes. Sadat could not sell this to his army commanders already deeply dissatisfied with the severe military restrictions imposed by Sinai-I.

Since Sadat's power base was the army, he could not risk its disenchantment another time. Thus, Sadat was in a tight

55. Burrell, n. 53, p. 25; Between 1955 and 1975 Egypt bought arms from Moscow to the value of 2200 million roubles whereas between 1975 and 1981 Egypt bought from the West arms to the value of $6,000 million. By switching to US as Egypt's source for arms Sadat ensured that there would never be any alternative to negotiating with Israel. Successive US Presidents have reiterated their undertaking to ensure the protection of Israel ever since its creation which involves guaranteeing Israeli superiority in weapons over all the Arab States. Hence Egypt was not only now committed to indefinite talks with Israel, but to do so from so weak a position that she would always be obliged to settle on any terms Israel was willing to concede. Heikal, n. 47, pp. 70-72.
situation when Kissinger failed in his attempt for Sinai-II because he had no serious war option due to two crucial reasons: i) Arms supplies had been cut by Moscow; ii) Massive US supplies of arms to Israel had altered the regional military balance in favor of Israel. It is interesting to note that at this time one Pentagon official said: "Israel wants one thousand percent security and she is getting it. She can decisively defeat any combination of Arab armies atleast through 1980". 56

Since the October war the US did everything possible to strengthen Israeli war machine. Before the war Israel had heavily depended on her superior airforce; but after its bad experience in the war due to Arab SAM's, the US rectified its shortcomings. Moreover in the field of infantry and artillery the US instilled in them the science of coordinated warfare. General Electric, Rockwell and other US firms transferred to Israel the technology to construct ever more sophisticated electronic weapons. Israel was also developing its own missile, the Jericho with a range of 250 miles. The Pentagon official added: "In quality and even qualitatively in some respects Egypt, Syria and Jordan together cannot match the force of Israel nor shall they for the next decade. Their MIG's cannot compare with the F-15's and F-16's and besides, their pilots lack skill. Their SCUD's? If they fired a dozen at Tel Aviv half might hit Beirut". Kissinger came up with an absurd explanation for US supply of weapons to Israel and the

56. Sheehan, n. 38, p. 172 and 199; In an interview with Time Magazine Sadat clearly revealed his aversion to war. "... But I hope we would not get to that, for I do not prefer war". Sadat also said: "In order to avert a new outburst of unfortunate violence. It is conceivable that any honest man, who is concerned about peace in this sensitive area, should tolerate any kind of stalemate ... for stalemate cannot alleviate tension or encourage the process of peace". Israeli, n. 35, p. 899 and 461; Time, March 25, 1974; D.B. Smith, "The Egyptian Military Elite: An Operational Code", Dissertation, California, 1977.
latter's refusal to withdraw. "I ask Rabin to make concession and he says he can't because Israel is weak. So I give him more arms and he says he doesn't need to make concessions because Israel is strong". 57

Meanwhile King Feisal of Saudi Arabia, Sadat's close ally was assassinated in March 1975. Concerned about his security and the future of his policies Sadat decided to appoint Air Force Commander Hosni Mubarak in April 1975 as his Vice-President. This was seen as an attempt by Sadat to assuage the resentment of the officer corps against his regime. Mubarak was regarded as the major political representative of the armed forces within the government. Thus, through Mubarak Sadat sought to consolidate his support in the professional military and reward the "Heroes of October". 58

Contrary to his own statements and defying all military logic Sadat decided to reopen the Suez Canal on June 5, 1975. By now he came to fear Israeli military capability as a mortal danger to Egypt. He was convinced that only the US could restrain Israel. By now he also came to depend almost exclusively on the US even for the survival of his regime as evidenced by his demand for US battleships during the reopening of Suez Canal. By reopening the Suez Canal, Sadat was offering one more concession to Israel in return for nothing. Perhaps he thought this move would

57. Ibid, p. 199.

convince the US and Israel of his desire for peace. 59

Kissinger tried once again for a second Sinai agreement and finally he succeeded and the agreement was concluded on September 1st 1975. Under the agreement the Israelis agreed to withdraw from the Sinai Passes as well as the Abu Rudeis oil fields. Egypt was allowed to move its forces strictly limited in numbers and fire power to the old buffer zone under Sinai-I. There were to be three electronic listening posts in the new buffer zone one each under the control of US, Egypt and Israel. The Israeli withdrawal was not very deep as they still retained control of nine-tenth of Sinai. Moreover, as some Israeli generals privately conceded the Sinai passes had little strategic value.

In return, Israel got from Sadat non-belligerency pact in all but name. Articles 1 to 6 made explicit references to the renunciation of force and this undoubtedly implied the end of belligerency. From the US the Israelis got massive economic, political and military commitments. Moreover, the US agreed on the following secret commitments: (1) a contingency plan for meeting Israel's military needs in any emergency; (2) preservation of Israel's superiority by furnishing the most advanced and sophisticated weapons, such as F-15 fighters, that its arsenals could offer; (3) to treat with particular gravity threats to Israel's security or sovereignty by a world power; and (4) to consider Sinai-II as valid in its own right, irrespective of 'any act or

59. Fahmy, n. 19, pp. 81-82; At Sadat's request the Americans made themselves responsible for his personal security. Not only was his special bodyguard sent to the US for training, but a new unit was formed specially equipped to deal with international terrorism. Heikal, n. 47, p. 69.
developments' (such as a war) between Israel and any other Arab state.

Egypt was not informed of these extensive commitments by the US to Israel. It was informed only ten minutes before the last formal meeting to finalize Sinai-II. According to Ismail Fahmy:

I was dismayed and immediately had strong second thoughts about the agreement. The new, large scale military assistance would widen even further the gap between the Israeli and Egyptian military capability and enhance dramatically the Israeli position in the future and make them more intransigent. This would make a future comprehensive solution of the Middle East conflict almost impossible unless the Arabs simply surrendered to the Israeli dictates. This was an unnecessarily high price for Egypt to pay for withdrawal east of the Sinai passes. 60

Thus, Sadat had unnecessarily paid a heavy price for minor Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. US political, economic and military commitments to Israel were enormous. The US, of course, assured Sadat that it would make a "serious effort to bring about further negotiations between Syria and Israel" and also that it would honestly strive to ensure Palestinian participation in a peace settlement. This was purely informal and set against the precise written counter commitment to Israel in which the US pledged neither to recognise nor negotiate with the PLO so long as that organization did not recognize Israel's right to exist or accept Security Council Resolution 242 and 338. Thus, the US

commitment to Sadat in this field was not of much value. More significant and damaging to Egypt's place in the Arab world was Sadat's secret promise to Kissinger that if Syria attacked Israel he would keep Egypt out of it. As anticipated, Sinai-II and Sadat were bitterly attacked and Egypt found itself isolated from the Arab world and Moscow. Within two weeks, the New York Times and the Washington Post had leaked the secret agreements. As with Sinai-I, Sinai-II also produced a further increase in military discontent in Egypt and a group of officers was at that time reported to have been arrested for conspiring against the regime.

Thus, by the end of 1976, Sadat had recovered only a part of Sinai with two-thirds still with the Israelis and other Arab lands still under Israeli control. His decision to embrace US mediation had yielded meagre results. Even though the October war and the use of oil as a political weapon had greatly strengthened Egypt's bargaining power; Sadat through his inept diplomacy had lost almost all his trump cards. His undeclared decision that Egypt would fight no more wars had made him agree to really unbelievable concessions in Sinai-I. Moreover, his decision to exclude Moscow from the peace process despite its military support had led to stoppage of arms supply. This in turn enormously weakened Egypt's military capability at a time when Israel was doing everything to enhance her military capability with US help.

62. Burrell, n. 53, p. 26; Some time prior to Sinai-II the military intelligence services arrested more than 100 officers; 43 high ranking officers were cashiered and a large number of airmen were arrested on the pretext that they were hatching a plot. The truth was quite different: Since part of the national trend in the army was dissatisfied with the general lines of Sinai-II, which it had become aware of during Kissinger's March tour, officers asked that no agreement should be signed before it had been shown to the army. The authorities replied with repression. Ghali Shukri, Egypt: Portrait of a President, 1971-1981 (New Delhi: 1981) p. 243.
Sinai-II put further restrictions on Egypt's ability to wage war with Israel. Sadat's inability owing to his fight with Moscow to rebuild Egyptian military capability together with the outcome of Sinai-II gave Egypt little military leverage over Israel. Moreover the lifting of the oil embargo and Egypt's isolation in the Arab world further reduced Egypt's bargaining power. Thus, the position of relative strength which Egypt had enjoyed soon after the war was reduced as time passed to one of abject weakness and desperation.

The Road to Jerusalem

The January 1977 food riots indicated the growing economic problems Egypt was facing. Sadat had to use the military to quell the demonstrations which highlighted his ultimate dependence upon the military for his survival. It was the first time since the overthrow of the monarchy that troops had been used to quell civil disturbances. Full casualty figures were never made public, but the death toll was high. For a few hours the country had seemed to totter on the brink of civil war. The effectiveness with which the military suppressed the riots could not have provided Sadat with much comfort. By now Sadat learnt that the discontent had spread to the military leadership. With the election of Carter as the new US President, Sadat was hoping for a quick resolution of the Arab-Israeli Conflict in 1977 but due to Carter's preference on a GPC which became a non-starter and due to his own aversion towards Moscow, Sadat did not want to go to the war option. Threatening war or a return to the Soviet fold was irrational because of Egypt's military weakness and impossible because of his strained ties with Moscow. Moreover, use of such leverage would be exploited by Israel and its supporters in the
US with the result by June 1977 Sadat was talking publicly about going "to the ends of the earth" to prevent another war. The emergence of a right wing government in Israel in May elections headed by Begin with such hawks as Ezer Weizman, Dayan, Sharon, Shamir further alarmed an already nervous Sadat whose objective now became peace by any means. According to Washington Post, the Israelis were ready to use the overwhelming military superiority which America had conferred upon them. If pushed into a corner, they were ready to fight a war of "annihilation", whether America liked it or not. A Beirut newspaper, neatly caught the Arab and the American-predicament: The Israelis are now hinting to the Americans don't pressure us or we shall blow up everything, oil, the international balance of power, your friends in the Arab world. We are ready to take you on politically by taking on the Arabs militarily. We are ready to change the political and military map and convene the Geneva conference the Israel way. It was around this time that a US Congressional report pointed out that Israel by 1977 had achieved 160 per cent of its pre 1973 war military strength, whereas Egypt's military capability had declined to 90 per cent. Thus, Sadat had to confront a militarily far stronger Israel than it was in 1973. Moreover an additional fear haunted Sadat and that was Israel's presumed nuclear capability which had increased her strength by leaps and bounds. Sadat vigorously denied that Israel's possession of nuclear weapons is a factor in his quest for peace. He said:


64. Hirst, n. 17, p. 281; Begin's reputation was that of a super hawk, a right-wing extremist and Herut was perceived as a party of war.
The reason for my striving for peace has nothing to do with the assumption that Israel may have 10, 20 or more, nuclear bombs. My motives are different. The October war has proved to Israel and to the world that none of the parties could impose its views on the other, this applies to both of us and the Israelis, regardless of nuclear weapons... The alternative then, is a peace effort not fear of nuclear bombs. I believe that the Israelis are capable (to manufacture a bomb) but I do not think that they have it already... No, there is no danger (of a nuclear arms race in the area). 65

Sadat himself admitted that he was in possession of definite information that the Israelis have nuclear weapons. In fact, as early as December 1974, Sadat told Iranian publisher Farhad Massoudi that he believed Israel already has nuclear weapons. The acknowledgement by Sadat of possession by Israel of nuclear weapons was a success to Israel's policy of nuclear deterrence which was to convince Arab people and their governments of the futility of continuing their confrontation with Israel. 66

At home, Sadat's daily intelligence reports indicated that serious discontent existed in the military, his power base. The officer corps' primary concern was the deteriorating condition of its equipment. With the cut off of arms supplies by Moscow, Egypt's military was starved of weapons and vital spare parts. Although injurious to the pride of the officer corps, this adverse change in the military balance (in favor of Israel) also increased its fear that should Sadat's diplomacy flounder and a


return to a policy based on military strength become necessary. Egypt's armed forces would have to bear the major brunt of the blame, as they did in 1967 war, for the probable failure on the battlefield. This sense of acute distress was aggravated by the decline in officers salaries relative to the large fortunes made by the civilians under the infitah policy. Now, the armed forces had been used by Sadat for the first time to control the 1977 food riots and to use their arms against their own people. In order to bolster the support of military, Sadat needed quick progress on the Arab-Israeli front. It became clear to Sadat that only if he achieved progress in arriving at a settlement would he be able to assuage the military's anxiety about the possible need to threaten or use force from a position of clear inferiority. Thus, a quick diplomatic breakthrough towards peace then was essential to assuage the anxiety of the military.

By late 1977, peace talks were stalled and Sadat was becoming desperate and impatient for peace. In fact, Sadat was now falling back on the language of 'no war – no peace' which was tantamount to admitting that the October victory which had been widely proclaimed had been no victory at all. It clearly revealed that it was the language of desperation pure and simple. Egypt and Sadat particularly badly needed peace. To say that Egypt needed peace is not, however, the same as saying that all Egyptians sought peace. Although many – perhaps most – Egyptians would have admitted privately, if not publicly, their opposition to any renewed outbreak of war with Israel there remained the residual doubt, particularly among the military, that no settlement

is possible without military action. The longer peace talks were postponed - as was Sadat's fear under the GPC - the stronger was this view likely to grow and the greater will become the pressures on Sadat to seek new arms supplies. If Sadat were unable to obtain peace then pressure would mount on him for a military option - or he would be forced to stand aside for a leader who will pursue such an alternative policy. A war option needed weapons and Sadat with his strained ties with Moscow was unable to obtain them in quantity needed to fight Israel. Moreover, resort or threat to resort to war would be suicidal in view of the vast military superiority enjoyed by Israel.

It is in this gloomy backdrop that Sadat initiated on September 16, 1977 covert talks with the Israelis in Rabat. Sadat aware of Egypt's military weakness, sought a clandestine way out to resolve the dilemma in which he found himself due to the policies he had pursued since coming to power. So, it was not surprising when Sadat in his address to the People's Assembly on November 9, 1977 revealed his intention to visit Israel in search of peace which clearly showed his fear of Israel and the threat of a pre-emptive war, but Sadat told his people just the contrary:

We do not fear any form of confrontation with Israel because we have given it its true size ... Israel has been restored to its normal size after the glorious October war. We have come to see it as an entity that can be taught to mind its limits and whose aggression can be repelled. However, powerful and influential Israel is and whatever the networks that operate on its behalf and heed its orders on the international arena, we do have elements

of power that exceed by far any forces that Israel can mobilize against us ... (Moreover) we have acquired a knowledge of our opponent and of his methods and are therefore able to defeat him under all circumstances. 69

Even though, Sadat after the October war had in fact several times openly warned that if peaceful efforts to solve the problem failed, "we shall go back once more to military conflict". 70 He also convinced himself that the October war had brought about a radical change of the area's balance of power in favor of the Arabs. But the reality was quite different. Towards the end of 1977 the balance had dramatically shifted in favor of Israel. Sadat's threat of a war option appeared ridiculous now. Thus, this vastly changed military balance propelled him to visit Israel. He went to Jerusalem from a vastly weakened position. Any way, before going to Jerusalem Sadat reassured his army that it would not be called upon to do battle at this stage and that arms would be forthcoming eventually. 71 In his November 9, 1977 speech Sadat spoke of his fearlessness of war with Israel, but just within a week he was telling US congressmen a very different story. He told them that Israel was the real threat to peace" and to the Arab world in its entirety, not just to a Palestine state, but to all Arabs". 72

... thanks to you, your committee (the House Armed Services Committee), you have given Israel the most sophisticated and latest arms and for that I fear, the moment will come when you will find out that they are defying you because they have whatever they ask for and they can start war as your Pentagon report says, and for six months without anything new from you because they have

69. Anwar-el-Sadat, Speeches and Interviews: On the Occasion of his visit to Jerusalem (Cairo: n.d.) p. 44.


71. Sadat's speech to the Naval College, EBIS, 6 May 1977 and his address to the Second Army at Ismailia, 6 June 1977; and his speech at an air base, EBIS, 17 June 1977, cited in Indyk, n. 63, p. 27.

72. Sadat, n. 69; p. 94.
The report also clearly pointed out that the US had replaced all the arms Israel had lost in war besides supplying still more "sophisticated arms to them". This had increased Israel's strength by 160% since the 1973 October war, Syria's by 110%, Whereas Egypt had about 80 to 58 per cent of its 1973 strength. Sadat confessed that due to this decline he was "ready to take the risk and do whatever can be done to reach peace". He further told the US delegation that "the responsibility lies on the shoulders of the American President, Congress and the American people, they must know that they have supplied Israel with everything so that they can threaten America in the matter of peace". Before his visit to Jerusalem he was asked whether he saw the end of the Arab-Israeli war. "That also is one of the motives that pushes me to go and discuss the whole thing with them (Israelis) in a very open and friendly way" he said.

It is in this background that Sadat visited Jerusalem on November 20, 1977 and the next day spoke in the Knesset telling the Israelis about Egypt's desire for peace and urging them to withdraw. In his speech he said: "I have not come here to submit a request that you evacuate your forces from the occupied lands ... nor will we go begging to anyone". At this, Ezer Weizman, the Israeli Defence Minister is reported to have scribbled in a note and passed on to the Prime Minister Begin. "We have to prepare for

73. Ibid., p. 68.
74. Ibid., p. 91.
75. Hirst, n. 17, p. 232.
76. Sadat, n. 69, p. 127.
Begin read it and nodded. The immediate reason which compelled Sadat to visit Israel was the large scale Israeli maneuvers in Sinai. According to Weizman:

In the fall of 1977 war clouds again obscured the blue skies of the Middle East. The Israeli army was conducting a large-scale exercise in the Sinai peninsula. The desert leaped to life as hundreds of tanks thundered across its sandy expanses and planes shattered the silence of the barren wasteland. They also sent the alarm bells ringing in the Egyptian army headquarters. Gamassy and members of his staff were summoned in all urgency (because) the Egyptians viewed our training exercise with suspicion, fearing it was camouflage for a pre-emptive strike ... The situation could have led to war ... 78

Sadat said Gamassy "showed me his intelligence reports which said that we were going to face a sudden attack and he was extremely nervous about it". 79 Asked why he visited Israel despite his previous stand that he would never meet with an Israeli while there was a single Israeli soldier on Egyptian soil. Sadat cited the differences over GPC but more significantly pointed out the threat of war from Israel. He said:

The Israelis started a manoeuvre in Sinai and they declared it ... and to my intelligence the volume of the manoeuvres in Sinai was taken as something extraordinary. Well, if one error happened from any side of us, we would have entered war without wanting it both of us. For these two reasons I went to Israel .... 80

To quote Sadat again: "I say this error (Israeli manoeuvres) could have dragged us into a new war ... For this reason, I went to the


78. Weizman, n. 66, p. 20.

79. Sadat, n. 69, p. 205.

80. Ibid., p. 176.
Knesset, addressed Israeli public opinion through it and placed before them all the facts and dimensions of the problem." 81

Summing up the most prominent trait in Sadat's personality an American had told Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin "The fear of War is in his bones". 82 Given the vastly superior military power of Israel and the fact that the Likud government was headed by hawks and Sadat's own fear of an Israeli attack, coupled with Egypt's limited capability all put together propelled Sadat to visit Israel. Moreover, the mounting economic problems, rising expectations of the people after the October war and the lavish promises made by Sadat that peace with Israel would increase the standard of living also pushed Sadat in visiting Israel. As he told Weizman, "It's time for us to stop killing one another. You have problems we too, have fundamental problems and that's why I decided to come to Jerusalem". 83 Sadat assumed by a masterstroke he would neutralize Israel and create the situation in which the US would have to apply pressure on Begin to withdraw from Arab lands. Despite other factors pushing Sadat on his visit to Israel it was undoubtedly the military factor which was very significant. In this context the following statements confirm the importance of military factor.

During the visit to Jerusalem Dr. Mustafa Khalil, then Secretary General of A.S.U. and one of Sadat's closest confidents told Weizman "what are you sacred of?" and said "you have nothing

81. Ibid., p. 208.


83. Weizman, n. 66, p. 67.
to fear from us. We won't defeat you in war. We have no military solution against you - you have to believe the President acting on that". Khalil and Butros Ghali, Egyptian foreign minister asked Weizmann further "Is it true that you intended to go to war against us a few weeks ago?" Then Khalil said "why are you so anxious about your security? After all, you have the atom bomb". When Weizman asked Sadat what will the agreement be worth if after his (Sadat's) death "your Commander in Chief, moves 3000 Egyptian tanks up to our border"? Sadat replied "It would be an error and political suicide for Egypt..." The Israeli Defence Minister after his talks with Sadat during the latter's visit to Jerusalem assessed:

Sadat must have concluded that he could not defeat Israel on the field of battle - certainly, he could not annihilate us, as he perhaps desired. He may even have feared an Israeli reprisal campaign and would thrust him still deeper into the quicksands.

84. Ibid., pp. 60-61; Khalil is reported to have told Weizman and Prof. Yigael Yadin that "we know that we would not have a chance of winning a war and we also know that you have the atom bomb. Egypt doesn't have a military alternative and we have to seek a different solution". Hirst, n. 17; p. 282.

85. Ibid, p. 69.

86. Ibid, p. 71; Weizman also wrote: I know he hadn't come to Jerusalem for our good looks. First, he'd had to reach a very difficult decision—even more difficult than his decision to go to war in October 1973. At that time, the Arab world was solidly behind him, whereas his current visit to Jerusalem had begun to isolate him. If in spite of all that, he had taken the fateful step - and taken it clearheadedly - it was for the good of his country. The burden of war was unbearably heavy. Egypt's economy was tottering. The high birthrate was dragging it down in internal strangulation. Rebuilding Egypt's economy and salvaging its social structure called for all available resources and all the nations energies to be diverted into those channels. Ibid, pp. 70-71.
Soon after his visit, Sadat acknowledged his success in preventing a war with Israel.

I think the ultimate goal of my visit to Israel has been achieved ... We were about to go to war. The Israelis and we without knowing why did we do this ... I think the ultimate goal of my visit has been achieved. This is bringing down this barrier (of war and fear).\(^8\)

This was confirmed by the Israeli Defence Minister Weizman who was shocked to hear from the Israeli soldiers only two days after Sadat's visit when they asked to know when Israel is handing over Sinai back to Egypt. He wrote:

Should war break out after Sadat's farreaching stride toward an understanding with Israel, it could undermine the motivation of many young Israelis. Whenever they had been called upon to go to war in the past, our men knew they had been summoned because there was no other choice open, because all other options had been exhausted. Now, for the first time, they were liable to ask themselves whether their national leadership had done everything in its power to prevent the war by setting the country on a peaceful course.\(^8\)

Meanwhile in Israel Sadat agreed with Begin that the October war was to be the last war and he told the Egyptians on return that he expects the Israelis to take "hard and drastic decisions" to his peace initiative. But Begin whom Sadat called hawk of hawks was not as generous as Sadat and Israeli concessions did not mate-

\(^8\) Sadat, n. 69; pp. 231-2.

\(^8\) Weizman, n. 66; p. 74; Weizman feared that the dramatic impact of Sadat's visit could lull us all into a state of euphoria that might infect the army. I feared that our troops alertness would be reduced and that they would spend their training exercises in releasing doves of peace instead of firing off artillery shells. The new atmosphere created by Sadat's visit was likely to lead to a slackening off in arms supplies from US as the urgency appeared diminished. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
rialize because Begin was well aware that "weakness, even
desperation" had driven Sadat to Israel for peace. Begin was
inflexible and uncompromising from the very start. Uri Avneri
wrote:

For him (Begin), this visit was a gift from
Heaven. It was handed to him free on a silver
platter. It was Sadat who initiated it and
paid the full price for it, endangering his life
and his regime and gave Israel an invaluable
prize - full recognition of her existence and her
legitimacy. What did Begin pay? Nothing at all,
not even a piastre with a hole in it. 89

Moreover Begin made it clear that Israel does not need Egyptian
recognition. Soon after his return from Israel Sadat loudly pro-
claimed that the "ultimate" goal of his visit had been achieved.
This was very true because he really feared an Israeli military
attack and by visiting "inside the lion's den" he had made war from
Israel impossible because Israel could have no justification to
attack Egypt. Thus, for Sadat this was an immense victory.

The Road to Camp David Accords and Sadat's Capitulation to Israel

At the Ismailia summit, Begin refused to agree to a
declaration of principles involving complete Israeli withdrawal
and instead he offered an autonomy plan for the Palestinians of
"Judea and Samaria" and talked of retaining Israeli settlements and
airfields as parts of Sinai as well. This clearly disappointed an

89. Hirst, n. 17; pp. 291-2; After Sadat's speech to the Israeli
Knesset, Dr. Ghali was guarded about Sadat's repeated decla-
ratation in Jerusalem that there would be "no more war" between
Egypt and Israel. Dr. Ghali explained that "no nation can
possibly give up its military option" and observed that Sadat's
visit had been intended to "show the Israelis that we are
ready to go to the maximum to obtain peace". By the launching
of a war in October 1973 and by his unprecedented gesture of
peace in November 1977; Sadat proved that he could and would
take hard and independent decisions perceived to be in Egypt's
otherwise optimistic Sadat. When Begin failed to make any gesture or concession Sadat returned to his belligerent posture. Sinai-II was due to expire in October 1978 and Sadat said if there was no progress by then, he warned, Egypt would repudiate it. He told troops in the Suez Canal Zone that if Israel persisted in failing to understand the spirit behind his peace initiative, they would be called upon to "complete the battle of liberation". If there was any threat to Egypt's territorial integrity "I shall give you the order as I did in October". Begin promptly retorted that Sadat had broken the "no more wars" pledge which he had made in Jerusalem, a pledge that was "completely unconditional".90

Talks with Israel dragged on and off until September 1978 when Carter invited Sadat and Begin to attend a summit meeting at Camp David.

Sadat was optimistic of the summit and he believed that he could get President Carter to exert full pressure on Israel on Egypt's behalf than he had ever done before. In an interview to Al Ahram Sadat said: "the Camp David would determine the fate of the region for many generations, either by peace or endless struggle". To which Begin angrily replied that anyone who described the Camp David summit as a "fateful one, we will not agree with him ... Our nation has existed for thousands of years before Camp David and it will continue to exist for thousands of years after it". And after all, he believed, America and Egypt had just as much cause for concern as Israel did. "What is Sadat's alternative-war? Will he drop the Americans and return to the

Soviets? Who will save him - Assad, Brezhnev, Gaddafi?91 At the Camp David, Sadat signed two agreements - A framework for peace in Middle East and framework for the conclusion of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Under this Egypt and Israel were to conclude a peace treaty within three months but due to several differences talks dragged on until March 1979 when both signed a peace treaty.

A scrutiny of the military balance between Egypt and Israel at the time when Sadat signed the treaty with Israel in 1979 would give a clear picture on the outcome of the treaty. Undoubtedly Israel dramatically increased its military power between 1973 and 1979. According to the Israeli source itself to quote the Tel Aviv Centre for Strategic Studies Report of 1980, the main features of Israeli military build up before and just after Camp David (1973-80) were: i) A significant increase in ground forces order of battle by the addition of three armoured mechanized divisions; ii) a marked quantitative and qualitative increase in combat material, tanks (mostly of high quality), APC's and artillery - to complement the increased order of battle, an increase of 1,300 tanks and 600 artillery pieces (including mortars); iii) The establishment of anti-tank missile network force of various models. The number of anti-tank missile launchers increased (dramatically) from 50 in 1973 to approximately 500 in 1980; iv) Improvement in air defence by the addition of five SAM batteries - Hawk and improved Hawk varieties and v) Continuation of the build up in air power - with F-15's. This was in short the Israeli military

91. Ibid, pp. 303-4; According to Ezer Weizman, the Egyptian Airforce was suffering from a severe shortage of spare parts. In his view, Sadat's haste in offering peace was reinforced by sound military reasons, having cut himself off from his previous suppliers - the Soviets, he was eager to milk the American cow. Weizman, n. 66, pp. 152-3.
build up. On the other hand, the same Israeli study says the Egyptian "build up" during 1973-80 was "a modest increase in the ground forces order of battle ... an increase in the number of anti-tank missile launchers ... (and) a reduction of air force strength".92

But a more impartial assessment was presented by John Keegan in World Armies in 1979 concerning Egypt. He noted that from 1973 to 1979 Egypt had not even replaced the tanks lost in the October war. In fact, he wrote: "scarcely anything new had been bought for the army since 1973 except anti-tank guided weapons". More dangerously the Egyptian Air Force had severely reduced the numbers of its operational (battle ready) aircraft as well as the average monthly flying hours of its pilots. The military balance is evident from the figures of arms imports by both the countries during this period, especially 1974-79. Egypt, whose arms imports was more than double of Israel prior to October war, suddenly decreased the level in 1974. From 1974 to 1979 Egypt imported only 1.73 million US dollars in arms, less than one third the amount of Israeli arms imports in the same period - 5.2 billion US dollars.

It is obvious from table I that as far as Israel was concerned: its arms bill went up dramatically while Egypt's plummeted significantly. Between 1974-79 Israel bought arms worth $7.400 billion compared to Egypt's meagre $1730 ml. It must be pointed out that most of the arms which Egypt bought since the October war from western countries were quite expensive

Table I

Arms Imports by Egypt and Israel (in current Millions of US Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Israel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total 1970-73</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,020</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total 1974-79</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,200</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total 1974-79</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,140</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1973 Oct-Nov. emergency aid sent during and soon after October war not included in the Table.

compared to the Israelis who obtained arms from US at concessional prices. Similar conclusions can be deduced from overall size and equipment of armed forces of Egypt and Israel between 1973-79.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Egypt</strong></th>
<th><strong>Israel</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Army manpower increased by 4.6 per cent from 260,000 to 272,000.</td>
<td>1) Army manpower increased from 275,000 to 375,000 an increase by 36.3 per cent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Egypt's operational aircraft dropped from 768 to 563.</td>
<td>2) Israel's Combat aircraft increased from 488 to 720.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Egypt's medium tank strength dropped from 1880 to 1680.</td>
<td>3) Israel increased its tank strength from 1,700 to 3000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Egypt increased its APC's from 2076 to 3080.</td>
<td>4) Israel more than doubled its APC's strength from 3050 to 8000.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, when Sadat made the long trip to Camp David he had lost all bargaining power - due to his unilateral ceasefire during October war, K.M. 101 talks, the Sinai-I, the premature lifting of oil embargo, the unscheduled re-opening of Suez Canal, Sinai-II, strained ties with Moscow and its arms embargo and his isolation in the Arab world due to his visit to Jerusalem. He went to Camp David with his hat in his hands and militarily almost naked. If one lends any credence to the old saying that you simply cannot negotiate from a position of weakness, then Sadat should not have signed the Camp David accords and treaty. A senior defence analyst of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff estimated that in 1978-79 Egypt had *"almost nothing".* More significantly in the

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words of Ezer Weizman, the Israeli army, when he took over as Defence Minister in June 1977

was large strong, well equipped and better prepared than at anytime in the past. The senior command now consisted largely of officers. Above all, I was surprised by the size of our forces ... we now owned APC's by the thousands. The numbers of tanks and planes were astounding. If anyone had told me during the time when I commanded the airforce (1967-69) that we would one day have the kind of planes I now found, I would only have laughed in bemusement. And I was considered overly optimistic about the airforce in those days! But the present reality far exceeded any fantasy I could have had. However, the navy proved to be an even greater surprise.

I hoped the Egyptians would never gain encounter our forces on the field of battle ... when fully mobilized, our army is enormous, it has more tanks than Britain and France combined. Beyond being one of the best in the world, our airforce is also one of the largest, exceeded in size only by the air fleets of the two superpowers. And our navy, too, could now compete with anyone's.94

Thus, Sadat found out at Camp David just how much his new diplomatic currency could purchase and in the absence of a credible military threat, it was far less than he had ever hoped. Carter was unwillingly to put any pressure on Israel. Begin flatly refused to link the peace treaty with Egypt to the "autonomy on the West Bank and Gaza". The question of Golan Heights and Jerusalem was not even mentioned. Moreover Israel insisted that a bilateral peace treaty with Egypt that did not take precedence over Egypt's Arab obligations was not acceptable. The remaining part of Sinai was to be returned to Egypt in stages involving three years with security arrangements there prohibiting heavy weapons and making it conditional on an international peace keeping force, not the UNEF, in Sinai, making it a DMZ and

diluting Egyptian sovereignty considerably. The treaty removed Egypt from the Arab-Israeli military power equation.95

The major military drawbacks of the treaty can be summarized as follows: Firstly, all provisions concerning the creation of demilitarized zones (DMZ's) and the thinning of forces in the area between the two countries were implemented almost exclusively on Egyptian soil. Thus, the Sinai was divided into 3 zones. Egypt was not allowed to station any military force in the eastern zone, alongside the border with Israel. It could have only up to 4000 men and strictly limited amounts and types of weapons in the middle zone. The deployment of the Egyptian army was even limited in the zone closest to the Suez Canal. Nowhere in Sinai was Egypt free to exercise its full sovereignty. Some token limitations were also imposed on the stationing of Israeli troops on the Israeli side of the border. But only in an area a few Kms wide, as contrasted to the entire depth of Sinai. In this paltry strip Israel was entitled to station as many troops as Egypt could have in the entire middle zone of Sinai. In effect the treaty surrendered Sinai's vital strategic value to Egypt and the first line of defence for Egypt has been transferred from the border to the Suez Canal. Secondly, the peace treaty established that MNF will patrol the DMZ between Israel and Egypt. These troops are stationed at Rafah and Sharm el Sheikh, on the Egyptian side of the border and in the zone where Egypt itself can keep no troops. No MNF are stationed on Israeli soil. More importantly there was no justification for the presence of MNF between two countries which are at peace, have diplomatic relations, have normalized their relations in all other spheres. A final, very serious

95 Hinnebusch, n. 48, pp.67-8.
problem stemmed from the fact that the MNF was and will be predominantly American. Since the US is so closely aligned with Israel there is no way for Egypt to ask the US troops to leave because Egypt depends on the US for military and economic aid. Yet the presence of American forces on Egyptian soil does nothing to further Egypt's interests or to provide it with real security. Thirdly, Annex 3, article 5 specifies that Egypt and Israel should cooperate closely to maintain peace and security in the area. Such cooperation must be directed against the other Arab countries. It's ludicrous that Israel which occupies much Arab territory and shows no inclination to give it up, could contribute to security in the area. There are other even more disturbing implications of this Annex. Egypt and Israel agreed not only to reopen road and rail links between them but also to construct a new road through Sinai linking Jordan, Israel and Egypt near Elat. This road is irrelevant to peace between them and such a provision is totally out of place in the treaty. This clause came to be included at the request of the US not the Israelis. Once again Sadat had agreed to do his American friends a favour without actually thinking of the implications. The road is intended for future use by the US RDF. Lastly, an important concession is contained in the various clauses of Article six, the most important of which reads as follows: "The parties undertake to fulfill in good faith their obligations under this treaty, without regard to action or inaction of any other party and independently of any other instrument external to this treaty". The Parties undertake not to enter into any obligations in conflict with this treaty and "Subject to Article 103 of the UN
charter in the event of a Conflict ... The obligations of the Parties under the present treaty will be binding and implemented". This gave the Israelis the perfect device to isolate Egypt from the rest of the Arab world. Israel could now claim that all agreements between Egypt and any Arab country were in conflict with the provisions of the peace treaty and thus void. The Arab Collective Security Pact that Egypt signed 40 years ago was therefore no longer binding on Egypt, yet this pact is the cornerstone of Arab defence policy. The geopolitics of the region make it imperative for the Arab countries to coordinate their policies, to defend themselves against incursions into the area. By persuading Sadat to sign clauses amounting to a repudiation of Arab solidarity, the Israelis had obtained more than just Egypt's isolation. Because Egypt is key Arab country in the area these clauses struck a savage blow at the entire Arab world.96

At the Camp David itself the US and Israel signed the Memorandum of Agreement which among other things stated:

The US will provide support it deems appropriate for proper actions taken by Israel in response to such demonstrated violations of the Treaty of Peace. In particular, if a violation of the Treaty of Peace is deemed to threaten the security of Israel including, inter alia, a blockage of Israel's use of international waterways, a violation of the provision of the Treaty of Peace concerning limitation of forces or an armed attack against Israel, the US will be prepared to consider, on an urgent basis, such measures as the strengthening of the US presence in the area, the providing of emergency supplies to Israel and the exercise of maritime rights in order to put an end to the violation.

In this agreement the US accepts the view that violations of the treaty could only originate from Egypt. The US guarantees

96. Fahmy, n. 19, pp. 293-5.
to Israel mean that Washington may not remain neutral in any conflict between Israel and the Arab countries. More interestingly until the last moment Egypt was not informed that the US and Israel were preparing to sign this Memorandum of Agreement. 97

But for Sadat the signing of the Memorandum between US and Israel was nothing new as similar secret memoranda had been signed after Sinai-I and II to which he had hardly protested. In fact, in his speeches Sadat pointed out on numerous occasions that he would not oppose if Israel signed a pact with the US. As he put it:

... Let us put whatever guarantees Israel wants, either from the US and the Soviet Union from the Five big powers - we have no objection to this at all ... Whatever they feel even I have gone to the extent that, if Israel chooses to have a pact with the US, we shall not oppose it. 98.

In sum, one of the main reason which led to the July 1952 revolution was Egypt's defeat in the 1948 war. Israel through its Gaza raid backed by western support pushed Nasser to approach Moscow for arms. Nasser's assertion of the Palestinian rights, defiance of West on many issues, coupled with his military intervention in Yemen led the US to build Israel as a counter-force to Egypt. Israel's victory over Egypt in the 1967 war greatly enhanced its strategic importance. A defeated Nasser, however, soon rebuilt his military machine with Soviet help. Despite Egypt's acceptance of UN Resolution 242 Israel

98. Sadat, n. 69, p. 60.
clung to the occupied lands. Nasser then launched a war of attrition. In retaliation, Israel wrecked havoc on Egypt. An exasperated Nasser accepted the Rogers Plan and US mediation in the conflict.

In sharp contrast to Nasser, Sadat was willing to sign a peace agreement with Israel. But Israel, intoxicated with its military superiority, rejected all peace initiatives. Sadat switched over to a military solution of the problem. The result was the October 1973 war. The Egyptians not only crossed the Suez Canal but occupied part of Sinai. The Israelis were unsuccessful in their attempts to repulse the Egyptians. It was only the US decision to send massive quantities of arms to Israel and the latter's crossing of the Suez Canal which changed the scenario. Sadat's decision to attack the Sinai Passes in order to counter the pressure on the west bank of canal and on Syria led to the weakening of its military position. Thus the rapidly expanding Israeli presence on the west bank of canal led to deterioration in Egypt's military position on ground. Egypt's inability to contain the Israeli presence and the threat of losing whatever Egypt had gained pushed Sadat to accept the ceasefire. Sadat's immediate task after the war was to secure the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from across the Canal and to rescue the trapped Egyptian army in Sinai. He concluded that under the circumstances only the US could rescue his position. Around this time he also concluded that the October war would be the last war for Egypt. Soon Egypt concluded Sinai-I under US auspices through which Israel withdrew from across the Canal and parts of Sinai. While the war had shaken Israel's military superiority, Sadat weakened his military position by making substantial concessions to Israel on
several issues. Normally the scale of concessions should reflect the deployment of the opposing armies but Sadat's concessions were primarily due to his aversion to any further military confrontation with Israel. Without consulting the military, Sadat gave away whatever was achieved in the war. Sadat further weakened his military capacity by excluding Moscow from peace talks. The Soviets cut off arms supplies to Egypt. In the face of massive US arms supplies to Israel, Egypt's military strength as well as its bargaining capacity were undercut. Under Sinai-II, Sadat got some more territory in Sinai from Israel but only after making a non-belligerency pact. Sadat again paid a heavy price for another minor Israeli withdrawal. Both the agreements produced discontent in the Egyptian military. Thus, the position of relative strength which Egypt had enjoyed soon after the war was reduced, as time passed, to one of abject weakness and desperation.

By late 1977, Sadat had to confront a militarily stronger Israel than it was in 1973 as the balance of power had shifted in favor of Israel. Sadat's additional fear was Israel's presumed nuclear capability. The 1977 food riots, and the use of the military to suppress them, made Sadat look desperately for peace. Against this backdrop, Sadat visited Israel in November 1977. Without anything in return, he told Begin that the October War was to be the last war between Egypt and Israel. For Begin it was clear that Sadat was seeking peace from a position of weakness. Israel could extract several concessions; and this it did at the Camp David peace talks under American auspices.