

“Crisis of Credibility”

U.S.-Egyptian Relations, 1981-1983

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Master's thesis in History
Institute of Archaeology, Conservation and History
Faculty of Humanities

Spring 2020

UiO • University of Oslo

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2020

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Cover photo: President Reagan having a breakfast meeting with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat with George Bush, Alexander Haig, Richard Allen, Kamal Hasan, Ali Mansur Muhammad Hasan and Osama el Baz in the President's Dining room. 08/06/1981. Courtesy of Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum.

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Abstract

When Ronald Reagan entered the Oval Office in January 1981, the United States' position in the Middle East had been on quite the rollercoaster. In just a few years, the U.S. had lost its ally in Iran, the Shah, and the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan. In addition, Iran and Iraq were at war, and tensions were building in Lebanon. Reagan's predecessor, Jimmy Carter, had been a central architect of the Camp David Accords. The peace treaty between Egypt and Israel was signed in March 1979 and marked a new phase in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As the Cold War became a race for allies in the Middle East, Egypt's turn from East to West, and the peace treaty with Israel, solidified the U.S.-Egyptian relationship. Egypt had become a strategic fixture in U.S. foreign policy.

This thesis depicts the U.S.-Egyptian relationship during the first three years of Ronald Reagan's first presidential term. The primary task of this thesis has been to study how the relationship evolved and what influenced the Reagan administration's policies towards Egypt. The two new partners had enjoyed a honeymoon phase between 1974-1979. What informed the new post-Camp David chapter between the two countries that would allow the relationship to endure to this day.

Acknowledgements

When I started this project in the fall 2018, I had no idea where it would lead or if it would amount to anything. This thesis would not exist as it does today without the vast amounts of support, guidance, and help that I have received over the past two years.

First and foremost, a heartfelt thank you to my thesis-adviser, Hilde Henriksen Waage. Her patience, support, and help with my all-over-the-place drafts, questions, and doubts have been invaluable over the past two years. I also must mention her seminars and the students that participated. Hilde's seminars provided a sense of community where everyone helped each other to reach their goal. Recognition also has to go to my fellow students on the third floor in Niels Treschows house here at Blindern, who have been struggling along-side me. Thank you for all the heated discussions, coffee breaks, support, and friendship.

Thank you to Magnus Seland Andersson and Taymour Bouran, who both took time out of their work and studies to provide help, suggestions and proofreading my drafts and chapters.

Since this project involved an archive trip all the way to Simi Valley, California, I have to thank Ruthie and Jay, and their dogs Truman and Reagan, for their hospitality. For guiding me through the bureaucracy of the Reagan administration, thank you to Ray Wilson and all the lovely people at the Reagan Presidential Library for all their help.

A huge thank you to my family for all the support and uplifting words of confidence. I also must thank Kamilla, Karoline and, Bjørn-Olav for always cheering me on.

Lastly, this final stint towards the finish line, unexpectedly, became particularly challenging and different. Being cut off from the University, from the sources and literature, and fellow students have been a heavy burden, personally and academically. However, the support never wavered, so an extra thank you to everyone.

Marie Konst

Oslo, May 2020

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Chapter One

Introduction

On 6 October 1981, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was assassinated. The event marked the loss of an essential character in both the U.S.-Egyptian relationship and the Arab-Israeli peace process. Sadat had in 1973 taken Egypt from being an ally of the Soviet Union and turned to the United States. Sadat was remarkably successful in his quest for a close partnership with the U.S., and the relationship grew in strength over the 1970s. The foundation of the relationship was Sadat's personal traits and policies, the Soviets losing its foothold in Egypt, and the possibility of "neutralizing" Egypt in the conflict between Arab countries and Israel.¹

When Ronald Reagan was elected President in 1980, tensions were running high in the Middle East. President Reagan and his administration had to navigate the consequences of the 1979 Camp David Accords and the subsequent 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty. Such as the obligations the United States had to fulfill, the isolation of Egypt in the Arab world, and the increased skepticism towards the U.S. among Arab countries. In addition, there was Israeli aggression towards Iraq and Lebanon among the complexities of the Arab-Israeli conflict. All these factors impacted the U.S.' relationship with Egypt. However, Sadat's assassination in October 1981, meant that the Reagan administration again had to balance the fragile standards for peace set by Egypt and Israel.

The Middle East had since 1945, been characterized by the Arab-Israeli conflict, several wars, demands of independence from colonial powers and the superpower rivalry. Against this backdrop, Egypt had gone from being a leader of the Arab world to a cast-away, and from a Soviet ally to a friend to the United States. How did the relationship between Egypt and the

¹ Quandt, William B. "American-Egyptian relations". *American-Arab Affairs* Vol. 22 (1987): 1-10. 2-3.

U.S. evolve during the years 1981-1983? Why did the Reagan administration lead the foreign policy it did towards Egypt, and what influenced the policymaking?

The scope of this project is limited to the period 1981-1983, focusing on the Reagan administration's foreign policy towards Egypt and how it was developed. The U.S.-Egypt relationship was first and foremost influenced by the Camp David Accords signed in 1978, in addition to the decades previous of wars and unrest in the Middle East, especially between Egypt and Israel. Because of the significant relationship between the United States and Israel, and Israel and Egypt's long history of hostilities turning to peace negotiation, the U.S.-Egyptian relationship cannot be examined in isolation. The relationship between the United States and Egypt must be examined as two-thirds of a triangle consisting of the US, Egypt, and Israel.² The three countries were intimately connected because of the United States' mediation role in the peace treaty between the two longtime enemies. Although the relations-triangle is an important factor for the thesis, the main focus is Egypt.

Previous research on U.S. foreign policy in general, as well as its foreign policy in the Middle East, is vast. However, research dealing with the Reagan administration and its Middle East policies towards specific countries is lacking. New perspectives regarding the Reagan administration are being uncovered as the archives are being opened, and documents are declassified. Another factor for the lack of research on some specific countries' relations to the Reagan administration can be that relations with individual countries remained in the shadow of the Cold War, the Iranian revolution, the Lebanon crisis, and domestic politics. In the case of Egypt, there is newer research on the relations between the U.S. and Egypt, but it is mostly limited to the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The research focuses on the Suez-crisis in 1956, the war in 1967, and the Camp David negotiations that took place in 1978.³ This research project will highlight an aspect of the U.S. foreign policy and the Reagan presidency that has not yet been fully explored. This project examines the U.S.-Egyptian relationship after Camp David, with Egypt realigned with the United States and its "cold peace" with Israel, utilizing previous research and archive material from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

² Quandt, William B. *The United States and Egypt: An Essay for Policy in the 1990s*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1990. 5

³ Examples: *Crisis and Crossfire: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* by Peter L. Hahn, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* by Douglas Little.

American Interests in the Middle East Since 1945

The Second World War profoundly changed the power structures of the world; the great European imperial powers: the United Kingdom and France, saw a considerable loss of power and influence around the world, including in the Middle East. Into the vacuum left by the Europeans after 1945, on the other hand, U.S. interests in the Middle East, including financial, diplomatic, and militarily, expanded considerably.⁴

Although every U.S. presidential administration has had different policies for the Middle East, three recurring themes guide U.S. national interests. First and foremost, the Cold War and the superpower rivalry influenced many aspects of U.S. foreign policy. The Cold War, for the U.S., translated to “*containment of Soviet influence*” as a national interest. That meant containment of influence in the Middle East, which affected the management of the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁵ The second aspect was oil. This national interest has been an obvious link between the United States and the Middle East as a whole, with the U.S. being a large importer of oil. Several countries in the Middle East control vast amounts of the known oil reserves in the world. Therefore, the stability of the Middle East is directly connected to U.S. national interests. Third, the support of, and commitment to Israel’s security. Israel’s position as a United States partner, and an official ally since 1967, was an accepted truth throughout the different administrations. These national interests: Israel, oil, and the Cold War, remained central throughout the post-1945 period, although they did not always align. Each administration had its view on Middle East policy, which aspect was most important, and how to balance the different aspects. Different administrations also had to figure out how to direct its policy when two of these core interests were at odds with one another.⁶

The Makings of American Foreign Policy: Theory and Organization

Professor and former staff member of the National Security Council, William Quandt, presents three possible models for policymaking: the “strategic model,” the “bureaucratic politics model,” and lastly, the “domestic politics model.”⁷ The first, the “strategic model,” lays down the foundation of decisionmakers as rational and strategic. This model implies that

⁴ Elgindy, Khaled. *Blind Spot: America and the Palestinians, From Balfour to Trump*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019. 40.

⁵ Quandt, William B. *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005. 11.

⁶ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 14.

⁷ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 7.

the personal traits of key officials in an administration does not matter. The continuity of American policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict would speak for such a model. Nonetheless, empirical research shows that policymaking seldom relies on rationale as the only factor. A complete disregard of the people behind the policy would not explain how policy is developed.⁸ Quandt moves on to the “bureaucratic politics model,” which lends itself more to the realities of day-to-day decision making: competition between departments, the difficulties of changing organizational procedures, and the difficulties of acquiring trustworthy information. This model highlights the unpredictable nature of policymaking and acquires analysis at the microlevel.⁹ The third model, the “domestic politics” model, highlights the role of Congress, lobby groups, and the presidential election cycle.¹⁰ Of the three models Quandt presents, the bureaucratic politics model is the one that is most relevant for this project. It opens up for analysis at the microlevel that can be analyzed in the documentary record, including outside events in other parts of the world, and decisions made by other governments that also affect U.S. foreign policy. A sitting administration would, on a regular basis, seek to influence and shape the chain of events. Although internal factors are important, they do not always count as an explanation for actions made by an administration.¹¹ The President and the chief foreign policy advisers are often guided by what they deem most important at a given time.¹²

The United States’ foreign policy is first and foremost in the hands of the President. The President has the power to choose who he wants as part of the foreign policy structure and if he wants to take an active part in the policymaking. The President usually takes office with some already-formed goals and priorities and chooses a suitable style for policymaking. The leadership style and fundamental views of the President are the foundation for an administration’s foreign policy.¹³ As part of developing foreign policy and decision making, the State Department, Department of Defense, intelligence agencies like the CIA, and Congress all have their part to play. Nevertheless, in dealing with conflicts and crises, foreign policy decisions are usually made within a small group of advisers. Historically, the two

⁸ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 7.

⁹ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 7.

¹⁰ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 8.

¹¹ Spiegel, Steven L. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America’s Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985. 10.

¹² Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 10.

¹³ Mulcahy, Kevin V. “The Secretary of State and The National Security Adviser: Foreign Policymaking in the Carter and Reagan Administrations”. *Presidential Studies Quarterly* Vol.16 No.2 (1986): 280-299. Accessed: 29 November 2019. URL: www.jstor.org/stable/40574650. 281-284.; Siniver, Asaf, *Nixon, Kissinger, and U.S. Foreign Policy Making: The Machinery of Crisis*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 22-23.

positions closest to the President on foreign policy matters are the Secretary of State, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, otherwise known as the National Security Adviser. These two positions have also been the cause of fierce competition in the process of foreign policymaking: “Competition between the nation’s diplomatic chief and the president’s chief White House adviser for national security affairs had become edemic[sic] to the process of foreign policymaking.”¹⁴ Such competition could spill over into the structure of the core group of advisers, causing further conflict and resulting in an incoherent foreign policy. This kind of competition has been a known characteristic of American policymaking for many years.¹⁵

An overall theme within an administration and among the departments, and agencies that can influence foreign policy, is the divide between global, regional, and local aspects. The President will begin his presidential term with some broad assumptions, such as containing Soviet influence. For instance, President Reagan’s was to defeat the Soviet Union as it was considered “evil.” Other policies would be subordinate to that assumption. In contrast to the Nixon and Carter administrations where coexistence and communication were more of a primary aim.¹⁶ In addition to the global objective, there would be goals on a regional scale focused more on the political, cultural, and economic structures of the region in question. The regional approach was more common amongst analysts, for example, within the Near East and South Asian Directorate. Lastly, there would be decision-making on specific areas with conflict.¹⁷ Within the global and regional, there was also a rift between direct and indirect policies, as exemplified with the Reagan administration and Iran. One camp within the administration believed the U.S. should deal with Iran head on and bring the new regime down. The other camp championed for an indirect form of action in building up “moderates” with whom they believed had shared interests with Washington.¹⁸

A central part of the foreign policy structure is the National Security Council (NSC), which is the President’s chief forum for national security and foreign policy matters. The NSC consists of: the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chairman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of National

¹⁴ Mulcahy, “The Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser”, 280-281.

¹⁵ Siniver, *Nixon, Kissinger, and U.S. Foreign Policy Making*, 33-34.

¹⁶ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 399-400; Quandt, *Peace Process*, 60-66, 187-188.

¹⁷ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 3-5.

¹⁸ Hooglund, Eric. “Reagan’s Iran: Factions behind US Policy in the Gulf”. *Middle East Report* No.151 (1988): 28-31. Accessed: 21 May 2020. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3012152>, 30.

Intelligence, and the National Security Adviser. Secretaries and Under Secretaries of other executive departments, agencies, and military departments can be invited as appropriate.¹⁹

The National Security Council was established by President Harry S. Truman with the National Security Act of 1947. Truman had insisted that the NSC be limited to advisory purposes and not take part in decision making. Its primary scope was to coordinate foreign and security policies.²⁰ From there on out, the NSC evolved and changed from President to President. President Dwight D. Eisenhower upgraded the status of the NSC and created the position that became known as the National Security Adviser. Under Eisenhower, the NSC grew to become an institution in its own right with an increasing number of staff members.²¹ Under Kennedy, the scope of the NSC changed to make the institution more prominent and operational in foreign policy matters rather than being strictly for planning and advice.²²

The growing importance and power of the NSC and the National Security Adviser often created tension with the State Department and the Secretary of State: who had the primary responsibility for foreign policy? The conflict between the NSC and the State Department plagued several administrations and affected foreign policy. For instance, Henry A. Kissinger, National Security Adviser in the Nixon administration, had a close working relationship with President Nixon. Consequently, the State Department led by Secretary of State William P. Rogers was deliberately kept separate from the White House.²³ That structure resulted in friction over who had authority over which area of policy, a lack of cooperation between the White House and State Department, and several half-hearted policies and initiatives.²⁴ That type of conflict and tension was also evident during the Carter administration between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski.

The Reagan Administration and the Middle East

Ronald Reagan came to power with limited foreign policy experience but with a very specific world view and set of notions. First and foremost, the global “good vs. evil” divide with his resolute anticommunism, and view that the Soviet Union was evil and the root of all of the

¹⁹ White House, “National Security Council”. Accessed: 24 March 2020, URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/>

²⁰ Daalder, Ivo H. and I.M. Destler. *In the Shadow of the Oval Office: Profiles of the National Security Advisers and the Presidents they served, from JFK to George W. Bush*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009. 3-5.

²¹ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 5-6.

²² Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 5-6.

²³ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 57.

²⁴ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 85.

United States' problems. The other was to break from the "principles of the Carter era," which applied particularly to the Middle East.²⁵ However, Reagan did not dive into the details of current issues and remained passive throughout policy development with the exception of when either a crisis or another crucial instance that required the President to choose between two opposing policies amongst his advisers. Reagan relied heavily on his advisers and he preferred it when his aides would agree amongst themselves.²⁶ That proved to be a rare occurrence as the Reagan administration would also be plagued with conflict. Reagan's passivity towards certain issues within foreign policy opened for his aides and cabinet members to take control over the foreign policymaking. The Reagan administration's first Secretary of State, Alexander Haig quickly attempted to assume the role but was checked by President Reagan's White House staff, Secretary of Defense Weinberger, and Reagan's second National Security Adviser, William Clark.²⁷

For the position of Secretary of State, President Reagan chose Alexander M. Haig Jr. Haig had been an Army General and served as National Security Adviser Kissinger's deputy before he became Chief of Staff during the Nixon administration. He was experienced in both White House politics and foreign policy, and after being appointed as President Reagan's Secretary of State, he quickly tried to assert himself as the chief foreign policymaker.²⁸ However, conflict between Haig, other advisers, and White House aides came to characterize his short time as Secretary of State. Early on, Ronald Reagan publicized his intention to have his Secretary of State as his chief foreign policy adviser, resulting in a break with a long tradition of a strong National Security Adviser. This was an effort to break from the conflict between the Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser that had plagued the Carter administration.²⁹

Haig shared Reagan's views on the Soviet Union and communism, in addition to also being highly pro-Israel. Early on, Secretary Haig had a clear idea of what should be the focus of the administration's Middle East policy and launched his idea of a "strategic consensus."³⁰ The primary aim was to stop Soviet influence. Although the plan was never properly explained, it

²⁵ Speigel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 399-400.

²⁶ Speigel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 401-402.

²⁷ Speigel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 401-402.

²⁸ Mulcahy, "The Secretary of State and The National Security Adviser: Foreign Policymaking in the Carter and Reagan Administrations", 286-288.

²⁹ Mulcahy, "The Secretary of State and The National Security Adviser: Foreign Policymaking in the Carter and Reagan Administrations", 286-291.

³⁰ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 248-249

was taken to mean that the United States should steer the focus of pro-Western regimes towards the threat of Soviet influence while putting local conflicts “on hold.”³¹ To reach its goal of limiting the Soviet Union’s influence in the Middle East, the administration would also work to encourage Arab countries to join the American side in the Cold War. On the other hand, due to the shift in focus to a more global perspective, the administration also retreated from the importance of the Camp David Accords that had characterized the Carter years.³² Nevertheless, the administration did not translate these ideas into clear tactics, which meant that it was more sensitive to events and decisions that took place in the Middle East.³³

Despite these shared ideas between Haig and the President, and the weak position of the National Security Adviser, Haig’s time at the State Department was turbulent. In particular, on Middle East issues. Haig and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger had significant differences, such as that Weinberger was more willing to provide support for Arab countries rather than Israel, which dominated policymaking early on.³⁴ Throughout the first Reagan period there were several instances where this approach was evident, and the mismatch between the ideology of the administration and the vague policies led to poor guidance of the broader American foreign policy and diplomatic structures. Tensions between Haig and others in the administration continued and after a year and a half as Secretary of State, President Reagan accepted his resignation in June 1982.³⁵ Haig was succeeded by George Shultz, who held the position throughout Reagan’s two presidential terms.

Secretary of Defense, Caspar “Cap” Weinberger, a former Army captain who served in both the Nixon and Ford administrations before becoming Secretary of Defense under Reagan. Weinberger had known Ronald Reagan since he ran for governor in California in 1967.³⁶ Weinberger was not as pro-Israel as the President and Secretary Haig and argued for the United States to build closer relations with Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia. The Defense Department had since the fall of the Shah in Iran in 1979 given more attention to the Middle East, and favored, as Secretary Weinberger, the importance of U.S. friendly Arab states.³⁷ The difference in opinion on the Middle East and Weinberger’s personal relationship with the

³¹ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 248.

³² Anziska, Seth. *Preventing Palestine: A Political History From Camp David to Oslo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. 166-167.

³³ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 399.

³⁴ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 403.

³⁵ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 416.

³⁶ Daalder & Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 131.

³⁷ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 5.

President resulted in conflict and policy stalemates with Secretary Haig, and even more so with Haig's successor, George Shultz.³⁸ Weinberger and Shultz disagreed on a number of issues, and had considerable conflict in the five years they overlapped in the Reagan administration. The conflicts were often public, evident by the numerous news articles about the battles of foreign policy.³⁹

The trio of White House aides with equal rank in the administration, known as the "troika", effectively ran the White House the first years of the Reagan administration. The troika consisted of Edward Meese III as Counselor to the President, James Baker as the White House Chief of Staff, and Michael Deaver as Baker's Deputy Chief of Staff. With extensive experience and influence among them, they managed the White House from the start in 1981.⁴⁰ Examples of how the three used Reagan's dependency on his aides are Ed Meese that had National Security Adviser Allen report to him, and not directly to the President. This further solidified the degraded importance of Allen's position. Secretary Haig also clashed with the troika from the start. The trio regularly attended high-level cabinet meetings and had their hands in the establishment of four Cabinet councils: one for State, one for Defense, one for Intelligence, and one Crisis Management committee. Each led by the heads of the Departments and the last led by the Vice President.⁴¹

In the weeks between the election and the inauguration the formation of the new administration was restructured. Notably, the downgrading of the National Security Adviser. The National Security Adviser had in previous administrations held a lot of power and had often ended up rivaling the Secretary of State. Richard V. Allen, who was chosen for this position, had previously been Nixon's campaign policy adviser and a part of Henry Kissinger's staff.⁴² Allen seemed content with the scaled-back version of the position and the NSC. Nonetheless, Allen, as the National Security Adviser, could not function as an effective tiebreaker with strong characters such as Haig and Weinberger in high-level positions within the administration.⁴³ In January 1982, Richard Allen was "eased out" of the administration formally on the basis for an unreported payment "but really for his poor management of the

³⁸ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 401-403.

³⁹ Taubman, Philip. "The Shultz-Weinberger Feud". *The New York Times Magazine*. Published: 14 April 1985. Accessed: 7 May 2020. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/14/magazine/the-shultz-weinberger-feud.html>.

⁴⁰ Daalder & Destler. *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 131.

⁴¹ Daalder & Destler. *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 137-138

⁴² Rothkopf, David J. *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2005. 215-216.

⁴³ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 247.

NSC staff.”⁴⁴ Next in line for the position was William P. Clark, who knew President Reagan from his days as Governor of California, where Reagan appointed him to the California Supreme Court. “Judge” Clark served in the State Department under Haig before taking over as National Security Adviser in 1982. Clark had no experience with foreign policy. However, his close relationship with the President saw to it that the position as head of the NSC was elevated once again.⁴⁵ Clark left the position in October of 1983 to serve as the Secretary of the Interior, where he would work with issues closer to his preference and knowledge, “rather than foreign policy where he was, by self-admission, out of his depth.”⁴⁶ Robert “Bud” McFarlane, a veteran within the NSC who had served as Clark’s deputy, took over as National Security Adviser in 1983. McFarlane possessed extensive experience in foreign policy and ended up acting as a broker in the continuous feud between Secretary Weinberger and Secretary Shultz, Haig’s successor as Secretary of State, in an attempt to restore some order in the administration’s policymaking.⁴⁷

Primary Sources

This thesis utilizes sources from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California. The Reagan archive has been declassifying documents for some years now, and a lot has become available. Even so, the most sensitive material on the Middle East remains sparse, and a large amount of this is still unavailable for research. The sources collected consist mostly of memorandums (hereafter called memos) sent within the administration and cables. The memos give insight into the conversations and meetings between key members of the foreign policy apparatus, what they were discussing, thoughts on policy, and what was important at that time. Memos can also contain background papers on conflicts and people, strategy suggestions, strategies to implement during a particular trip to the Middle East, talking points, and various other information. Cables are communications between American Embassies and outposts and the government in Washington D.C. The cables report on meetings and conversations with foreign officials to transmit necessary information from the specific country or during official travel by a member of the administration. The cables do not

⁴⁴ Mulcahy, “The Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser”, 291-292.

⁴⁵ Mulcahy, “The Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser”, 292.

⁴⁶ Mulcahy, “The Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser”, 293.

⁴⁷ Mulcahy, “The Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser”, 295.

always include complete transcripts from meetings that took place, but they give a good foundation of information.

Other important sources from the archive are memorandum of conversations, referred to as “memcons”, which are summaries of conversations from meetings and phone calls with foreign officials on visits to Washington D.C., meant for distribution within the administration. Documents from meetings, in particular NSC meetings, and “minutes” from these give a thorough view of the administration’s foreign policy concerns. Minutes are transcripts of the conversation during a meeting, and associated documents contain strategies, background papers, financial information, and security concerns.

The documents from the Reagan archive are by themselves, not a complete source of information. A large quantity of documents remains classified, and a lot that is open for research are partially redacted. In “tracing the steps” from conflict/crisis arising to discussing policy, or changes to an existing policy, and then implementing said policy, one or more of these steps will have missing documents. However, what is open for research gives some insight into the Reagan administration, its inner workings and machinery in addition to bridging the gap between what these available sources can tell us, what we can assume, and the information provided by secondary literature.

Literature

This thesis relies on the literature on American foreign policy, the Reagan administration, the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as the biographies and literature on Egyptian governments and policies. These subjects overlap to an extent. On the subject of American administrations and the Middle East, one of the authorities is William B. Quandt. He is a professor of politics and was a senior fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution. He also served in the Nixon and Carter administrations as part of the National Security Council. Quandt was also closely involved in the Camp David negotiations in 1978.⁴⁸ His book, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, provides a comprehensive look at the inner workings of policymaking in the United States towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. The book is useful throughout the thesis in that it provides information in the technical and general aspects of American policymaking and U.S. interests as well as an in-

⁴⁸ Quandt, *Peace Process*.

depth look at the different administrations since 1967. Quandt has also written books and articles on the Camp David negotiation and the U.S.-Egyptian relationship during the 1980s.

Another valuable insight into American policymaking towards the Arab-Israeli conflict is *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan*, by professor of political science, Steven L. Spiegel. Although the book is from 1985, it is an important piece of research into the United States' approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. A newer piece of research on the subject is *Blind Spot* by Khaled Elgindy. Here the author discusses how American policy has affected the Arab-Israeli conflict, where the U.S. has a "blind spot" for Israel and has consistently shown to work in Israel's favor. The book also highlights the lack of understanding of the power disparities between Israel and the Palestinian people. Elgindy's research shows how this blindness towards the dysfunctional balance of power has shaped the peace process over the decades.

The book *Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo*, by historian Seth Anziska is more focused on the Palestinian people and why they are still a stateless people. The book is based on archival sources from both Israeli state archives and the Reagan Presidential Library. The book is useful with its perspective on the Camp David Accords and the aftermath and that it is new research on the subject.

The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, by professor of international relations Avi Shlaim, provides a comprehensive account of the Arab-Israeli conflict over 50 years. Shlaim aimed with his book to provide a "revisionist interpretation of Israel's policy toward the Arab world," so the primary focus of this research was Israeli attitudes, policies, and behavior in the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁴⁹ It is a thorough, comprehensive telling of the conflict's complexities, and it provides useful insight into the different actors.

Another aspect of the secondary literature material is biographies and autobiographies. One substantial piece of insight into the Reagan administration is journalist Lou Cannon's book *President Reagan: A role of a Lifetime*. The book gives an almost day-by-day account of the Reagan presidency while reflecting on his upbringing and background in acting. Other biographies are Alexander Haig's book *Caveat*, which gives a thorough account of his days as Secretary of State in the first year and a half of the Reagan presidency. National Security Council member Howard Teicher's biography *Twin Pillars to Desert Storm: America's Flawed Vision in the Middle East from Nixon to Bush*, provides his account of for example the

⁴⁹ Shlaim, Avi. *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*. London: Penguin Books, 2001. Xvi.

negotiations that took place between Israel and Egypt in the weeks and days before the final withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula in April of 1982. Although the works within biographical literature enjoy control of the narrative, including the benefits of hindsight, it is not always of academic value. Biographies provide an opportunity for the author to tell a side of the events that transpired. However, in the case of the Reagan administration, which is known for being turbulent, a biography or memoir can also work as a settling of scores, an extreme example here is Haig's book *Caveat*. Nevertheless, in this case where large amounts of the documents from the Reagan presidency remains classified, this part of the literature can help fill certain holes in the narrative.

The thesis is structured chronologically, following the central events that impacted the U.S.-Egyptian relationship, 1981-1984. Chapter two goes through key events from the end of the Second World War to the conclusion of the Camp David summit and the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979. The chapter focuses mainly on Egypt and the political developments from Nasser to Sadat, the Six Day War and the October War with Israeli, and the change of sides in the Cold War. Chapter three starts with Reagan's first few months in office and how the administration handles the obligation laid down by the previous President. The chapter specifically explores how the Camp David Accords were used in meeting with the European Community, the financial and military aid to Egypt, and the shock of President Sadat's assassination. Chapter four primarily focuses on the U.S.-Egyptian relations amidst the Lebanon crisis in 1982. Leading up to the war in Lebanon, there was the aftermath of the Sadat-assassination and how the Reagan administration handled the new Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, as well as the substantial part of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty: the withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. The final research chapter explores the Reagan Plan for the Middle East and how that affected U.S. relations with Egypt in light of the continuing Lebanon crisis.

Chapter Two

From Revolution to Camp David

From the end of the Second World War to the completion of the Camp David negotiations, Egypt, as well as U.S.-Egyptian relations, went through several twists and turns. The internal political makeup in Egypt changed from a military coup to Nasser's nationalistic and pan-Arabism ambitions to a more pragmatic foreign policy era under President Sadat, which culminated in the search for peace at Camp David. What were the foundations for U.S.-Egyptian relations in Ronald Reagan's first presidential period?

After 1945 a wave of decolonization changed the world order. Resistance towards the European imperial powers grew, and the "Great Powers" such as the United Kingdom and France had been weakened by war and could not resist the swift waves of change. Egypt was one such country where nationalism grew parallel with the resentment towards its occupiers, the British, who had occupied the Suez Canal area in Egypt in 1882 and had tightened their grip on the country during World War I.⁵⁰ The Suez Canal became the cornerstone for Britain's vision for the preservation of its role in the new world order despite the dwindling power of the British Empire.⁵¹ Britain and the other West-European imperial powers, along with the U.S.'s increased presence in the Middle East, represented a manifestation of imperialism for the Egyptians. The presence of the imperial powers further fueled the nationalistic mindset that quickly grew in Egypt and the other Arab countries.⁵²

What came to characterize the Egyptian political system after 1945, and after the monarchy was abolished, was the personal authoritarian rule of the President. The three presidents proved resilient in the post-war period, especially going through several wars, political,

⁵⁰ Gardner, Lloyd C. *The Road to Tahrir Square – Egypt and the United States from the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak*. United Kingdom Saqi Books, 2011. 39-40.; Betts, Raymond F. "Decolonization: A brief history of the word". In *Beyond Empire and Nation*, edited by Els Bogaerts & Remco Raben, 23-37. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012. 25-26.

⁵¹ Gardner, *The Road to Tahrir Square*, 40.

⁵² Gardner, *The Road to Tahrir Square*, 47.

economic, and ideological crisis, the presidency continued to accumulate power. The authoritarian rule reflected the context of the time and its changes, decolonization, and nationalism, where Gamal Abdel Nasser had a key role.⁵³

Persons take precedence over rules, where the officeholder is not effectively bound by his office and is able to change its authority and powers to suit his own personal and political needs. In such a system of personal rule, the rulers and other leaders take precedence over the formal rules of the political game: the rules do not effectively regulate political behavior.⁵⁴

The Free Officers and Gamal Abdel Nasser

The Free Officers was a small group within the Egyptian military and included members like Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser. The group represented the politicization of the Egyptian armed forces, and the group's political involvement increased after Egypt was defeated in the war against Israel in 1948.⁵⁵

In July 1952, these military officers undertook a coup d'état, which sent King Farouk into exile and inserted the Free Officers member General Muhammad Naquib as the new Prime Minister. Although Naquib had a strong standing as being both a former Prime Minister, coming from a military family, and an older member of the Free Officers movement, he quickly lost his political influence. Meanwhile, Nasser gained legitimacy and strengthened his political position. The foundation for the authoritarian presidential rule can be found when Nasser assumed the presidency in Egypt. In late 1954 there was an assassination attempt on Nasser carried out by members of the Muslim Brotherhood. As a response to this act, Nasser had Naquib removed from power under the accusation that Naquib had colluded with the Brotherhood. Nasser then made himself President and head of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). Since the coup in 1952, Nasser strengthened his role within the Egyptian government, and a presidency in the Egyptian constitution formally replaced the role of the King.⁵⁶

From an early age, Nasser had been involved in anti-British activism and had fought in the Arab-Israeli war in 1948. He returned from the war with strong nationalist- and anti-

⁵³ Kassem, Maye, *Egyptian Politics: The Dynamics of Authoritarian Rule*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004. 11-12.

⁵⁴ Kassem, Maye. *Egyptian Politics*, 11.

⁵⁵ Jankowski, James. *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*. London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002. 15.

⁵⁶ Lang, Anthony F. "From revolutions to constitutions: the case of Egypt". *International Affairs* Vol.89 No.2 (2013): 345-363. Accessed: 6 February 2020. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23473540>. 353.: Kassem, *Egyptian Politics*, 12-13.

imperialist beliefs and joined the Free Officers movement. The Free Officers gave him a forum for his revolutionary and nationalistic ideology.⁵⁷ After seizing power in 1954, his Egyptian nationalism and ambition for Pan-Arabism became even more apparent through his rhetoric and actions, for example, “Arab Egypt” and “by our country I mean the whole Arab world.”⁵⁸

In order to defend Egypt and the Arab world against Israel, and secure its power, Egypt needed both military and financial aid. Shortly after the Free Officers and the RCC gained power in Egypt, the negotiations and talks with the U.S. concerning military and financial aid started. Even when Nasser took over as President in Egypt, he tried to make these deals happen. However, an aid deal with the U.S. came with conditions that did not combine well with Nasser’s nationalistic ideology and Pan-Arabism dreams. It also clashed with the Egyptian people’s desire not to be occupied or tied to another state’s interests, especially when that included the tie between the U.S. and Israel.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Nasser knew that Egypt needed a strong army to defend itself against Israel’s growing strength. With Western conditions for military supplies being unacceptable for the Egyptians, the decision fell to approach the Soviet Union for arms deals, which increased the distance between the West and Egypt. By 1956, Egypt became completely dependent on the Soviet Union for military equipment. The West continued to be viewed by the Egyptians as imperialist countries that wished to retain its power in the Middle East through arms deals and military bases.⁶⁰

The Suez Crisis

The Suez Crisis in 1956 marked the first event after 1945, where Egypt truly separated from the Western powers, especially Britain. The crisis also marked Gamal Abdel Nasser as a leader, not just in Egypt but in the Arab world.⁶¹ The Suez crisis ignited when Nasser declared that Egypt would nationalize the Suez Canal Company. To British Prime Minister Anthony Eden and the French Prime Minister, Guy Mollet, this was considered theft and presented a considerable risk of losing influence in the Arab world.⁶² To the British and French governments, only military action could rectify this. Contrary to that belief, Nasser’s actions

⁵⁷ Gardner, *The Road to Tahrir Square*, 41.

⁵⁸ Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, 27.

⁵⁹ Jankowski, *Nasser’s Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, 42-48.

⁶⁰ Hopwood, Derek. *Egypt: Politics and Society, 1945-1990*. London: Routledge, 1993. 45.

⁶¹ Hopwood, *Egypt*, 45-46.

⁶² Gardner, Lloyd C. *The Road to Tahrir Square*, 67-68.

were not illegal as long as Egypt compensated the company owners. President Dwight D. Eisenhower went against its European allies and made it clear that the U.S. would not condone any military action against Egypt. Despite the warning, the French and the British were working on secret plans of action with Israel. The plan consisted of Israel attacking Egypt and the two European powers stepping in to “restore the peace” in what would be a manufactured Israeli-Egyptian conflict.⁶³

U.S. foreign policy for the Middle East soon faced a dilemma of whether to prioritize the Cold War from a perspective of preserving the Anglo-American alliance and, by extension, the British occupation of Egypt. The other choice was embracing Arab nationalism as a means of stopping Soviet influence.⁶⁴ The United States was not willing to alienate Nasser and Egypt entirely, as that would mean the loss of an important strategic piece of the Middle East. The balance between allies and strategic pieces in the Middle East was put to the test in October 1956, when the British, French, and the Israelis launched an assault on Egypt to regain control over the Suez Canal. The war lasted from October 29 until a ceasefire was implemented at midnight on November 6.⁶⁵ The brief war resulted in the loss of the remaining British and French influence in the Middle East, and an immense rise in Nasser’s prestige amongst the Arab states.⁶⁶

1967 – The Six Day War

At the beginning of June 1967, another war broke out between Egypt and Israel. Tensions had been rising between Israel and Egypt, where Nasser’s ambition had only grown since the Suez crisis in 1956. On the other hand, Israel claimed Nasser was a threat to the country’s very existence.⁶⁷ Before the outbreak of the war, the Sinai Peninsula was monitored by a United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) and acted as a buffer zone between the two belligerents as a result of the compromises reached after Suez. President Nasser saw that as a humiliating reminder of defeat: primarily because the UNEF was just on Egyptian territory, not on the Israeli side. In a risky gamble, Nasser replaced the UNEF with Egyptian forces and promptly

⁶³ Gardner, Lloyd C. *The Road to Tahrir Square*, 67-70.

⁶⁴ Hahn, Peter L. *Crisis and Crossfire: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945*. Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2005. 39-40.

⁶⁵ Waage, Hilde Henriksen, *Krig og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. Kristiansand: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2013. 202-206.

⁶⁶ Hahn, *Crisis and Crossfire*, 42.

⁶⁷ Gardner, *The Road to Tahrir Square*, 104-106.

closed the straits of Tiran.⁶⁸ Nasser's grandiose war preparations did not go unnoticed. Israel knew it was militarily superior and having somewhat of a "green light" from President Johnson.⁶⁹ The Six Day War became an astonishing military victory for Israel. After launching a surprise attack on June 5, the Egyptian air force was destroyed within a few hours. Israel stepped up its war efforts and gained more and more territory. Despite that Egypt, Jordan and Syria all agreed to the ceasefire called for by the UN Security Council, Israel continued hostilities.⁷⁰ By the time both sides agreed on the ceasefire on June 10, Israel had occupied all the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights.⁷¹

The war in 1967 changed the Egyptian political goals when it came to its conflict with Israel. One factor was the American ambiguity in the post-war period. Rather than standing firm by the principle of territorial integrity, the Johnson administration pivoted towards the notion that the territories should be part of a negotiated peace. The Johnson administration also placed most responsibility on Egypt and did not push for Israeli withdrawal.⁷² Egypt lost a large and vital territory, and Nasser became a victim of his ambition and success after the Suez crisis. The defeat initiated more severe radicalism in Arab politics and a crisis of confidence. Egypt's goal became to regain the Sinai and some of its former glory.⁷³ The war did not only change Egyptian foreign policy; it also altered the geopolitical map of the Middle East as a whole. Where Egypt and other Arab countries had the solidarity for the struggle of the Palestinian people, Israel was now in control of vast amounts of Arab territory. The Arab-Israeli conflict had turned into a broader regional conflict where Israel's neighboring countries reverted the focus of the conflict towards its borders and peoples.⁷⁴

The war highlighted Israeli military superiority, but also the U.S.-Israeli relationship. The 1967 war was a far cry from Eisenhower's denial of arms sales to Israel and the demand that Israel retreat from the Sinai in 1956. In 1967 the relationship solidified, and Israel was considered an ally. Several of the administrations succeeding Eisenhower had made large

⁶⁸ Jensehaugen, Jørgen. *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter: The US, Israel and the Palestinians*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2018. 16.

⁶⁹ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 16; Quandt, *Peace Process*, 41.

⁷⁰ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 250.

⁷¹ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 16; Rogan, *Araberne*, 388-395.

⁷² Quandt, *Peace Process*, 44-45.

⁷³ Ripsman, Norrin M, *Peacemaking from Above, Peace from Below: Ending Conflict between Regional Rivals*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016. 63.

⁷⁴ Ripsman, *Peacemaking from Above, Peace from Below*, 62-64.

sales of weaponry to Israel, and the Johnson administration essentially gave Israel the go-ahead for the war and let Israel keep the occupied territories after the short war ended.⁷⁵

The war also resulted in UN Resolution 242 which was adopted in November 1967. The resolution became the new foundation for all future peacemaking efforts in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The resolution referred to Israeli withdrawal from territory occupied in the recent war and the right of all states to live in peace with secure boundaries. The Palestinian people was not explicitly mentioned, but the resolution called for a “just settlement of the refugee problem.”⁷⁶ The vague language meant that the resolution text was interpreted differently by the opposing sides, which came to haunt future peace negotiations.⁷⁷ Both Egypt and Jordan supported the resolution, while Syria and other Arab countries did not.⁷⁸

Sadat Takes Over

Anwar Sadat, a Free Officer member, and a somewhat modest politician compared to Nasser took over as President in 1970 after Nasser’s sudden death. Sadat had been appointed as Vice President the year before, and quickly took on the role as a leader. However, his policies diverged from that of Nasser.⁷⁹ Sadat’s political standpoint was primarily Egyptian, not Arab, nationalism. He primarily made these changes to turn Egypt in a pro-Western direction.⁸⁰ Sadat initiated a dual political system, mixing some of the authoritarian elements of Nasser while also forging alliances with important social groups. Sadat’s leadership style ensured his presidential rule against those segments of the Egyptian society that had grown increasingly outspoken against Nasser.⁸¹

The emphasis on Egyptian identity became more evident after the war in 1973. That was when Sadat got away from Nasser’s shadow and made the national identity and the longstanding traditions of Egypt a focal point for his policies. Sadat did not break completely from the Arab world but spoke in more general terms of common interests more than ideology

⁷⁵ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 16-17.

⁷⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, 22 November 1967. Accessed: 5 March 2020. URL: <https://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7D35E1F729DF491C85256EE700686136>.

⁷⁷ Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 78.

⁷⁸ Rogan, Eugene. *Araberne: Historien om det arabiske folk*. Oslo: Gyldendal, 2013. 396.

⁷⁹ Hopwood, *Egypt*, 105.

⁸⁰ Shama, Nael, *Egyptian Foreign Policy from Mubarak to Morsi: Against the National Interest*. London: Routledge, 2013. 24.

⁸¹ Shama, *Egyptian Foreign Policy from Mubarak to Morsi*, 24-25.

as his predecessor had done.⁸² Following the October War, there was a shift in the pattern of Egyptian foreign policymaking between 1973 and 1978. Sadat's hasty decision-making became visible in many incidences. For example, he decided in October 1973 on an immediate ceasefire and simply informed the Syrians of the decision afterward. The same went for the acceptance of the Sinai I and Sinai II agreements between Egypt and Israel, negotiated by the United States, where Sadat's rash political moves were heavily criticized by the other Arab states.⁸³ Another important element in Sadat's political beliefs that could explain one of Egypt's largest policy shifts in that period was his hostility towards the Soviet Union. His strong opposition to the Soviet Union led him to expel all Soviet advisers and military personnel and thereafter, sought to realign Egypt with the United States.⁸⁴

1973 - The October War

On 6 October 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a coordinated attack against Israel. The goal was to regain the lost territories, and perhaps some of the prestige that was lost after the crushing defeat in 1967. Egypt and Syria caught Israel by surprise and made great strides in the first few days of the war. Nevertheless, it did not take Israel long to regain its position. Iraqi, Saudi Arabian, and Jordanian forces were called in to assist Syria and Egypt. However, with Israel's strong support from the United States, Israel held its ground and expanded its previous occupied territories.⁸⁵

The two superpowers supported their allies: The U.S. was caught by surprise alongside Israel and had not been able to read the precursors of the hostilities, and the Soviet Union could not afford to sit by and watch as Israel moved further towards Cairo.⁸⁶ After almost two weeks of fighting, Sadat realized the battle was lost and agreed to a ceasefire agreement presented to the UN Security Council by the Soviet Union and the United States on 22 October. The UNSC, after that, approved Resolution 338 for a ceasefire between the parties. However, the war escalated again as Israel had not yet met its military goals. Israel broke the ceasefire agreement, which first led to Soviet military mobilization, followed by a U.S. order for

⁸² Karawan, Ibrahim A. "Sadat and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Revisited". *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol.26 No.2 (1994): 249-266. Accessed: 04 March 2019. URL: www.jstor.org/stable/164735. 252.

⁸³ Karawan, "Sadat and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Revisited", 252-253.

⁸⁴ Karawan, "Sadat and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Revisited", 252-256.

⁸⁵ Rogan, *Araberne*, 424-428.

⁸⁶ Waage, *Krig og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 389-392.

American troops to be on alert. The escalation put pressure on the U.S., which led the U.S. to put pressure on Israel to agree to the ceasefire on October 25, 1973.⁸⁷

The war in 1973 paved the way for U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy" in the Middle East, which involved tackling one aspect of the conflict at a time. The negotiation tactic was made possible by Resolution 242 and the disagreements on interpretation.⁸⁸ Kissinger's step-by-step negotiations resulted only in partial agreements that did not include key Middle East countries in a broader peace agreement. For example, the two Sinai disengagement agreements signed in January 1974 and September 1975.⁸⁹

Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy" additionally functioned as part of the U.S. Cold War-effort to limit Soviet influence in the Middle East.⁹⁰ President Sadat's efforts to align Egypt with the United States had presented an opportunity for the Americans to build on, and they strengthened their relations with Sadat.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the progress made with Egypt damaged the prospects of a future settlement with the Palestinians, Jordanians, and further negotiations with the Syrians as the agreements did not address the core issues of the conflict, such as the Palestinian question. The second Sinai agreement also marked the end of Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy" as it had left the core issues in the Arab-Israel conflict still unresolved.⁹²

In the newly established U.S.-Egyptian relationship, Sadat remained optimistic in his beliefs that Egypt could benefit the United States greatly as a strategic partner both in the Arab-Israeli conflict and in the Cold War. Even though Sadat was faced with heavy criticism from his own people and other Arab countries, he was fully committed to the partnership with the United States after the two Sinai agreements in 1974 and 1975, despite losing support from his neighbors in the Middle East.⁹³ The next stage on the road to peace in the Middle East was the summit at Camp David in 1978.

⁸⁷ Waage, *Krig og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*, 392-393.

⁸⁸ Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 79.

⁸⁹ Jensehaugen, Jørgen. "Blueprint for Arab-Israeli Peace? President Carter and the Brookings Report". *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol.23 No.3 (2014): 492-508. Accessed: 16 April 2019. URL: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uio.no/10.1080/09592296.2014.936199>. 493.

⁹⁰ Jensehaugen, "Blueprint for Arab-Israeli Peace?", 493.

⁹¹ Quandt, "American-Egyptian Relations", 2.

⁹² Jensehaugen, "Blueprint for Arab-Israeli Peace?", 493-494.

⁹³ Quandt, "American-Egyptian Relations", 3-4.

Camp David

Early September in 1978 American President Jimmy Carter, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, arrived with their delegation at the Camp David compound and began a thirteen-day long negotiations process with the goal of reaching a peace agreement. The summit had come out of Carter's change in Middle East policy, as he was the first American President explicitly to acknowledge the Palestinian people and their struggle. It was also in part Carter trying to salvage the Arab-Israeli peace process as it had deteriorated over the past several years. The road to Camp David had been strenuous as several preliminary meetings and talks with the U.S. as a mediator had ended in deadlock. Begin would not budge and kept stonewalling, Carter would not pressure Begin too much, and any U.S. pressure towards Israel depended on Sadat continued adherence to peace negotiations. The negotiations at Camp David would be a last attempt to break that deadlock.⁹⁴

The foundation for the summit at Camp David was Sadat's unorthodox political maneuvers. Sadat had made a trip to Jerusalem the previous year, where he spoke of peace in the Middle East, Israeli withdrawal, and the rights of the Palestinian people.⁹⁵ This trip was considered a political victory in the eyes of the Americans and had opened up for direct talks between Israel and Egypt.⁹⁶ The political move by Sadat also angered the Palestinians and the Arab countries such as Syria and put Sadat in a difficult position between wanting to regain vital territory and build closer relations with the U.S. as well as upholding the leader position in the Middle East. To further complicate Egypt's standing amongst the Arab countries, Sadat, on an unprecedented note from the Arab perspective, acknowledged Israel's right to exist. Sadat, however, carried the weight of being Nasser's successor, leader of the Arab world. He could not afford to be considered unreliable by the Arab states and the Palestinian people. Failure to reach a favorable agreement could cost Egypt its role and credibility as a regional leader. However, internal Egyptian political constraints also affected Sadat's actions. Although Sadat spoke of lasting peace in the Middle East and the Palestinian people, the primary goal was to regain the Sinai territory back from Israeli occupation.⁹⁷ During the negotiations at Camp David, Sadat was in a difficult position. He was under pressure from Carter and his aides to be

⁹⁴ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 111-112, 128-129.

⁹⁵ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 93.

⁹⁶ Pressman, Jeremy. "American Engagement and the pathways to Arab-Israeli peace". *Cooperation and Conflict* Vol. 49 No. 4 (2014): 536-553. Accessed: 6 June 2019. URL: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uio.no/10.1177/0010836713517569>. 542.

⁹⁷ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 360-361.: Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 93.

more flexible, and his aides urged him to stand his ground and not make too many concessions. Muhammad Ibrahim Kamel, Sadat's foreign minister, resigned during the summit in protest of Sadat's policy choices. Kamel's reasons for leaving office centered around the misleading treatment of the Palestinian people, and he felt that Sadat left Egypt isolated in the Middle East.⁹⁸

Sadat's counterpart was Israeli Prime Minister Begin, head of the newly elected Likud government. Begin consistently stayed within the well-established Israeli political positions. Begin did little to warrant any optimism from the other parties for a conclusion to any future negotiations.⁹⁹ Begin could afford to remain firm in his policies and was willing to risk the negotiations failing to further his political position. A further advantage for Begin was the fact that he knew that he could push Sadat to make more concessions and that Sadat was more willing to make concessions in order to get a peace treaty.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, Begin brought a large number of aides and experts with a more flexible stance on the Israeli position than himself, and he saw to it that the delegation could make decisions on the spot without approval from the Knesset.¹⁰¹ However, Begin also had several "red lines" he would not compromise on, like the status of Jerusalem and the sovereignty of the West Bank, "In short, Begin went to Camp David to work for peace, but it had to be his kind of peace."¹⁰²

During the thirteen days at Camp David, the three leaders negotiated in seclusion with limited amounts of the regular domestic political restraints. The media knew very little details of what was happening inside which provided further privacy. Therefore, almost all accounts of what happened came from the people involved. They all arrived with their own strategies, ambitions, and illusions of how the negotiations were to proceed. It was a constant process where pressures for concessions in the proposals targeted the one who could least afford failure, President Sadat. The main difference between Begin and Sadat was that Begin was willing to leave Camp David without an agreement.¹⁰³

The primary issues for the Camp David negotiations were a full bilateral peace between Israel and Egypt, full Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, Israeli settlements in Sinai, and

⁹⁸ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 373-374.

⁹⁹ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 360-361.; Khalidi, Rashid. *Brokers of Deceit: How the US has Undermined Peace in the Middle East*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2013, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 130-133.

¹⁰¹ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 372.

¹⁰² Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 372.

¹⁰³ Quandt, William. *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1986. 219.

Palestinian self-determination.¹⁰⁴ On the point of withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, Prime Minister Begin refused from the start to return the occupied territory and the removal of Israeli settlements. From the Israeli point of view, this was an enormous and painful concession of Israeli land and settlements: therefore, Egypt should make equal concessions on all other points. For the Egyptians, however, the Sinai was Egyptian land that was unlawfully taken and should be returned if peace was to be achieved.¹⁰⁵ Normalization of relations between Israel and Egypt was linked to the withdrawal from the Sinai, and would be initiated once the withdrawal had begun.¹⁰⁶

The issues regarding the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian people presented more difficulties for the negotiations. Begin stuck to his red lines that there would be no withdrawal from these territories, and there would be no Palestinian state. Begin and his delegation at Camp David worked hard to eliminate the term “self-determination” from the final text of the Accords. Although President Sadat had taken on the responsibility to speak for the Palestinians at Camp David, both Carter and Begin knew that Sadat would not risk losing the recovery of Egyptian territory in favor of securing autonomy for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁰⁷ Israel, being the toughest at the negotiation table at Camp David, managed to secure the most in its own favor: such as its gains being clearly stated in the framework text and therefore more secure, and the concessions squared away in side-letters or in vague language which gave it less legal weight.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Begin’s aides and Carter had to convince Begin that although he had managed to secure Israel more favorable gains and few concessions, there would be no deal if the Sinai Peninsula was not returned to Egypt. The negotiations seemed uncertain to succeed until the very last hours, but Carter and his delegation managed through pressure, concessions, and ambiguous language to secure support for the Camp David Accords from both Sadat and Begin.¹⁰⁹

Results

The negotiations in early September 1978, produced two deals: one titled “Framework for Peace in the Middle East” and another with the title “A Framework for the Conclusion of a

¹⁰⁴ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 353-360.

¹⁰⁵ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 378.

¹⁰⁶ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 379.

¹⁰⁷ Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 123-125.

¹⁰⁸ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 141-143.

¹⁰⁹ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 140.; Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 124-125.

Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt,” formally known as the Camp David Accords. The final version of the two frameworks did not constitute a formal peace treaty, rather a starting point or a foundation for further negotiations that later would lead to a more binding treaty.¹¹⁰

The first one, “Framework for Peace in the Middle East,” was to continue in three stages and presumed that Jordan and representatives for the Palestinian people would join the negotiation process. The framework dealt with the territories of the West Bank and Gaza and the ambitious statement in the preamble to reach “the resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects.”¹¹¹ The framework named UN Resolution 242 functioned as its foundation, but it was purposely complex and vague on the primary issues. Part of the Camp David Accords became open for interpretation by the parties as they saw fit because the text of the framework was made vague to get Israel and Egypt to sign. In addition, with the already vague text of Resolution 242 as a base, made progress exceedingly difficult.¹¹²

The agreement concerning Egypt and Israel, “A Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt,” was more straightforward than the one concerning a broader Middle East peace. The timeframe was ambitious which aimed for a peace treaty within three months of the conclusion of the Camp David summit, and implementation within two to three years afterwards. The main point in the treaty was the Sinai Peninsula. The treaty called for full Israeli withdrawal and demilitarization, as well as UN peacekeeping forces to oversee the process. After partial completion of said withdrawal, normalization of relations between Egypt and Israel was to take effect with an exchange of ambassadors.¹¹³ The Egyptian-Israeli framework had a stronger foundation for follow-through and completion because both parties were present at Camp David, and especially because of the omission of the Palestinian question. The Egyptian-Israeli agreement omitted the issues of the Palestinian right to self-determination and occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. The omission of these two was central for Begin and Sadat to reach an agreement as Begin would not make concessions on the Palestinian issue, and even though Sadat had fought for the two agreements to be linked, regaining the Sinai took precedence. The other framework, “A Framework for Peace in the Middle East,” which included the two issues, was vague and had little to no commitments, especially for Israel.¹¹⁴ Prime Minister Begin had a talent for legal

¹¹⁰ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 146.

¹¹¹ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 374.

¹¹² Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 374.

¹¹³ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 375.

¹¹⁴ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 143-146.

language and details and had managed to make the Israeli commitments so vague that he could interpret them as he saw fit for Israel.¹¹⁵

Aftermath

The Palestinian question was a highly controversial topic when it came to the Camp David Accords. Sadat felt he had an obligation to speak for the Palestinian people as well as using the problem to link the treaty with Israel to the greater Middle East. That way he could avoid the scrutiny of entering a bilateral peace agreement with Israel. Begin had his red lines and would not budge to make any concessions.¹¹⁶ Even though Sadat had started out with the goal to link the bilateral agreement with Israel to the Palestinian issue, that effort was largely abandoned for the Sinai Peninsula. This was recognized by the Arab countries and the Palestinians who forcefully criticized Sadat for his behavior.¹¹⁷ Both the PLO and several Arab states announced their rejection of the Camp David Accords and Egypt was expelled from the Arab League after the treaty was signed on March 26, 1979. The expulsion left Egypt isolated in the Middle East. The main problem from the Arab point of view was that Egypt had turned its back on the Arab world and made a deal with the enemy. Although President Sadat had made several speeches where he included the Palestinians and their right to autonomy and self-determination, there lacked substance to these terms in the final text of the Accords.¹¹⁸

Another criticism of the framework for peace in the Middle East was the territories of the West Bank and Gaza. Sadat was heavily criticized because his efforts to regain Egypt's lost territory had resulted in the strengthening of Israel's hold on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Even though President Carter had desired peace for the broader Middle East at first, he and his aides decided not to challenge the Israelis on other territories apart from Sinai, "In his assessment of Camp David, NCS advisor William Quandt suggested that while Israel gave up territory captured from Egypt in 1967, they secured retention of the West Bank."¹¹⁹ This was worsened just days after the signing of the Accords when Prime Minister Begin made a public statement that Israel would remain in the West Bank and would continue to expand its settlements there. This was a clear contradiction to the agreement according to Carter and

¹¹⁵ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 145.

¹¹⁶ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 2335-236.

¹¹⁷ Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 125.

¹¹⁸ Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 125.

¹¹⁹ Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 124-126.

Sadat. However, Carter did not confront Begin at first but weeks later called the Israeli settlements “illegal” and a hindrance to reach a broader peace.¹²⁰

Critics held the view that in the framework, an extensive amount of responsibilities was given to Jordan, a country that was not part of the negotiations at Camp David.¹²¹ The inclusion of Jordan in the framework was unknown to its leader and decision-maker, King Hussein, who was furious that such responsibilities had been assigned to him by Sadat and Begin.¹²²

Hussein became a fierce critic of the Accords, and Jordan’s relations with both the U.S. and Egypt deteriorated. Hussein opposed the tactics the Carter administration used to pressure Jordan to go along with the framework, as well as Sadat, remarking that Egypt treated the Arab countries like “a herd of sheep,” that Egypt could determine the course for.¹²³ King Hussein would continue to refuse to join the fowling stages of the Camp David framework.¹²⁴

The Camp David Accords and the following peace treaty between Egypt and Israel was a complex diplomatic and political matter, which rarely work out as intended. When put up against political realities, the Accords could not be judged by its initial design. There was always the question of what could have been done better. However, at the peak of the negotiations, Egypt and Israel were talking to each other and seemed ready to make a move towards peace, or at least less war. President Carter seemed to have had a greater obligation to Sadat and Egypt as Sadat had already made sacrifices to get the negotiations going. Sadat had gained popularity among the American public. It presented the best time to try and tackle the Palestinian question and risk a fight with Begin, “And the Palestinian question has proved to be so controversial that most presidents have been reluctant to get deeply involved in it.”¹²⁵ By contrast, other Arab countries in the Middle East were either hostile towards the whole idea of Camp David or remained on the sidelines. In the case of Egypt and Israel, there were already two agreements in place: the Sinai agreements from 1974 and 1975. Those made the odds better for a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt than any other country in the Middle East.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 127.

¹²¹ Ashton Nigel. “Taking Friends for Granted: the Carter Administration, Jordan, and the Camp David Accords, 1977-1980”. *Diplomatic History* Vol.41 No.3 (2017): 620-645. Accessed: 4 March 2019. DOI: 10.1093/dh/dhw06. 620.

¹²² Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 144.

¹²³ Ashton, “Taking Friends for Granted”, 643.

¹²⁴ Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 145.

¹²⁵ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 236.

¹²⁶ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 235-236.

Despite the problems with the second, broader framework that came out of Camp David, the negotiations between Egypt and Israel continued. It was a purely bilateral agreement between Egypt and Israel with an extensive promise of aid from the U.S. to make it happen.¹²⁷ This was a great victory for Sadat who had managed to get a signed agreement to regain the Sinai from Israel as well as a closer relationship with the United States. This victory did not come without consequence. The Palestinians, along with several Arab countries, accused Egypt of abandoning the Arab and Palestinian cause and rejected the framework. Despite fierce tensions in the immediate aftermath of the signing, implementation proceeded according to plan. Egypt and Israel established diplomatic relations and exchanged ambassadors in February 1980.¹²⁸

The U.S.-Egyptian relationship developed from the end of the Second World War over the next decades through many conflicts and wars. Nonetheless, because of the U.S.-Israeli “special” relationship, U.S.-Egyptian relations was rarely truly bilateral. The relationship between the two countries became a triangle. The decades after 1945 showed the complexities both within Egypt and in the Middle East at large. Egypt went from severing ties with the European powers and gaining prestige in the Arab world through Nasser’s Pan-Arabism and nationalism to switching Cold War-alliances from the Soviet Union to the U.S. under President Sadat.

¹²⁷ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 159.

¹²⁸ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 381.

Chapter Three

“Ulterior Purposes”

Developing policy and expanding military capabilities

“The Inaugural (Jan. 20) was an emotional experience but then the very next day it was ‘down to work.’” – Ronald Reagan¹²⁹

By the time Ronald Reagan took office in January 1981, the Americans had gained a new friend among the Arab states in the Middle East, despite decades of being on opposing sides. After the war with Israel in October 1973, Egypt moved away from its alignment with the Soviet Union. President Sadat set his sight on a closer relationship with the United States. In the years following that war, President Jimmy Carter worked hard towards his goal of peace in the Middle East. To some extent, it had come to fruition with the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1979. During the Reagan era, Egypt would rise to become the country to receive the most in economic and military assistance from the United States, only second to Israel. Which meant Egypt received more support from the U.S. than official American allies such as Turkey and Pakistan.¹³⁰ What considerations did the Reagan administration take to accommodate their new friend? What was prioritized by the administration in its Middle East policy, and how was its policy developed?

Ronald Reagan inherited several issues in the Middle East when he took office: the hostage situation in Iran, the Lebanon crisis, and the completion of the Camp David Accords. The bilateral agreement between Israel and Egypt, signed in March 1979, was meant to lay the

¹²⁹ Reagan, Ronald & Douglas Brinkley. *The Reagan Diaries*. New York: HarperCollins, 2007. 1.

¹³⁰ Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, 2.

groundwork for future negotiations and peace agreements in addition to the established requirements. The requirements the agreement established was the return of the Sinai Peninsula, with the aid of a peacekeeping force, and diplomatic relations between Egypt and Israel. The road to the signing of the peace treaty in March 1979 had been rocky. Nonetheless, the return of the Sinai started smoothly, and by 26 January 1981, Egypt had regained 80 percent of the Sinai.¹³¹

The first and foremost obligation that fell to the Reagan administration because of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was to oversee the transition of the Sinai Peninsula and make sure it went as peacefully as possible. When Reagan took office, there was still one year to go before it was to be completed. Second, the U.S. was obliged to “use its best efforts” to put together a multinational force if the UN could not supply peacekeeping forces.¹³² Third, Egypt had not received any specific confirmation on assistance or aid during the Camp David negotiations. Nevertheless, at the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in March 1979, Carter’s Secretary of Defense Harold Brown signed a letter to the Egyptian Minister of Defense and promised \$1.5 billion of financial aid over the next three years. Added to this letter was a list detailing the military equipment Egypt would be allowed to purchase from the United States.¹³³ These obligations were most of the focus in developing policy regarding Egypt in the first months of the Reagan administration. Completing the obligations of the U.S. towards Egypt in addition to the Camp David Accords and the peace process at large became vital tools for the administration in policy development towards both Egypt and the Middle East. The application of these tools was exemplified in how the Reagan administration handled the growing interest of the European Community in the peace process, the Sinai multinational force, and the aftermath of the Sadat assassination.

Although President Reagan inherited the aftermath of the Camp David Accords and the obligations that followed, Reagan and his Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, both shifted the focus of American Middle East policy away from the Arab-Israeli conflict. Haig was, as the President, a “staunchly anti-Soviet conservative” and believed that the Middle East was but a battleground in the Cold War.¹³⁴ Ronald Reagan had campaigned on the notion that the Soviet Union was the reason for all conflicts and unrest at the time, along with ample support for

¹³¹ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 381.

¹³² Quandt, *Camp David*, 313.; Vance, Cyrus R. and M. Dayan. “The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty”. *Middle East Journal* Vol.33 No.3 (1979): 327-347. Accessed: 17 February 2020. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/4325878?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

¹³³ Quandt, *Camp David*, 313-314.

¹³⁴ Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 108-109.

Israel as a “strategic asset,” demonstrating a clear break from the Carter administration.¹³⁵ Just a week after the inauguration, the break from the importance of the Arab-Israeli conflict was made public when Secretary Haig stated in a news conference that although the Reagan administration would abide by the Camp David accords, there was no “urgency in our view on this matter.”¹³⁶ Secretary Haig, later, launched his “strategic consensus” for the Middle East. Although a vague concept, it involved redirecting the focus of U.S. friendly countries in the Middle East away from the regional conflicts and towards the Soviet threat.¹³⁷ The President and the Secretary of State, the two positions most central to foreign policy development, publicly dismissed the importance the Arab-Israeli conflict and the peace process had within U.S. Middle East policy. Nevertheless, the Camp David Accords and the peace process would make its way into policy and strategy development in the first months of the Reagan administration’s first year in office.

European Peace Initiative – A Thorn in the side of Reagan’s Middle East Policy

In early February 1981, just two weeks after the inauguration, the administration prepared for official state visits by several European leaders. Other than to get acquainted with the new administration, the reason for the visits was to discuss the European peace initiative that was aimed at the Arab-Israeli conflict. The foreign ministers of the nine member states of the European Community had agreed on political cooperation in the Middle East. They believed that the peace process had lost all momentum, which resulted in the Venice Declaration of June 1980.¹³⁸ The declaration put forward by the European Community raised several problems regarding the peace process that were sources for significant tensions within the Arab-Israeli conflict. The European Community members believed they should play a more significant part in the Middle East peace process and take an active stance in favor of the

¹³⁵ Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 109.

¹³⁶ Memo, Douglas Feith to Bailey, Kemp, Lord and Tanter. 25 June 1981, “Arab-Israeli Conflict”, folder, “Middle East General (6/16/81-10/8/81)”, Box 44, Executive Secretariat. Country File, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (hereafter RRL).: “Excerpts from Haig’s remarks at first news conference as Secretary of State”. *The New York Times*. Published: 28 January 1981. Accessed: 27 April 2020. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/01/29/world/excerpts-from-haig-s-remarks-at-first-news-conference-as-secretary-of.html>

¹³⁷ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 248.

¹³⁸ Memo, Gary Sick to Richard V. Allen, “Middle East Discussions with European Visitors”, 5 February 1981, folder, “Middle East General (5/13/81-6/15/81)”, Box 44, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.: Memo, Robert Neumann to Richard Allen, “The European Initiative on the Middle East”, 23 February 1981, folder, “Middle East General (2/13/81-3/3/81)”, Box 44, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

Palestinian people and, consequently, a stand against Israel. Points four, six, and seven of the declaration specifically addressed the rights of the Palestinian people, “which is not simply one of refugees.”¹³⁹ The declaration also brought up Jerusalem’s status and the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from areas occupied during the war in 1967. Two rather radical points to make in such an unambiguous statement. Israeli reactions to this had been harsh. The Israeli cabinet released a communique shortly after the declaration was approved in June 1980. The communique stated that “not since Mein Kampf was written have more explicit words been said, in the ears of the entire world, including Europe, about the desire for the destruction of the Jewish state and nation.”¹⁴⁰

The first visits to Washington were from Great Britain by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, France by Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean François-Poncet, and from West Germany by the Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Prior, there was an interagency meeting at the State Department to find a strategy for the impending meetings with the administration’s European counterparts. The strategy planning had a dual purpose: for one, the administration needed to be ready for discussions regarding a possible strategy for the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, with Thatcher, François-Poncet, and Genscher. Secondly, the administration needed a strategy that could be presented to governments it considered friendly and moderate in the Middle East, such as Egypt and Jordan. The goal was to bolster confidence in the future of U.S. policy in the early stage of the administration’s term, or at the very least, presenting a form of strategy for the Middle East that could prevent any deterioration of trust in the U.S. existing among several of the Arab countries.¹⁴¹ The aim was to present the United States as a better option for the peace process than the European Community and the Soviet Union.

The rush to have a Middle East policy strategy ready for the state visits was to have something to counter the European Community and its resolve to enter the Arab-Israeli peace process. The consensus among the European Community members was that the peace process had stalled completely, and there was a need to “push the process along.”¹⁴² The

¹³⁹ European Union External Action, “The Venice Declaration, June 13, 1980”. Accessed: 6 January 2020. URL: http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/mepp/docs/venice_declaration_1980_en.pdf.

¹⁴⁰ European Union External Action, “The Venice Declaration, June 13, 1980”.: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “100. Resolution of the heads of government and ministers of foreign affairs of the European Council (Venice Declaration), 13 June 1980 and the Cabinet statement, 15 June 1980.”. Accessed: 6 January 2020. URL: <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook4/Pages/100%20Resolution%20of%20the%20heads%20of%20government%20and%20mini.aspx>.

¹⁴¹ Memo, Sick to Allen, “Middle East Discussions with European Visitors”, 5 February 1981, RRL.

¹⁴² Memo, Sick to Allen, “Middle East Discussions with European Visitors”, 5 February 1981, RRL.

administration feared that the European Community would bring its declaration to the UN Security Council and push for a resolution that explicitly mentioned the Palestinian people and the PLO. Such a declaration could disturb the Israeli withdrawal process from the Sinai, which the Reagan administration could not see disturbed at the risk of reigniting the Egypt-Israel hostilities. Completing the Sinai transfer would further distance the Reagan administration from the previous one. Furthermore, getting a strategy ready before the state visits over the next months, in particular those from the Arab countries, would diminish the risk of giving mixed signals and spurring distrust in the United States.¹⁴³

Central to the strategy meeting at the State Department was a review of options for the U.S. in its pursuit of objectives in the Middle East. Analyst of Middle East affairs Gary Sick, who served on the National Security Council in the first few weeks of the Reagan administration, proposed three points with critical questions to National Security Adviser Richard V. Allen. The first point dealt with questions about American military presence, the number of forces, in what capacity and where. There was also the question of how to reconcile the administration's security objectives with local sensitivities about an external power having a military presence on their land, considering the recent history of anti-Western sentiments and Arab nationalism.¹⁴⁴

The next two points fronted by Gary Sick concerned the peace process: "What is our timetable for breathing new life into the moribund Arab-Israel peace process?"¹⁴⁵ The third and last point involved whether the United States would be willing to include other parties in the peace process and how. These new parties would be the Jordanians and the Palestinians, as mentioned in the Framework for peace in the Middle East. Because the Palestinian people were an integral part of the European initiative for the Middle East, the administration had to work out a strategy for how to deal with the question of including a representative for the Palestinians before the meetings with the visitors from Britain, France, and West Germany.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, given the strong ties between Israel and the U.S., concessions to the Palestinians on the part of Israel, and what its government thought of as rightfully Israeli, was unthinkable.

Despite the rush to get a counterstrategy prepared for the European Peace Initiative, the Reagan administration rarely mentioned the Camp David Accords publicly in early 1981

¹⁴³ Memo, Sick to Allen, "Middle East Discussions with European Visitors", 5 February 1981, RRL.

¹⁴⁴ Memo, Sick to Allen, "Middle East Discussions with European Visitors", 5 February 1981, RRL.

¹⁴⁵ Memo, Sick to Allen, "Middle East Discussions with European Visitors", 5 February 1981, RRL.

¹⁴⁶ Memo, Sick to Allen, "Middle East Discussions with European Visitors", 5 February 1981, RRL.

except for Haig's news conference at the end of January. This omission was mostly due to how close the Camp David Accords was linked to the Carter administration.¹⁴⁷ Limiting the attention on peace process before a strategy was fully prepared, and the Reagan administration knew what the next steps would be, could reduce the uncertainty of where U.S. policy in the Middle East was headed. On the other hand, prestige was undoubtedly a factor, and making the Camp David Accords less of a priority in the public eye would create distance from the previous administration. During the election, Reagan had highlighted the mistakes of the Carter administration's Middle East policy, while he underscored his own and America's commitment to Israel. Reagan and his advisors also turned back to the notion that the Middle East was primarily a theater for the global superpower rivalry. Whereas the peace process had been the central part of the Carter administration's Middle East policy, the new administration wanted it only as a small part of a broader strategy. Despite being downgraded, the Camp David agreement could be used by the administration against the peace initiative generated by the European Community. The administration needed to have a justified reason for why it did not want the European countries to proceed with their initiative and the plan for a new UN Security Council resolution. In this instance, the Camp David Accords and the peace process could be presented as a viable reason: it should be allowed to proceed. After the spring of 1981, not much was heard of the European peace initiative.¹⁴⁸

Power and Money – Developing Policy

In early April 1981, Secretary of State Haig was due to leave for the Middle East to give the heads of state in Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia an outline of President Reagan's foreign policy.¹⁴⁹ The main issue, above all the specifics for each of the four countries, was to make it clear that the United States wanted to reassert its leadership and its willingness to help its "friends", and to be a better option than the Soviet Union.

The Secretary's purpose was not to weave all four countries into a common alliance against the Soviet Union, but rather to convince them that the United States was determined to reassert its traditional

¹⁴⁷ Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, 18.

¹⁴⁸ Memo, Sick to Allen, "Middle East Discussions with European Visitors", 5 February 1981, RRL.: Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 162-163.

¹⁴⁹ Memo, Geoffrey Kemp to Richard V. Allen, "Report on the Visit of Secretary Haig to the Middle East, April 5-10, 1981", 8 May 1981, folder, "Middle East General (5/13/81-6/15/81)", Box 44, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

leadership and to pay particular attention to the security and well-being of friends irrespective of their oil wealth or their public attitudes on controversial issues.¹⁵⁰

On Secretary Haig's visit to Egypt, the primary subject of the discussions was the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai and the proposed peacekeeping force, which would be set to manage the transition. The full withdrawal was planned to be completed in April the following year. Haig had two meetings with the Egyptians, one with Egyptian officials including Foreign Minister Kamal Hassan Ali, Vice President Hosni Mubarak, and Deputy Foreign Minister Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In the initial meeting with the Egyptian officials, they showed hesitancy about the United States' role in the Sinai force. They preferred the idea of one made up of UN forces or a multinational force separate from the UN, with a minimum of American military presence.¹⁵¹ Much of the hesitance towards American military presence in their country came down to perceptions. They highlighted the importance of maintaining an acceptable image. How would the Egyptian public interpret this? How would Egypt be perceived among states in Africa and the Middle East if they allowed full American military presence on its territory? On April 5, Haig met with President Sadat, who seemed to go against his ministers' sentiments and was positive, if not to a full American force, at least to a substantial U.S. participation in a multinational force. However, Sadat pointed out that he would need help with "public presentation."¹⁵²

The UN peacekeeping force mentioned in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was initially thought to be the UN Emergency Force (UNEF), already in place in the Sinai since the end of the war in October 1973. The mandate was set to expire in July 1979, and the Security Council would have to vote to extend it. However, the issue never came to a vote at the UN Security Council as the Soviet Union had threatened to use its veto power. The most likely cause for the Russian's actions on the subject was a continuation of their protest against the peace treaty that the Soviet Union stated was a "betrayal of Arab interests."¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Memo, Kemp to Allen, "Report on the Visit of Secretary Haig to the Middle East, April 5-10, 1981", 8 May 1981, RRL.

¹⁵¹ Memo, Kemp to Allen, "Report on the Visit of Secretary Haig to the Middle East, April 5-10, 1981", 8 May 1981, RRL.

¹⁵² Memo, Kemp to Allen, "Report on the Visit of Secretary Haig to the Middle East, April 5-10, 1981", 8 May 1981, RRL.

¹⁵³ James, Allen. "Symbol in Sinai: The Multinational Force and Observers*", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* Vol.14, No.03 (1985):255-271. Accessed: 6 January 2020. URL: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/03058298850140030201>. 255-257.: Teltsch, Kathleen. "U.S. and Soviet Discussing U.N. Peace Role in Sinai". *The New York Times*. Published: 8 April 1979. Accessed: 3 January 2020. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/04/08/archives/us-and-soviet-discussing-un-peace-role-in-sinai-more-meetings-are.html>.

Talks between the U.S. and the Soviet Union took place before the scheduled vote on the Sinai peacekeeping force in the UN Security Council. Nevertheless, there are no records of the matter being brought up in the UN Security Council, suggested the talks between the Soviet Union and the U.S. lead nowhere. Other than Arab solidarity and anti-Americanism, the Soviet's reason for threatening to use its veto is unknown.¹⁵⁴ However, the protest opened up for a force consisting entirely of American military personnel, which the Israeli preferred, but both Israel and Egypt could, according to the treaty, decide against any composition of the peacekeeping force they did not like. Publicly, the Egyptians did not want a purely American military force policing the Sinai, as that would not be well received by the Egyptian public or the Arab world at large.¹⁵⁵ The UNEF mandate expired in July 1979 and was not renewed. There had been no significant talk after the mandate expired, regarding the multinational force to be placed in the Sinai until the Reagan administration came into office in 1981: "President Carter committed the US to ensuring the establishment of a multinational force (MNF) to police the Sinai after Israel's final withdrawal in 1981. This commitment was then promptly forgotten until the new administration came into office."¹⁵⁶ Consequently, the Reagan administration had to decide how to proceed, how such a force could benefit or potentially hurt the administration's Middle East policy and the U.S.' position amongst the Arab countries. In the following months, the Sinai Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), became a central topic within the Reagan administration. In order to succeed in moving the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty forward and to secure confidence in the United States as a mediator in the peace process, the Reagan administration had to work out the logistics of the MFO as well as the U.S.' place and aim of participation.

Dual Purpose

Before the arrival of the American delegation in Egypt, there had been a significant amount of speculation in the Egyptian press about the possible "dual purpose" of the American contingent in the Sinai multinational force. The speculation was based on what the American forces could do or be used for beyond its original mandate. Although the multinational force's primary objective would be to enable a safe transition of the Sinai Peninsula and to be in place

¹⁵⁴ Teltsch, Kathleen. "U.S. and Soviet Discussing U.N. Peace Role in Sinai".

¹⁵⁵ Minutes, NSC Meeting, 19 March 1981, folder, "NSC 0005 19 Mar 1981 (4/4)", Box 91282, Exec. Sec. NSC Meeting File, RRL.

¹⁵⁶ Memo, Chris Shoemaker to Richard V. Allen, "NSC Meeting: Sinai Multinational Force", 27 May 1981, folder, "NSC 00010 28 May 1981 (1/2)", Box 91282, Exec. Sec. NSC Meetings, RRL.

to deter possible conflicts arising between Egypt and Israel, the deployment opened for other opportunities for the Americans. These entailed training opportunities and efforts to establish a regional military presence. However, there was a real possibility of the Egyptian officials and public seeing the deployment as an establishment of a permanent American military base on their land. Members of the NSC expected the U.S. could be accused of using its participation in the force as a pretense for getting its forces, which were earmarked for contingencies in the Persian Gulf, closer to the intended areas. NSC member Geoffrey Kemp advised Richard Allen that the public line should be held strictly to the goal of strengthening the peace between Egypt and Israel. Kemp also noted: “Bear in mind that there are some ulterior purposes we want to use this force for, but they should be unstated rather than explicit.”¹⁵⁷ Meaning that for whatever purpose the administration wanted to use the American contingent in the Sinai multinational force, should not be public or shared with Egypt and Israel.

A part of the United States’ goal was to have the strength and capacity to stand up against the Soviet Union, reflecting the administration’s focus on the Cold War. An aspect of that goal was to be able to limit Soviet influence in the Middle East and thereby draw in more friendly states to cooperate with the United States. “In sum, greater American military strength is the necessary umbrella for solving political problems, problems that require careful negotiation, cooperation and mutual purpose.”¹⁵⁸ That was easier said than done because of the rocky relationships between the U.S. and most of the Arab countries in the Middle East. In addition, the rivalry with the Soviet Union. The high possibility that the Soviets could invade an Arab state, particularly after the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, meant that the United States wanted the opportunity to respond quickly in a given area. Quicker reaction could be done through “forward bases”, a strategic military position to be used for tactical operations and to rotate forces through training without establishing comprehensive and permanent facilities.¹⁵⁹

Prior to the 1980s, the United States had primarily focused its military presence on the Persian Gulf. The U.S. had a permanent military contingent in the Gulf in the 1960s and 1970s, with

¹⁵⁷ Memo, Geoffrey Kemp to Richard V. Allen, “NSC Meeting on Sinai Security”, 18 March 1981, folder, “NSC 0005 19 Mar 1981 (1/4)”, Box 91282, Exec. Sec. NSC Meetings, RRL.

¹⁵⁸ Memo, Geoffrey Kemp to Norman Bailey, “Middle East Policy”, 29 April 1981, folder, “Middle East – General 1981 (April 20-30, 1981)”, Box 6, Geoffrey Kemp Files, RRL.

¹⁵⁹ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms”, (Washington DC: The Joint Staff). Accessed: 6 January 2020. URL: <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf>. 88-89.

deployments to support those who were friendly to the U.S. During the 1960s, the U.S. started to provide more extensive military support to both Saudi Arabia and Iran. The United States also became the sole supplier of military assistance to Israel. The background for the military presence in the Middle East during the decades after World War II was to contain the Soviet Union, support those the U.S. considered moderate and pro-American, and maintain its interests like oil and its strategic alliance with Israel.¹⁶⁰

Relying on the fact that there was no set definition on what a peacekeeping force was supposed to be, the Reagan administration established early on that the U.S. wanted a “combat presence” in the Sinai.¹⁶¹ Secretary Haig stated that the speculation regarding the topic in the Egyptian media had a “devastating effect” on the U.S.’s reputation and interests in the Middle East.¹⁶² Secretary Weinberger cautioned President Reagan and Haig in a NSC meeting that protection of U.S. interests, such as oil supplies, should not be “mixed up with peacekeeping efforts.”¹⁶³ If the administration were to confirm other uses for these forces publicly, it could bring the negotiation with Egypt and Israel to a halt. Egypt would be seen as a puppy for the American military and be further isolated from the surrounding Arab states. Further, dual use of an American contingent would negate U.S. efforts to maintain friendly relations with Arab countries.¹⁶⁴ If the U.S. wanted Egypt to help bringing Jordan into the autonomy negotiations with Israel, it could not risk Egypt branded a blind follower of the Americans. Therefore, the American forces’ alternative purposes could not be talked about publicly by anyone within the administration.¹⁶⁵

The dual purpose of the potential American contingency for the multinational force to police the Sinai remained a subject in the administration throughout the spring and summer of 1981. Even though the force’s composition had not yet been determined, the strategy of which country to propose participation was important. The United Nations declared that it would not partake in the Sinai force, which left the United States as the leader of the multinational force

¹⁶⁰ Sobhy, Sedky. “The U.S. Military Presence in the Middle East: Issue and Prospects”. Strategy Research Project. U.S. Army War College. 2005. Accessed: 17 December 2019. URL: <https://apps.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA432294>. 2-3.

¹⁶¹ Minutes, NSC Meeting, “National Security Council Meeting, Sinai Peacekeeping and Pakistan”, 19 March 1981, RRL.

¹⁶² Minutes, NSC Meeting, “National Security Council Meeting, Sinai Peacekeeping and Pakistan”, 19 March 1981, RRL.

¹⁶³ Minutes, NSC Meeting, “National Security Council Meeting, Sinai Peacekeeping and Pakistan”, 19 March 1981, RRL

¹⁶⁴ Minutes, NSC Meeting, “National Security Council Meeting, Sinai Peacekeeping and Pakistan”, 19 March 1981, RRL

¹⁶⁵ Minutes, NSC Meeting, “National Security Council Meeting, Sinai Peacekeeping and Pakistan”, 19 March 1981, RRL.

to oversee the withdrawal. Congress approved of American military personnel to the mission, and the U.S. reached out to several countries to secure participation.¹⁶⁶ However, there was reluctance from several countries as well as restrictions from both Israel and Egypt. Israel wanted mainly U.S. military forces and personnel and would not accept any participation from within the Soviet sphere or countries that Israel did not have diplomatic relations. On the other hand, Egypt did not want any participation by African countries to avoid conflict between the OAU and the Egyptian-Israeli treaty.¹⁶⁷

The restrictions and reluctance to partake became a challenge for the MFO to appear impartial. The United States used the MFO as a means in order to show complete commitment to the peace process to urge other countries to do the same. The presentation of the MFO became important regarding the European countries. With initial skepticism, the European Community entered a long and intense discussion on whether to participate in the MFO. For the United States, if it got the European Community to partake, it meant a demonstration of commitment to the peace process and the treaty that had been heavily criticized since its inception. It also served as a means of preventing the continuation of any European initiatives such as the Venice Declaration. Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamal Hassan Ali also stated that the inclusion of more countries in the MFO, especially Western powers, demonstrated much-welcomed support of the peace process.¹⁶⁸

Meanwhile, the MFO was a necessary means to secure the withdrawal from the Sinai. The Reagan administration also had an ulterior intent with stationing American forces at that location. The Reagan administration regarded the Middle East as a likely place for armed conflicts to arise and was therefore considered as an area where the United States required strategic placement of military personnel.¹⁶⁹ Discussions regarding the Sinai multinational force in May 1981, led to the conclusion that the placement of American forces in the Sinai could be a strategic advantage as it would allow the U.S. to respond quickly to possible conflicts or threats in the Gulf. The administration expected that the U.S. would most likely carry most of the costs for this operation, as well as contributing most of the personnel. What

¹⁶⁶ Tabory, Mala. *The Multinational Force And Observers In The Sinai: Organization, Structure and Function*. New York: Routledge (1986). E-book. Accessed: 05 May 2020. URL/DOI: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uio.no/10.4324/9780429312908>. 14-19.

¹⁶⁷ Tabory, *The Multinational Force And Observers In The Sinai: Organization*, 20-26.

¹⁶⁸ Tabory, *The Multinational Force And Observers In The Sinai: Organization*, 20-26.

¹⁶⁹ Minutes, NSC Meeting, "National Security Council Meeting, US policy for Caribbean Basin, US Relations with the PRC, and Sinai Multinational Force", 28 May 1981, folder, "NSC 00010 28 May 1981 (1/2)", Box 91282, Exec. Sec. NSC Meeting Files, RRL.

the military personnel could or could not do was understood to be highly restrictive because of the peace treaty's sensitive nature and the relations between Egypt and Israel.¹⁷⁰ Despite Secretary Weinberger's warnings that restrictions on that particular force meant it would be unavailable in an emergency, President Reagan stated, "in an emergency, we would simply tell the Egyptians and Israelis that the troops are 'going on leave' and move them where they are needed."¹⁷¹ The statement was followed by an approval from Secretary Haig and a swift change of topic. The importance of a military presence in the Middle East to protect U.S. interests outweighed the political nuances of the area. The difference in the willingness to use U.S. military forces in the Middle East, and the knowledge of the effects that could have on geopolitics and the American position. It became a balancing act between the administration's military ambition and the desire to keep Egypt a moderate and strategic state in the rivalry with the Soviet Union.¹⁷²

Economic and Military Aid

As a direct consequence of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, the United States government had initiated a military assistance program for Egypt. The program involved increased financial aid for Egypt, and an increase in support from the security assistance program, a program used by the U.S. government to promote American national security interests. One such interest was to assist countries that the U.S. regarded as moderate and friendly to the West. A friendly country to the U.S. in the Middle East, such as Egypt, would mean a secure location for American forces to be stationed. Such a placement of military forces could offer support to the U.S.'s partners in case of conflict, both local and regional, that could threaten the stability of the Middle East as well as threats posed by the Soviet Union. All such conflicts in the Middle East could potentially hurt American interests.¹⁷³

The purpose of the various aid programs was to help modernize and strengthen the Egyptian military forces and consequently phase out the Soviet military equipment. Deputy Secretary

¹⁷⁰ Minutes, NSC Meeting, "National Security Council Meeting, US policy for Caribbean Basin, US Relations with the PRC, and Sinai Multinational Force", 28 May 1981, RRL.

¹⁷¹ Minutes, NSC Meeting, "National Security Council Meeting, US policy for Caribbean Basin, US Relations with the PRC, and Sinai Multinational Force", 28 May 1981, RRL.

¹⁷² Minutes, NSC Meeting, "National Security Council Meeting, US policy for Caribbean Basin, US Relations with the PRC, and Sinai Multinational Force", 28 May 1981, RRL.

¹⁷³ Document, "US Military Assistance to Egypt -- Egypt's requirements", date unknow, folder, "NSC 00018 (1)", Box 91282, Exec. Sec. NSC Meeting Files, RRL.: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms", (Washington DC: The Joint Staff). Accessed: 7 January 2020. URL: <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf>. 88-89, 191.

of Defense Frank Carlucci argued that there was an “incongruity present when one visits Egypt and is greeted by officers very friendly to the US who must rely on Soviet-provided tanks and MIGs for defense.”¹⁷⁴ Maintaining good relations with Egypt meant that the administration had to agree on how substantial the increase in aid would be. The increase had to be enough to show the Reagan administration’s willingness to help those who were on their side. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger stated that it was “important to the US for Egypt to be strong and friendly.”¹⁷⁵ Being able to show that the U.S treated its partners “even-handedly” by bringing the aid for Egypt up to the level only second to Israel, went beyond just the partnership with Egypt as it would boost the perception of the United States in the Middle East.¹⁷⁶

However, there were some expected challenges by increased aid to Egypt, from roughly \$1.68 billion in 1981 to \$2.3 billion by 1983. The increased military capacity of one of Israel’s neighboring countries was expected to cause resistance among the Israelis and its supporters in the United States. The amount itself also presented a possible challenge: too little and Sadat might take it as a decline in American interest and answer with a reduced commitment to the U.S. Too much, and there would be harsher resistance from Israel.¹⁷⁷ This kind of aid and financial support also had to go through Congress. Therefore, the proposal and amount had to be well justified. Nevertheless, Haig and Weinberger did not expect too much trouble in presenting the aid package to Congress, as Sadat was well-liked in the United States. However, the budget was already tight; therefore, Haig and Weinberger urged President Reagan to be personally involved in achieving approval.¹⁷⁸

In the first months of the Reagan administration, there ruled a complicated system for communication within the foreign policy apparatus. Although the NSC staff researched and wrote policy papers and reported to the National Security Advisor, there was restricted communication between the head of the NSC and the President. Except for the daily briefings, instead of reporting directly to President Reagan on other matters the NSC worked on, Allen

¹⁷⁴ Minutes, NSC meeting, “Gulf of Sidra Exercise; US Naval Presence in Indian Ocean; Security Assistance for Egypt”, 31 July 1981, folder, “NSC 00018 (1)”, Box 91282, Exec. Sec. NSC Meetings, RRL.

¹⁷⁵ Minutes, NSC meeting, “Gulf of Sidra Exercise; US Naval Presence in Indian Ocean; Security Assistance for Egypt”, 31 July 1981, RRL.

¹⁷⁶ Minutes, NSC meeting, “Gulf of Sidra Exercise; US Naval Presence in Indian Ocean; Security Assistance for Egypt”, 31 July 1981, RRL.: Memo, Haig and Weinberger to President Reagan, “Five-Year Military Assistance Planning for Egypt”, 30 July 1981, folder, “NSC 0018 (2)”, Box 91282, Exec. Sec. NSC Meetings, RRL.

¹⁷⁷ Memo, Haig and Weinberger to President Reagan, “Five-Year Military Assistance Planning for Egypt”, 30 July 1981, RRL.

¹⁷⁸ Memo, Haig and Weinberger to President Reagan, “Five-Year Military Assistance Planning for Egypt”, 30 July 1981, RRL.

reported to Ed Meese, who served as Counsellor to the President. Along with Meese, there were Chief of Staff James Baker and Baker's deputy chief of staff, Michael Deaver. These three effectively ran the White House early in the first Reagan presidential period.¹⁷⁹

Communication difficulties were intensified when "troika"-member Meese established three coordinating committees, one for foreign policy, one for defense, and one for intelligence. Later the troika established another committee, this time for crisis management, which later became the National Security Planning Group (NSPG). The development by the White House aides all but ignored Secretary of State Haig's suggested structure for foreign policy. The new structure also did not take into consideration that there was a National Security Adviser. Haig was from the beginning in regular conflicts with the "troika" and other White House officials.¹⁸⁰ The new structure led to less communication between the NSC and the President. In addition, it separated the State Department, the Department of Defense, and the CIA. An example of the new structure was a policy paper on the Middle East in late April 1981. To gauge what it should work on, the Planning and Evaluation Directorate, under the NSC, requested other directorates' views on areas of concern. The Planning and Evaluation Directorate was to "identify likely crises, evaluate and analyze available information, and formulate policy alternatives either to head off crisis or to deal with it if it occurs."¹⁸¹ Norman Bailey, who in May became Director of the Planning and Evaluation Directorate, sent the request to Donald Gregg of the Intelligence Directorate and James Lilley of the Political Affairs Directorate, both under the NSC. Lilley, in turn, sent it to seven members of the Political Affairs Directorate. Among them was Geoffrey Kemp, whose area of responsibility was the Near East and South Asia. Geoffrey Kemp promptly returned a paper on Middle East policy to Norman Bailey. The first concern the paper listed as a policy for the Middle East was that the United States should "maintain a strong united front" against the Soviet Union and its expanding sphere of influence.¹⁸² Second to the cold war rivalry stood the pursuit of peaceful settlements of local conflicts.¹⁸³ The power structures in the early phases of the Reagan administration were defined by the troika at the White House, Haig's conflict with Meese, Baker, and Deaver, as well as his belief that he should run the foreign policy

¹⁷⁹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 215-219.; Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 133.

¹⁸⁰ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 134.

¹⁸¹ Memo, Norman Bailey to Donald Gregg, James Lilley, and Robert Schweitzer, "Areas of Analysis", 23 April 1981, folder, "Middle East – General 1981 (April 20-30, 1981)", Box 6, Geoffrey Kemp Files, RRL.

¹⁸² Memo, Geoffrey Kemp to Norman Bailey, "Middle East Policy", 29 April 1981, folder, "Middle East – General 1981 (April 20-30, 1981)", Box 6, Geoffrey Kemp Files, RRL.

¹⁸³ Memo, Kemp to Bailey, "Middle East Policy", 29 April 1981, RRL.

structures. At the top of that was Reagan's passive leadership, where he preferred that his aides "sit around and argue issues," whether or not they had direct responsibility for or knowledge of the issue at hand.¹⁸⁴

Next on the policy paper was the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was introduced as a problem with extensive influence in the greater Middle East but then degraded to one-of-many conflicts; "But it is not the only conflict, and even if it was resolved, peace in the Middle East will still be a long way off."¹⁸⁵ That continued the distancing from the Carter administration, which was characteristic early on for the Reagan administration. The degrading of the Arab-Israeli conflict was also in line with the position taken by both President Reagan and Secretary Haig in January 1981. It involved the administration to limit its attention to the conflict and redirect its focus to the Persian Gulf, which was where the Soviet Union containment line was. This line of argument matched President Reagan's continuous focus on the Cold War.

By June 1981, no formal policy for the Middle East had been made official except for the "often expressed determination to stand up to the Soviets."¹⁸⁶ Despite the lack of an official policy, the NSC analyzed policy for the Middle East, and specific issues regarding the Middle East like aid for Egypt, weapons sales, military exercises were on the agenda. On June 16, President Reagan was to have a press conference. Ahead of the press conference, there were uncertainties because the President would have to answer questions about the Middle East as a consequence of an Israeli attack on an Iraqi nuclear plant ten days prior. NSC staff member Kemp told Allen, "What he says tomorrow will set our policy" ... "In order to assure that we are all thinking along the same tracks, there are some suggestion that if the press conference could be postponed [...]."¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the press conference went on as planned. The President did, as expected, get questioned about both the Middle East. Reagan answered: "Well, there seems to be a feeling as if an address on foreign policy is somehow evidence that you have a foreign policy, and until you make an address, you don't have one. And I challenge that. I'm satisfied that we do have a foreign policy."¹⁸⁸ On the topic of the Middle East there

¹⁸⁴ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 134-137.

¹⁸⁵ Memo, Kemp to Bailey, "Middle East Policy", 29 April 1981, RRL.

¹⁸⁶ The President's News Conference – 16 June 1981, q&a under "Foreign Policy". Accessed: 15 February 2020. URL: <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/61681b>.

¹⁸⁷ Memo, Geoffrey Kemp to Richard Allen, "The President's Press Conference and Middle East Policy", 15 June 1981, folder, "Middle East General (5/13/81-6/15/81)", Box 44, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

¹⁸⁸ The President's News Conference – 16 June 1981, q&a under "Israeli Attack against Iraq", "Foreign Policy."

was no mention of a specific policy.¹⁸⁹ The ambiguous statement on whether there existed a set policy for the Middle East embodies an essential characteristic of the first term of the Reagan administration. Although President Reagan and Secretary of State Haig agreed that the United States should focus on the Cold War in limiting the influence of the Soviet Union, there was no public and explicit policy on what the administration had planned for the Middle East to reach this goal.

The Assassination of Anwar Sadat

At 1103Z hours 6 October during the Armed Forces Day Parade approx. 7 armed gunmen dressed in military uniforms climbed from the bed of a truck directly in front of the review stand where Pres. Sadat was seated and began throwing grenades and shooting.¹⁹⁰

Egypt regarded 6 October as a national holiday to mark the military triumph over Israeli forces in the war of October 1973. The day was celebrated by a grand military parade at the Grave of the Unknown Soldier in Cairo. Along the path, there were stands for the crowds viewing the parade. There was no separation between the stands and the street.¹⁹¹ President Anwar Sadat was seated at street level with Vice President Hosni Mubarak and almost all the Egyptian senior officials. In addition, military and religious leaders were seated next to-, and behind the President. A truck pulling an artillery piece for the parade stopped in front of the stand, and six men in military uniforms jumped out. First, they threw grenades at the Egyptian officials, the first of which did not explode, but the second did. The assassins then started shooting at the stands and into the crowds. President Sadat, Vice President Mubarak, and Minister of Defense Abu Ghazala were hit.¹⁹²

Immediate reports after the shooting told that President Sadat had sustained injuries but that these were not life-threatening. It would be several hours before an official statement was made. Vice President Mubarak and Defense Minister Abd al-Halim Abu Ghazala came out of

¹⁸⁹ Memo, Kemp to Allen, "The President's Press Conference and Middle East Policy", 15 June 1981, RRL.: The President's News Conference – 16 June 1981, q&a under "Israeli Attack against Iraq", "Foreign Policy" and "Middle East."

¹⁹⁰ Cable, Cairo Embassy to DirNSA, "Follow-up nr one", DTG 12:39, 6 October 1981, folder "Egypt – Assassination of Sadat (10/6/81) (2)", Box 34, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

¹⁹¹ Kahana, Ephraim & Sagit Stivi-Kebris. "The Assassination of Anwar al-Sadat: An Intelligence Failure". *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, No.27 Vol.1 (2014): 179-192. Accessed: 22 October 2019. DOI: 11603011866709. 179.

¹⁹² Cable, Cairo to Secretary of State, "Assassination attempt against President Sadat", 6 October 1981 (DTG: 61536Z Oct 81), folder, "Crisis Management (Sadat Assassination) (1)", Box 27, Exec. Sec. Subject File, RRL.

the ordeal with minor injuries. Later, the investigations showed that the attack was an isolated attempt at Sadat's life and not a more extensive coup plot. In Cairo, the American embassy reported that there were no related incidents following the shooting at government buildings or towards other Egyptian officials.¹⁹³ Several hours passed between the attack on President Sadat and an official Egyptian statement announcing his death. The delay mounted to some uncertainty among the American administration members, and enough time passed so that statements from President Reagan and the State Department wishing Sadat a "speedy recovery" were sent out.¹⁹⁴ However, later that afternoon, Haig recalled that during a luncheon with the Prime Minister of Thailand, Sherwood "Woody" Goldberg, who was Haig's Chief of Staff, passed him a note which contained information that Sadat had died at the scene from his injuries.¹⁹⁵

Two days after the assassination, Secretary Haig shared his view on the shooting with the President. Haig's memo detailing his thoughts on the assassination was sent shortly before his departure to Egypt as part of the American delegation to attend Sadat's funeral. At that point, the administration had no tangible evidence related to how the shooting could have happened or who was responsible for the shooting. A Lebanese group calling itself the Independent Group for the Liberation of Egypt had claimed responsibility for the assassination, though U.S. intelligence had no evidence that could legitimize this claim. Secretary Haig had several ideas about the assassination ranging from probable to the more obscure. To President Reagan, Haig argued that even if this was an isolated event, orchestrated by a small number of fanatics as the Egyptians had reported, the U.S. had now suffered "a major strategic setback" in the Middle East.¹⁹⁶ The U.S. had relied on Sadat and his personal traits and commitment to the peace process and the United States, in addition to the several occasions during this first year, showed that personal relationships were important. In a report from Haig's trip to Egypt in April, he remarked that even though some of Sadat's ministers might have had objections, it was Sadat's word that counted:¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Cable, Cairo to Secretary of State, "Assassination attempt against President Sadat", 6 October 1981, RRL.

¹⁹⁴ Cable, Washington to Cairo, "Message from the President", 6 October 1981 (DTG: 61348Z Oct 81), folder "Egypt - Assassination of Sadat (10/6/81) (2)", Box 34, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

¹⁹⁵ Haig, Alexander M. *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984. 322.

¹⁹⁶ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, "U.S. Position in the Middle East", 8 October 1981, folder "Middle East General (6/16/81-10/8/81)", Box 44, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

¹⁹⁷ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, "U.S. Position in the Middle East", 8 October 1981, RRL.: Spot Commentary, CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, 6 October 1981, folder, "Crisis Management (Sadat Assassination) (1), Box 27, Exec. Sec. Subject File, RRL.

Hence, a one-on-one with Sadat is probably more important than any other country [...]. This is both good and bad. So long as Sadat accepts our initiatives and trusts us, we can deal directly with him and know that his ministers will go along. It means that when President Reagan meets him, President Sadat can probably do things that would be impossible, even with the Secretary of State.¹⁹⁸

In the same report, it was suggested that the administration should work up a detailed analysis of Sadat and his personality so that President Reagan and others in the Cabinet would know how to deal with him. “Arab countries’ policy is often less important than personalities.”¹⁹⁹ The administration had relied on Sadat’s style of foreign policy, desire for peace, and continued aid from the United States. The U.S. had obliged to maintain a moderate ally in the Middle East. At that point, the danger for the Americans was what would happen with the transition of power in Egypt. Would the new regime continue in Sadat’s footsteps with the peace process and relations with the U.S., or would it try to quell the internal and external unrest by moving closer to the Arab countries?²⁰⁰

Another aspect Haig pointed out in the immediate aftermath was the possibility that this was not just an isolated event. He stressed the dangerous possibility for increased Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt: “we may have seen just the tip of the iceberg and that there could be a potentially dangerous trend toward Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt.”²⁰¹ With the transition of power and uncertainty surrounding the succession after Sadat’s death, Haig went on to suggest the possibility that some Egyptian officials might have been in on the assassination plot. Haig himself pointed out the complete lack of evidence for this claim, despite conveying this point to the President.²⁰²

Whichever of these interpretations is accurate, our style of dealing with Mubarak now (as distinct from how we deal with Egypt) must be extremely careful. The pressures on him will be to move his policies toward the Arab mainstream on the Palestinian issue. Our job must be to strengthen moderate forces in Egypt so that he is more inclined to follow policies which serve U.S. interests.²⁰³

To Reagan, Haig named two main approaches the U.S. needed to take. The first was to revitalize the peace process, which in the first ten months had not been a high priority for the administration. Haig recommended, in stark contrast to his position earlier in the year, that

¹⁹⁸ Memo, Geoffrey Kemp to Richard Allen, “Report on the Visit of Secretary Haig to the Middle East, April 5-10, 1981”, 8 May 1981, folder, “Middle East General (5/13/81-6/15/81)”, Box 44, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

¹⁹⁹ Memo, Kemp to Allen, “Report on the Visit of Secretary Haig to the Middle East, April 5-10, 1981”, 8 May 1981, RRL.

²⁰⁰ Memo, Kemp to Allen, “Report on the Visit of Secretary Haig to the Middle East, April 5-10, 1981”, 8 May 1981, RRL.

²⁰¹ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, “U.S. Position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, RRL.

²⁰² Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, “U.S. Position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, RRL.

²⁰³ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, “U.S. Position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, RRL.

this was a matter of high priority in which they “must succeed.”²⁰⁴ At the beginning of the year, Haig had put the Soviet threat as the primary strategic issue in the Middle East and attempted to change the administration’s focus from the Arab-Israeli conflict to the Gulf. During a news conference on January 28, 1981, Haig shared his perception of the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations, that officials within the U.S. government would be misguided “to inject any sense of urgency in our view of this matter.”²⁰⁵ Second, Haig argued that the U.S. had to be prepared to use its financial assets to support its friends in the Middle East. Aid and the security assistance program were a well-documented approach for the Middle East in general and Egypt specifically. The assassination of Sadat would be a turning point for the Secretary of State.²⁰⁶

Reactions in the Middle East after the assassination were mixed. The response forwarded by several Arab states displayed the feeling of betrayal after Sadat approached peace with Israel, visited Jerusalem, and signed the Camp David Accords. Sadat’s actions in the 1970s led to hardly any outcries of sadness and condolences from the Arab countries. Libya seemed to celebrate a victory as an unscheduled broadcast on Libyan radio announced that the Egyptian regime had “finally collapsed.”²⁰⁷ The broadcast continued with a statement that Egyptians were marching in the streets, “The Egyptian ruler has fallen dead covered in blood [...] Thus every unjust man will meet his end.”²⁰⁸ Syrian, Iranian, and Iraqi all reported that Sadat’s assassination was the “death of a traitor.”²⁰⁹ Other Arab countries such as Jordan, Kuwait, and Bahrain did not comment on his death at all, while Israel condemned the assassination.²¹⁰

Aftermath

The U.S. government was aware that President Sadat’s death gave the impression to other countries, particularly in the Middle East, that the U.S. regional security strategy was shaken.

²⁰⁴ Memo, Haig to President Reagan, “U.S. Position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, RRL: Memo, Kemp to Allen, “U.S. position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, folder, “Middle East General (6/16/81-10/8/81)”, Box 44, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

²⁰⁵ Memo, Haig to Reagan, “U.S. Position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, RRL.: Memo, Douglas Feith to Bailey, Kemp, Lord and Tanter, “Arab-Israeli Conflict”, 25 June 1981, folder, “Middle East General (6/16/81-10/8/81)”, Box 44, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

²⁰⁶ Memo, Haig to Reagan, “U.S. Position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, RRL.

²⁰⁷ FBIS 36 “Tripoli claims As-Sadat killed in attack”, text from Libyan radio, 6 October 1981 (DTG: 61255Z Oct 81), folder “Egypt – Assassination of Sadat (10/6/81) (2)”, Box 34, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

²⁰⁸ FBIS 36 “Tripoli claims As-Sadat killed in attack”, text from Libyan radio, 6 October 1981 (DTG: 61255Z Oct 81), RRL.

²⁰⁹ Memo, Richard V. Allen to President Reagan, “Reaction to Sadat Assassination”, 7 October 1981, folder “Egypt – Assassination of Sadat (10/8/81)”, Box 34, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

²¹⁰ Memo, Richard V. Allen to President Reagan, “Reaction to Sadat Assassination”, 7 October 1981, RRL.

The loss of such a friend to the United States could put a question mark on whether the United States was able to protect its partners and allies. Given that both the Carter and Reagan administrations had relied heavily on Sadat alone to get the peace process going and to get other Arab countries on board, put pressure on how the relations would be between the U.S. and Egypt post-Sadat. Egypt was a new ally who had entered an unsteady peace with its neighbor, Israel, a U.S. ally, which had created unrest for both Egypt and the United States in the Middle East. Uncertainty among American officials about the Egyptian succession, and how the new leader would perform compared to Sadat meant that the Reagan administration had to reconsider its security strategy for the Middle East. Just days after the assassination, Secretary Haig conveyed to President Reagan the severity of the situation they now faced and that “business as usual” was not an option.²¹¹ Haig had earlier that year publicly moved away from the importance of the peace process and wanted the U.S. strategy in the Middle East to be more focused on the Gulf. Since the assassination changed the composition of the American strategy, Haig now stressed the importance of getting the peace process to the forefront of the administration’s plan for Egypt and other Arab states.²¹²

The peace process had become a continuation of the Camp David Accords, notably the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, and the basis for the calmer state between the long-term enemies, Israel, and Egypt. Under the leadership of Sadat, relations between the U.S. and Egypt had been smooth sailing. President Reagan and his administration relied on the fact that they could consider Egypt as “stable and friendly” to be able to get Jordan to join the peace process.²¹³ The worst-case scenario in the time after Sadat’s death was that the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai could be stopped, and peace between the two countries would come undone.²¹⁴

Sometime after Sadat’s assassination, it became known that members of an Islamist fundamentalist group, al-Jihad, which had fractured off from the Muslim Brotherhood, was behind the shooting. If this information reached U.S. intelligence and the Reagan administration before the trials and executions in April 1982 is unknown. Secretary Haig had pointed out after the shooting that: “[...] we may have seen just the tip of the iceberg and that there could be a potentially dangerous trend toward Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt.”²¹⁵

²¹¹ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, “U.S. position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, RRL.

²¹² Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, “U.S. position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, RRL.

²¹³ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 249.

²¹⁴ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 249.

²¹⁵ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, “U.S. Position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, RRL.

However, this was not anything new in Egypt; the fundamentalism was already there. The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928, had a long history in Egyptian society. However, after an assassination attempt on Nasser in 1954, the Brotherhood was banned, many arrested, and the rest was forced underground. The ban resulted in fractioning, and more radical elements of the group were formed. These new radical formations criticized The Brotherhood for being too moderate. However, most groups shared in condemning the West and saw the “foreign occupation” of Egypt as evidence that the Muslims were failing to live according to their religion.²¹⁶

Radicalization heightened after Sadat drew closer to the U.S. and pushed forth with the peace treaty with Israel. Signing what many considered a separate peace with Israel in March 1979, and by consequence abandoning the Palestinians. The deal with Israel resulted in the isolation of Egyptian society from the rest of the Arab world, which did little to calm these new radical fractions. 1979 was also the year when the Shah, backed by the U.S., fell in an Islamic revolution, and the Americans lost a crucial player in the Middle East. Although far from Egypt, the revolution had an impact on the radical elements in Egyptian society. It not only showed the fundamentalists that revolution was possible, but it also showed the leaders that revolution was possible. Just months before Sadat’s assassination, he began on a more “systematic oppression of Islamists,” including more moderate sections, and just one month before the shooting 1500 were arrested.²¹⁷ These arrests marked the peak of the conflict between the Egyptian state, personified by Sadat and his actions, and the Islamists.²¹⁸

Just two weeks after Sadat’s assassination, President Reagan was set to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Fahd. This meeting was vital as it was so close in time to the shooting, and the Crown Prince would be looking for any indication of how the U.S. thought about the new Egyptian leadership or if there were changes in strategy. Secretary Haig, in preparation, conveyed to President Reagan the setting for the meeting and preferred objectives. One of these objectives was the “Continuity of Egyptian policies and US support of Egypt” and “Regional stability in the wake of Sadat assassination.”²¹⁹ The goal with this preparation and

²¹⁶ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, “U.S. Position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, RRL.: Nedoroscik, J.A. “Extremist Groups in Egypt”. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol.14, No.2 (2002): 47-76. Accessed: 9 October 2019. DOI: 10.1080/714005613. 49-55.

²¹⁷ Rogan, *Araberne*, 452-455.: Kahana and Stivi-Kerbis. “The Assassination of Anwar al-Sadat: An Intelligence Failure”, 182.

²¹⁸ Kassem, *Egyptian Politics*, 144.

²¹⁹ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, “Your Meeting With Crown Prince Fahd October 23, 2:00-3:00 p.m., at CANCUN”, date unknow, folder, “Middle East Briefing Papers 1981”, Box 5, Geoffrey Kemp Files, RRL.

the meeting was to bolster confidence that the U.S. would continue its relations with Egypt and the peace process and quell any unrest that might ensue from Sadat's sudden passing. Not only did the administration have to show that the U.S. continued its commitment to friendly states in the Middle East and its pursuit of peace. Haig also pointed out that "We are also determined to alter the impression [...] that it can be fatal to be a friend of ours."²²⁰

The overarching subject of the American policy for the Middle East continued to affect how the administration handled Sadat's death, meeting the surrounding Arab countries' governments such as Saudi Arabia. The threat of the Soviet Union and its partners was still very much a focal point. The administration saw that "Many in the Middle East will interpret Sadat's passing as a severe blow to US regional security strategy."²²¹ If the U.S. was seen as weakened, it could entice the Soviet Union and countries that were more anti-American to take advantage of the situation of Egypt and the peace process losing its leader.²²² It meant that the administration had to support Mubarak and secure a smooth transition of power to save its image and strengthen Egypt. Not displaying uncertainty about Egypt in the weeks following the assassination became paramount for the U.S. position in the Middle East.

Succession

Proper procedure after Sadat's death was, according to the Egyptian constitution, that the Speaker of the People's Assembly assumed the presidency for 60 days to organize an election. Although Vice President Mubarak had been Sadat's personal favorite, Defense minister Abu Ghazala and Foreign minister Hassan Ali had been pointed out as candidates should Mubarak lose support.²²³ Before his death, Sadat had initiated an extensive strike against his opposition and fundamentalists, not seen since he took power after Nasser's death in 1970. After ten years in power, Sadat had many enemies, both in Egypt and amongst the Arab countries. This created unrest when it came to the succession. There were several options considered by U.S. intelligence and the Reagan administration.²²⁴

²²⁰ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, "Your Meeting With Crown Prince Fahd October 23, 2:00-3:00 p.m., at CANCUN", date unknow, RRL.

²²¹ Memo, Haig to President Reagan, "Your Meeting With Crown Prince Fahd", date unknow, RRL.

²²² Memo, Haig to President Reagan, "Your Meeting With Crown Prince Fahd", date unknow, RRL.

²²³ Report, CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, "Egypt: The Succession Issue", date unknown, folder, "Crisis Management (Sadat Assassination) (1)", Box 27, Exec. Sec. Subject File, RRL.

²²⁴ Report, CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, "Egypt: The Succession Issue", date unknown, RRL.

First, a regime led by Mubarak or another in Sadat's close circle was most likely. It was assumed that a regime led by Mubarak, for the most part, would continue relations with the United States. Nevertheless, the primary priority would be the consolidation of power. A possibility that was fronted by the intelligence community was that the new regime would want to recover Egypt's relations with other Arab countries, maybe at the expense of Egypt's new relations with Israel. Although the U.S. deemed a complete reversal of the peace treaty to be unlikely, Egypt could make political moves to get closer to its fellow Arab states, thereby provoking Israel.²²⁵

A significant concern when there was an assassination like the one of Sadat, is what the armed forces would do. A new president would need the military's support, at least that of some of its prominent leaders. In the event of further unrest between the Islamist fundamentalists and the state, it would be likely that the Egyptian armed forces could intervene and take control, inserting a military regime. U.S. intelligence assumed that such a regime would continue relations with the Americans but would also try and move closer to its Arab neighbors. It was also deemed unlikely that a revolutionary regime would take power after Sadat, either to the extreme left or right.²²⁶

Sadat's wish for whom to take over his presidency was his vice president, and former General in the Air Force, Hosni Mubarak. Sadat wished for a smooth transition of power like his own when former Egyptian President Nasser died. To prepare, Sadat had put Mubarak through something close to an apprenticeship for the presidency and Mubarak was allowed to develop his own power base and was appointed acting president when Sadat was out of the country.²²⁷ After the assassination, despite apparent unrest, the transition of power went over smoothly, and Mubarak took over the presidency already on October 14, 1981. Mubarak, an unknown in the political arena until Sadat made him Vice President in 1975 and lacking the charisma and flamboyancy of both Nasser and Sadat, was viewed as an interim leader. He was considered not to have enough political skills and maneuvering to stay in power for any significant length of time, especially with the current internal political climate in Egypt.²²⁸

²²⁵ Report, CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, "Egypt: The Succession Issue", date unknown, RRL.

²²⁶ Report, CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, "Egypt: The Succession Issue", date unknown, RRL.

²²⁷ Report, CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, "Egypt: The Succession Issue", date unknown, RRL.

²²⁸ Report, CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, "Egypt: The Succession Issue", date unknown, RRL: Hashim, Ahmed. "The Egyptian Military, Part Two: From Mubarak Onward", *Middle East Policy* Vol. 18, No.4 (2011): 106-128. Accessed: 14 January 2020. DOI: [10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00514.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00514.x), 106.

Conclusion

Although the Reagan administration had a lot on its plate at the time of the inauguration in January 1981, a Middle East policy was slow to develop. With regards to Egypt, the Reagan administration first and foremost had to tackle obligations set by the former President, Jimmy Carter. The United States had gained a new friendly Arab state in the Middle East on its side in the superpower rivalry of the Cold War. Despite President Reagan and Secretary of State Haig's wish to distance this administration from the Arab-Israeli conflict and focus more on the Persian Gulf and the Cold War, these specific obligations in the Egyptian-Israeli treaty demanded attention. During the spring and summer, the Sinai multinational force for the Israeli withdrawal was a central topic of policy development. These discussions showcased how the administration wanted to expand its military presence in the Middle East through the Sinai MFO to limit Soviet influence in the Gulf region. It also showed that the prospect of success in the Arab-Israeli conflict was an essential instigator for the Reagan administration's involvement. The aim was to remain as the sole mediator and limit interference by other Western powers as well as the Soviet Union in both the Middle East and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The first months of the Reagan presidency displayed a distinct move away from the Arab-Israeli conflict and peace process. A set of factors could be contributed to this, though the Cold War throned the list. The Soviets had prior to 1981 showed several signs of a more aggressive stance as they invaded Afghanistan in 1979. There also reigned a fear that the Soviets would take advantage of the fall of the Shah, and the Iran-Iraq war that broke out in late 1980. These events gave peace process-sceptics Reagan and Haig premise for moving the Arab-Israeli peace process down on the list of priorities.²²⁹

Sadat, one of the original architects of the Camp David accords and the peace process, became heavily reliant on good relations with the U.S. and its aid programs after Egypt switched sides in the Cold War. Reporting within the Reagan administration showed how Sadat was more willing to allow the U.S. military into the Sinai area and how his word counted more than his ministers. Cultivation of a good personal relationship between Reagan and Sadat was used to be able to sway Sadat as the U.S. needed him and Egypt to stay within the peace agreement with Israel and remain a U.S. friendly among the Arab countries in the

²²⁹ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 245-247.

Middle East.²³⁰ The continuation of the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt meant less risk to Israel, which was regarded as a “formidable strategic asset” to the United States.²³¹ In turn, this meant a stronger position for the Americans and their interests in the Middle East.²³²

The steady relationship with Sadat ended abruptly in October 1981 when Sadat was assassinated. This moment marked a substantial turn, especially for Secretary Haig, who in fear of losing a strategic “friend,” urged President Reagan that the administration would have to bring the peace process back to the forefront of their Middle East policy. The importance of keeping the peace between Egypt and Israel, thereby reduce the risk of conflict between the Arab states and their long-term adversary, suddenly became relevant again.

What characterized Reagan’s administration and Reagan’s leadership style the first year, was an unwillingness to or even a lack of interest in making decisions on specific issues: “He was also remarkably uninterested in the kind of detail that fascinated his predecessor.”²³³ More broad lines such as limiting Soviet influence, strengthening Israel by keeping Egypt friendly and strong, made up much of the policy agenda. On another note on developing policy, due to the size and inefficiency of the NSC-to-Cabinet communication, implementation of issues up for discussion was difficult to find: “Big policy papers were discussed, but little evidence of them or their impact emerged.”²³⁴

At the end of Reagan’s first year as President, there was a new leader in Egypt. The sudden shift in leadership resulted in several uncertainties for the administration and the year ahead. At the forefront was the impending Israeli withdrawal from Sinai and how the Arab-Israeli peace process would look in 1982. The peace process had been the cornerstone of the relations between the United States and Egypt had been downgraded at the expense of the American position in the Persian Gulf. Both the U.S. and Egypt countries had gained from the new partnership. Egypt gained its territory and oil fields and increased financial support from the United States. This foundation was no longer as secure in the post-Sadat era and going into Reagan’s second year as President.

²³⁰ Memo, Geoffrey Kemp to Richard Allen, “Report on the Visit of Secretary Haig to the Middle East, April 5-10, 1981”, 8 May 1981, folder, “Middle East General (5/13/81-6/15/81)”, Box 44, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

²³¹ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 246.

²³² Quandt, *Peace Process*, 246.

²³³ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 246.

²³⁴ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 246.: Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 222.

Chapter 4

“Crisis of Confidence”

American uncertainties about Egyptian resolute, and Egyptian uncertainties about U.S. capability

The end of 1981 and the beginning of Reagan’s second year in office brought on several changes. The death of President Anwar Sadat brought the peace process back to the forefront of the Reagan administration’s Middle East policy. The subsequent power transition in Egypt resulted in grave concerns over the stability of the regime. The final stages of the Sinai withdrawal process created uncertainties for all parties involved, and the summer of 1982 brought the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Internally there were changes to the administration, most notably the positions of National Security Advisor and Secretary of State. What considerations were taken regarding the U.S.-Egyptian relationship in 1982, and how was foreign policy developed with a new Egyptian President? How did events such as the Lebanon crisis influence policymaking towards Egypt?

The assassination of Egyptian President Sadat in October 1981 sent immediate shock waves through the Reagan administration. However, it did not alter the relationship between the two countries in any significant way – at least not initially. Nevertheless, the Arab-Israeli peace process was brought up, and in the immediate aftermath, considered to be of severe importance.²³⁵ The late President Sadat had managed to charm the American people and Congress to such an extent that in public opinion polls, Egypt was considered equally as important to the U.S. as Israel.²³⁶ Hosni Mubarak, the new Egyptian President, was neither as grand a personality as Nasser nor was he eager to publicly advertise Egypt’s ever closer relations to the U.S. as Sadat had. The understated appearance served to calm internal unrest

²³⁵ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, “U.S. Position in the Middle East”, 8 October 1981, folder “Middle East General (6/16/81-10/8/81)”, Box 44, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

²³⁶ Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, 19.

in Egypt, which primarily resulted from the isolation from the rest of the Arab states in the Middle East after Camp David. Factors like losing Sadat, the instigator, and one of the principal architects of the peace process, and the unrest in Egypt became apparent at the beginning of 1982. These all meant that the Reagan administration had to find a way to support their friend and partner and not let the progress made under Sadat's rule slip away. Mubarak had reassured both Reagan and Israeli Prime Minister Begin that he and Egypt would remain committed to the Camp David Accords and the peace process.²³⁷ Nonetheless, the reassurance did not calm the tensions before the final Sinai withdrawal. In addition, there were increasing tensions between the United States and Israel.

The Reagan administration knew that although newly elected Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak had been Sadat's choice as a successor, he was still not completely secure in his position as President. Internal unrest and high expectations reigned, and Mubarak had to consolidate his power. U.S. intelligence regarding the transition of power after the assassination argued that when Sadat took over after Nasser's death in 1970, even though it went smoothly, it took over a year before he had consolidated his power. There had also been a plot against Sadat in May 1971 to challenge his position as President.²³⁸ Mubarak certainly remembered that and was quick to underline the fact that Egypt would stand by its commitments to the Camp David Accords. Mubarak also wanted to continue to have good relations with the United States so that Egypt could continue to receive the much-needed aid from the United States.²³⁹ The proclamation of support did not quell the skepticism harbored by the Israelis and the Reagan administration about the stability of the Egyptian regime.

In January 1982, Secretary of State Alexander Haig traveled twice to both Israel and Egypt, to examine the potential progress of the peace process. Haig argued that because of the imminent return of the Sinai Peninsula, a central part of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, the focus would shift to the autonomy talks between Israel and Egypt to try to find an interim solution to the Palestinian question.²⁴⁰ The autonomy talks had, in theory, started after the signing of the peace treaty in 1979. However, there had been no progress. The Palestinian question and autonomy were sensitive subjects that created immense tension between Egypt, Israel, the U.S., and the other Arab countries outside the Camp David agreement but who still had a

²³⁷ Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, 19.

²³⁸ Report, CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, "Egypt: succession issue", date unknown, folder, "Crisis Management (Sadat Assassination) (1)", Box 27, Exec. Sec. Subject File, RRL.

²³⁹ Report, CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, "Egypt: succession issue", date unknown, RRL.

²⁴⁰ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, "Developments on Middle East Peace Process", 27 February 1982, folder, "Middle East General (2/27/82-4/15/82)", Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

stake in the issue. Even though the Reagan administration considered the transfer of Sinai back to Egypt as secure, they had to acknowledge that there were obstacles that could derail the plan as agreed by the parties. The obstacles were present in the bilateral relations between Egypt and Israel as well as in the Middle East at large.²⁴¹ Hostilities between Israel, the PLO, Syria, and Lebanon threatened to tip the balance of the fragile agreement between Egypt and Israel. Both countries could back out before the final withdrawal in April.

The Reagan administration needed the Sinai transfer to be completed as smoothly as possible and without any delay. Both to show that the U.S. was capable in its role as mediator and gain the prestige of completing such a significant step forward in the peace process. If Israel were to delay its withdrawal, it could create hostilities with the Egyptian government and put the peace treaty at risk.²⁴² The Egyptian government, at that point, was uniquely privy to public opinion. The Egyptian public had fiercely opposed the peace deal with Israel, and Sadat's quest for peace, which resulted in his death. The primary focus for the Egyptian public was regaining lost territory. However, regaining the Sinai was not seen as a concession to the Israelis, rather it was regaining something that was rightfully Egyptian. A delay or worse, if Israel did not complete the withdrawal, the Egyptian public could turn against Mubarak and demand that he respond to Israel's defiance by backing out of the peace treaty.²⁴³ Secretary of State Alexander Haig feared that if Mubarak continued in Sadat's footsteps with no alteration to his foreign policy, he would likely be killed as Sadat had months prior. Haig stated that it was "vital to demonstrate that it was not fatal to be a friend of the United States."²⁴⁴ After losing both the U.S. friendly Shah of Iran and Sadat, the United States needed at least Jordan and Saudi Arabia to join in on the negotiations related to the peace process. If Egypt were to break away from the agreed treaties, there was little to no chance that the U.S. could gain the confidence of Jordan and Saudi Arabia in the negotiation efforts.

New National Security Adviser

From the very beginning, the Reagan administration had a more decentralized structure for policymaking, and the "troika" - consisting of Baker, Deaver, and Meese - had started off the

²⁴¹ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, "Developments on Middle East Peace Process", 27 February 1982, RRL.

²⁴² Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, "Developments on Middle East Peace Process", 27 February 1982, RRL.

²⁴³ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 378.; Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, 18-19.

²⁴⁴ Haig, *Caveat*, 325.

first Reagan presidential period by prohibiting any challenge to their position as chief advisers. The three acted as a wall between the President and the outside world. Even key members of the administration, such as the Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser, had difficulties getting sufficient access. The combination of a decentralized foreign policy structure and the troika's position had led to high levels of distrust and failing communication amongst many of the key players. Nonetheless, Chief of Staff Baker and his deputy Deaver, concluded during 1981 that foreign policy responsibility needed to be returned to the National Security Adviser.²⁴⁵ With the fluid job description and responsibilities of the Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser regarding foreign policy, a lot came down to personality and personal relationships. Baker and Deaver wanted National Security Adviser Richard Allen replaced by someone with "an independent relationship with Reagan," who also could stand up to other strong characters in the White House.²⁴⁶

With Richard Allen's departure, the position of National Security Adviser was offered to William Clark, who had served as Reagan's Chief of Staff in California and then in the Supreme Court, earning him the nickname "Judge Clark."²⁴⁷ When Reagan became President, Clark had been Secretary Haig's deputy at the State Department and had worked to keep the communication channels between the White House and the State Department open. Clark wanted to raise and consolidate his new position within the administration. He demanded direct access to the President, and although he had no experience with foreign policy, he wanted control over the process, which had been lacking within the White House. In an official statement by the White House released to confirm Clark as the new National Security Adviser, it read that Clark's role would include "the development, coordination, and implementation of national security policy."²⁴⁸

Clark restructured the NSC in an attempt to make it more efficient by bringing in people with senior experience. For instance, Robert "Bud" McFarlane, who had served as State Department counselor, was brought in as Clark's Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Not only did the inner machinery of the NSC get a makeover, but the NSC-White House relations were also altered.²⁴⁹ The NSC was given more responsibility due to a presidential directive that obligated anyone within the White House, Defense, and

²⁴⁵ Daalder and Destler. *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*. 142.

²⁴⁶ Daalder and Destler. *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*. 142.: Quandt, *Peace Process*, 247.

²⁴⁷ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 142.

²⁴⁸ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 142-143.: Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 224-225.

²⁴⁹ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 143-144.

State Departments, and the CIA to get approval before talking to the media. Also, any statements and international travel by the executive branch were to be cleared by the NSC staff.²⁵⁰ Because of his limited experience in the foreign policy field, Clark relied on his personal relationship with President Reagan, which became his most important tool. His position and power were almost solely based on this relationship, shown through the quick elevation of his position as National Security Adviser. Eventually, he was seen as equal to or more influential than the Secretary of State.²⁵¹ In Reagan's first year as President, he had a National Security Adviser with knowledge of foreign policy issues but lacked authority within the administration. From January 1982, Reagan gained an adviser who had virtually no foreign policy experience but with the authority to act as a broker when there was disagreement between others in the administration.²⁵²

Completion of Sinai Withdrawal

The completion of the Sinai withdrawal was set for 25 April 1982. In the months leading up to this date, uncertainty reigned on all sides. The stability of the Egyptian regime was called into question when Mubarak became President in October 1981. Would he continue in Sadat's footsteps and uphold the Camp David Accords? Furthermore, in December 1981, Israel extended its jurisdiction to the Golan Heights, a *de facto* annexation of the occupied Syrian territories, not long after committing to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on strategic cooperation with the United States.²⁵³ The expansion of Israeli jurisdiction was regarded as evidence by the Arab states that Israel and the United States could not be trusted, as well as a clear breach of international law. The annexation strained the already cold peace between Israel and Egypt. It sent a clear signal that the momentum of the Sinai withdrawal might not continue after April 1982. In addition, the annexation was argued as Israel testing President Mubarak's intentions regarding Egypt's commitment to the peace treaty.²⁵⁴

Leading up to the final date for the withdrawal, the Reagan administration had to tackle grave uncertainty and fierce opposition from the Israeli government. Secretary Haig harbored a concern that with Sadat gone and Mubarak's position still weak, Egypt would turn away from

²⁵⁰ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 143-144.

²⁵¹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 226-227.

²⁵² Cannon, Lou. *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2000. 351.

²⁵³ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 391-393.

²⁵⁴ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 393-394.; Rutherford, Bruce K. & Jeannie L. Sowers, *Modern Egypt: What Everyone needs to know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 155.

the peace treaty and attempt to recover its position among the Arab countries. Haig's concern about Egypt was leaked to the press, allegedly by a participant in State Department staff meetings.²⁵⁵ The specific reason for the leak was unclear. Nevertheless, the information about Haig's concerns fed the fears of the Egyptian public, where the popular opinion was that the U.S strategy had been to take Egypt under its wings and thereby eliminate any serious challenge to Israel. Further, the speculation was that the U.S. strategy in turn would allow Israel to absorb the occupied territories such as West Bank and the Gaza Strip.²⁵⁶ Another aspect of the American concerns leading up to 25 April, was the shift in focus from the Sinai to autonomy talks. The autonomy talks had been a topic in the peace process that was extremely sensitive and unlikely to see progress. Secretary Haig had visited both Egypt and Israel in January 1982 and found both parties to be "demoralized and cynical" about the probability of reaching an agreement.²⁵⁷ Haig's concern was that the lack of confidence in Israel and Egypt could further weaken relations between the two countries, and be an obstacle for the withdrawal.²⁵⁸ Any delay or failure to complete the withdrawal as agreed could undermine the United States' interests and diplomatic efforts regarding the "cold" Egyptian-Israeli peace.²⁵⁹

Internal unrest still ruled in Egypt since Sadat's death. President Mubarak had no opponent for the presidency, but he inherited considerable domestic political problems. Dissatisfaction concerning Egypt's political, ideological, and economic position was common among the Egyptian public.²⁶⁰ Egypt had struggled with its economy since Nasser and Sadat's reforms had not helped the situation. In addition, the two previous wars of 1967 and 1973 had effectively ended the notion of Arab power as professed by Nasser. The following isolation of Egypt because of Sadat's quest for peace had shattered the unity the Egyptians had among Arab countries. The unrest and mistrust made up the foundation of Egyptian public opinion

²⁵⁵ Gwertzman, Bernard. "Haig is confident Egypt and Israel are Committed to Autonomy Pact". *The New York Times*. Published: 20 February 1982. Accessed 16 March 2020. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/02/20/world/haig-is-confident-egypt-and-israel-are-committed-to-autonomy-pact.html>.

²⁵⁶ Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, 18-19.

²⁵⁷ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, "Developments on Middle East Peace Process", 27 February 1982, RRL.

²⁵⁸ Memo, Secretary Haig to President Reagan, "Developments on Middle East Peace Process", 27 February 1982, RRL.

²⁵⁹ Teicher, Howard & Gayle Radley Teicher. *Twin Pillars to Desert Storm: America's Flawed Vision in the Middle East from Nixon to Bush*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1993. 172.

²⁶⁰ Kassem, *Egyptian Politics*, 26.

when Secretary Haig's alleged concerns about the continuation of the peace process were made public, which further fueled the discontent.²⁶¹

Before the final withdrawal from the Sinai, the Israeli government faced intense political opposition. The opposition was led by Yuval Ne'eman, leader of the small ultranationalist Tehiya party, and Moshe Arens, who was the chairman of the Israeli Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. They wanted Israel to opt-out of the treaty before the final withdrawal. They argued that Egypt would join the Arab states against Israel as soon as Israeli troops were out of the Sinai.²⁶² At the beginning of March, in a meeting between Prime Minister Begin and several other Israeli ministers, the hardliner Ariel Sharon suggested a possible reason to validate an invasion of Lebanon, testing Egypt's commitment to the peace process. At the end of April, the final withdrawal from Sinai would be completed, and with the vital piece of territory regained and Sadat gone there were concerns that Egypt would back out and rejoin the Arab states against Israel.²⁶³ Sharon's suggestion was rejected by Begin to use as a viable reason as he argued that the peace deal with Egypt should be separate from Israel's goal in Lebanon. Aside from the political opposition, there were Israeli claims that the Egyptian government was failing to live up to the terms of the Camp David agreement and the peace treaty. Among these claims were allegations of an increased number of Egyptian troops in the Sinai and allowing the PLO to smuggle arms into Gaza. The Egyptians denied these claims and called the Israeli behavior hysterical "in order to extract last minute concessions."²⁶⁴

Due to the tensions surrounding the withdrawal, the Reagan administration sent Deputy Secretary of State Walter Stoessel and a small delegation to engage in a short but intense "shuttle diplomacy" in the two weeks before 25 April. The Stoessel-delegation flew between Cairo and Jerusalem to make sure that the final withdrawal would be completed on time. Despite the Reagan administration downplaying the delegation's mission, the delegation was immediately met with a "full blown political circus with leaks, allegations, misinformation, and high drama at every turn."²⁶⁵ The reason for the calm public explanation for the Stoessel-delegation, the last weeks before the withdrawal was "ridden with tension."²⁶⁶ The Israelis

²⁶¹ Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, 18-19.: Kassem, *Egyptian Politics*, 26.

²⁶² Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 399.

²⁶³ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 395-399.

²⁶⁴ Memo, Geoffrey Kemp to Michael O. Wheeler, "Weekly Issues", 15 April 1982, folder "Middle East General (2/27/82-4/15/82)", Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

²⁶⁵ Teicher & Teicher, *Twin Pillars to Desert Storm*, 172.: Memo, Kemp to Wheeler, "Weekly Issues", 15 April 1982, RRL.

²⁶⁶ Memo, Kemp to Wheeler, "Weekly Issues", 15 April 1982, RRL.

suspensions towards Egypt were being exploited, particularly by Sharon, who exaggerated claims of betrayal and unjust pressure from the United States. Even though both sides had the same view of what the issues were, there was nothing but mistrust between the Egyptians and Israelis.²⁶⁷

Among the general uncertainties about the withdrawal, there were several boundary disputes. These fell under the responsibility of the Joint Commission under the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty to negotiate. The most contested was the small strip of beach, called Taba, south of the Israeli city Eilat. As agreed in the peace treaty, Israel was to “withdraw all its armed forces and civilians from the Sinai behind the international boundary between Egypt and mandated Palestine.”²⁶⁸ However, when the time for withdrawal drew nearer, Israel wanted to keep Taba after all.²⁶⁹ The Israeli government could use this dispute to not withdraw on the agreed-upon date. Nevertheless, there were mechanisms in the treaty in case of such a scenario to resolve disputes. Despite these mechanisms, the Stoessel delegation shuttled between Jerusalem and Cairo, in what came to be called “the Taba Shuffle,” in an effort to indulge Israeli sentiments, and not insulting the Egyptians in the process.²⁷⁰ The Stoessel delegation wanted to persuade Mubarak to send a letter to Begin to calm Israeli sentiments about perceived Egyptian intentions and accommodate the Israeli belief that Egypt was not trustworthy. Nevertheless, the Stoessel delegation managed to infuriate Mubarak in an attempt to persuade him to write the letter. Howard Teicher, NSC member and part of the Stoessel-delegation, recalled Mubarak’s response as a near outburst of anger. The Egyptians saw Israel’s focus on Taba as merely a land grab, and there was a strong possibility of a political crisis in Egypt if Mubarak was accused of just giving Egyptian land to Israel. Deputy Secretary Stoessel suggested the withdrawal continue as planned while the Taba issue remained open. Mubarak agreed to consider the ideas Stoessel had proposed for Taba, while “clearly straining to keep his temper under control.”²⁷¹ Despite protest on both sides, the plan worked to some extent; the Taba-dispute remained open but did not stop the overall withdrawal.²⁷² In the end, Taba became a long-standing dispute in the Egypt-Israel relationship and did not get a resolution until the end of the 1980s.²⁷³

²⁶⁷ Teicher & Teicher, *Twin Pillars to Desert Storm*, 174.

²⁶⁸ Vance and Dayan. “The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty”, 327, Article I.

²⁶⁹ Vance and Dayan. “The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty”, 327, Article I.

²⁷⁰ Teicher & Teicher, *Twin Pillars to Desert Storm*, 174-175.

²⁷¹ Teicher & Teicher, *Twin Pillars to Desert Storm*, 176-177.

²⁷² Teicher & Teicher, *Twin Pillars to Desert Storm*, 172-176.

²⁷³ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 438-439.

Lebanon Crisis – Israeli Invasion

On June 6, 1982, Israel invaded southern Lebanon. The invasion came as no surprise to the Reagan administration. There had been tensions and continued hostilities between Israel and the PLO since the previous Israeli invasion in 1978. In addition, a civil war raged in Lebanon that started in 1975. Nonetheless, just two weeks before the invasion, President Reagan signed a National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) identifying aspects that should serve as guidance for U.S. security policy. The NSDD primarily focused on the Soviet Union, with no mention of the Middle East.²⁷⁴ Prior to the Camp David negotiations in 1978, tensions were rising on the Israel-Lebanon border. The PLO, which had set up bases in southern Lebanon, had on 11 March 1978, carried out an attack that killed 37 Israelis. The attack was answered with a massive show of force from Israel: 30 000 IDF soldiers entered southern Lebanon, while Israeli planes and warships bombed PLO targets. The invasion sent over two hundred thousand of the Lebanese population fleeing north and had severe consequences for the civilian populations.²⁷⁵ Despite pressure from both the UN and the United States, Israeli forces remained in Lebanon for several months. A United Nations interim force for Lebanon (UNIFIL), backed by the United States, had been put in place after the Israeli invasion in 1978 but did not provide much peace and security for Lebanon. Clashes between Israel and the PLO continued and intensified over the years leading to the invasion in 1982.²⁷⁶ As an experienced diplomat, Philip Habib was appointed by Reagan as a special envoy to the Middle East in 1981 to mediate between Israel, Lebanon, and the PLO. Nonetheless, there was no confidence that the UNIFIL protection would last.²⁷⁷

For Israel, several longstanding goals could be realized by invading Lebanon. One was the destruction of PLO's military capabilities in Lebanon. Second, Israel had an alliance with the Maronites, a Roman-Catholic Christian group. The group with the closest ties to Israel was the Phalange, led by Bashir Gemayel. One of Ariel Sharon's aims was to get Bashir Gemayel to the presidential seat to reach those goals. Because of the close ties with the Phalange, Israel could establish a new political order in Lebanon to benefit itself. The third goal was to drive Syrian forces out of Lebanon in order to control the political developments.²⁷⁸ Despite it being

²⁷⁴ NSDD, "U.S. National Security Strategy", 20 May 1982, folder, "NSDD 32 (us national security strategy)", Box 8, Philip Dur Files, RRL.

²⁷⁵ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy under Carter*, 117.

²⁷⁶ Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy under Carter*, 117.: Quandt, *Peace Process*, 250.

²⁷⁷ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 250.

²⁷⁸ Shlaim, *Iron Wall*, 396-398.: Quandt, *Peace Process*, 250.

a risky plan, Israeli officials opted to share their ambitions regarding Lebanon with the Reagan administration.²⁷⁹ Already in December 1978, Sharon had shared his military plans to special envoy Habib, on his return to the U.S. warned President Reagan, Secretary Haig, and others in the State Department on what was bound to happen in the Middle East.²⁸⁰ In addition, Israeli officials on visits to Washington explained in detail to Secretary Haig what Israel had planned. Haig had displayed a lack of objection to these plans with what to many described as a thinly veiled invitation: “What Haig did say, repeatedly, was that the United States would understand such a military move only in response to an ‘internationally recognized provocation’.”²⁸¹ By May 1982, an invasion seemed inevitable, and by 3 June, Israel got its desired provocation, an assassination attempt against its ambassador in London. Three days later, Israeli forces crossed over into Lebanon.²⁸²

Egypt had not acted against Israel during the invasion in 1978 as the desire for a peace agreement, and especially regaining the Sinai, had taken precedence for President Sadat. He had gambled everything on getting a peace agreement with Israel and securing a closer relationship with the United States. The costs Egypt faced with the continuation towards a bilateral peace were substantial; isolation and losing the ability to intervene against future Israeli military action. On the other hand, Egypt was not strong enough, economically, or militarily, to engage in further hostilities with Israel as the wars of the previous decades had shown. In 1982, as a consequence of the Camp David agreements, Egypt was taken “out of the military equation” in the Middle East and was obligated not to act against Israel.²⁸³ Any Egyptian military action against Israel would risk an Israeli military response. It would also damage relations with the United States and risk the financial aid on which Egypt was now dependent.²⁸⁴ Egypt and its military forces depended on both financial and military aid from the United States. In 1982, the Reagan administration was working on a \$400 million grant as an increase in military assistance for Egypt for the following year. In addition, a large part of the Egyptian military officers received U.S. military training. The financial benefits gained

²⁷⁹ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 250.

²⁸⁰ Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 200-201.

²⁸¹ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 250.

²⁸² Quandt, *Peace Process*, 250-251.

²⁸³ Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 99.: Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter* 116-118.

²⁸⁴ Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 99-100.: Jensehaugen, *Arab-Israeli Diplomacy Under Carter*, 116-118.

from good relations with the United States gave Egypt very few incentives to launch an attack against Israel despite the criticism from the other Arab countries and the Palestinian people.²⁸⁵

The Reagan administration was afraid of what damage Israel could do in Lebanon and what this war would do to the United States' position in the Middle East. There was also unease that the loss of confidence in the U.S. would lead to a shift from verbal criticism from the Arab countries to possible military action, against both Israel and the United States.²⁸⁶ In response to the invasion, two opposing factions formed within the Reagan administration. One side centered around Secretary Haig, who believed that Israel should be allowed to destroy the PLO. On the other side were those who believed Israel should be restrained from further action, which included Vice President Bush, Chief of Staff Baker, Secretary of Defense Weinberger, and National Security Adviser Clark.²⁸⁷ The split in the administration resulted in incoherent policies and opposing signals being communicated to the American embassies in Cairo.

The scope of the Israeli invasion, so far unknown to the Reagan administration, and even though Haig hardly saw a problem in Israel eliminating the PLO threat, he argued that if the administration acted fast, they could “prevent a further widening of the conflict.”²⁸⁸ The restructuring and efforts to make the NCS more efficient did not necessarily make a difference in such a situation. A combination of internal tensions and Reagan's leadership style resulted in slow and incoherent policymaking. President Reagan retreated to the Camp David compound after an extensive trip around Europe at the time of the invasion. His presidential approval of policy and instructions affected policymaking for the Lebanon crisis. It became clear that Israel did not consider its ally, the United States, in the invasion, and the slow and indecisive U.S. policy saw an escalation in the extent of military activities and civilian toll.²⁸⁹ The lack of communication left the United States to catch up with the situation, rather than controlling it, resulting in tensions within the administration and a lack of decisive strategies for the war.

²⁸⁵ Rutherford and Sowers, *Modern Egypt*, 144-145.: Report, Congressional Research Service, “Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations”, Table A-1, “U.S. Foreign Assistance to Egypt: 1946-2019”, 35. Updated: 21 November 2019. Accessed: 17 December 2019. URL: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf> ; Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Institute, “White House Diaries, Thursday, 4 February, 1982.” Accessed: 02.05.2020. URL: <https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/white-house-diaries/diary-entry-02041982/>

²⁸⁶ Briefing Paper, “Potential Costs to the United States Interests of the Israeli Invasion of Lebanon”, 18 June 1982, folder, “Middle East General (6/23/82-7/14/82)”, Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

²⁸⁷ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 252-253.

²⁸⁸ Haig, *Caveat*, 310.

²⁸⁹ Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 108-110.

As Israel's invasion of Lebanon grew in both scale and intensity, a shift occurred in the Reagan administration. The conflict resulting from the Israeli invasion seemed to be the last straw for the tension building within the administration. President Reagan accepted Secretary Haig's resignation at the end of June. Haig was replaced as Secretary of State by George Shultz. Shultz had previously served as Secretary of Labor and as Secretary of the Treasury during the Nixon administration. He was experienced and respected within the Washington bureaucracy, and would remain in the position until 1989. Shultz was not as inclined as Haig to let the Israelis do as they please. Among others, Shultz feared what the invasion could do to the fragile Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement and the broader Arab-Israeli peace efforts.²⁹⁰

Another aspect of the troubles for the Reagan administration involved the ambition of the mastermind behind the invasion, Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, who had more far-reaching plans of Israeli hegemony in the Middle East than was initially implied to the Reagan administration officials. Despite pressure from both the UN and the United States, the plan to invade had worked out for Israel. By the time the ceasefire backed by the U.S. had come into effect, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) had already reached the outskirts of Beirut.²⁹¹ Even though a ceasefire was in place, the IDF continued, on Sharon's orders, towards Beirut and managed to isolate the PLO and several Syrian military units within the city. The invasion had during that short time evolved into a war with Syria and a siege of Beirut. The campaign to destroy the PLO continued and the tactics used by the Israelis intensified, from cutting off water and power to a heavy bombardment of the city. These tactics resulted in both internal Israeli unrest and vast international criticism. Even the U.S. could not fully stand by its ally, and there were few high-ranking officials left in the administration who didn't heavily criticize Israel's actions.²⁹² Israel, and Sharon's breaking of the ceasefire and ignoring the warnings coming from the U.S., left the impression among the Arab countries that the United States had little power and influence over its ally in the Middle East, or was unwilling to wield its power.²⁹³

The invasion and subsequent siege of Beirut meant that the administration had to quickly evaluate the costs the invasion had on U.S. interests in the Middle East. The Reagan administration first of all faced stark decline in its image in the Middle East with the spreading opinion amongst the countries who critiqued the invasion that Israel could continue

²⁹⁰ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 253; Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 228.

²⁹¹ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 410.

²⁹² Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 407-411.

²⁹³ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 411.

its actions and the U.S. was unable or unwilling to influence or stop it. The Reagan administrations feared that it could result in a rise in anti-American sentiments and radicalism in Arab countries.²⁹⁴ The invasion and American loss of influence in the Middle East would also have a severe impact on Egypt. The widespread perception that the Reagan administration allowed the invasion and was unable or unwilling to stop Israel breaking the ceasefire implicated Egypt by association as an accomplice to the U.S. and Israel, and was therefore against its fellow Arab states.²⁹⁵ The implications put Egypt between the two camps of the Palestinians and Arabs and the U.S. and Israel, with limited possibilities. Egypt's troublesome position in the crisis became a concern for the Reagan administration, as it was unsure of the new regime's stability under President Mubarak. If Israel's military efforts continued and if Israel invaded Beirut, it would pose a risk to the stability of the Egyptian regime as the preexisting tensions in the public would not tolerate Egypt's involvement with the U.S. and Israel in the Lebanon crisis. The domestic instability could further affect Egypt's usefulness in future peace negotiations.²⁹⁶ The concern was fueled by the lack of public pressure from the administration towards the Israeli government to withdraw its military forces. In an evaluation by the NSC of costs to the United States as a consequence of the invasion, it was reiterated that "We are seen by many Arabs either as accomplices to Begin or, even worse, impotent to constrain him."²⁹⁷ The image of the United States in the Middle East was central to the cost analysis as it invited other risks, such as attacks on U.S. embassies, moderate Arab countries turning more radical, and even turning to the Soviet Union. The last two especially applied to Egypt with its many internal struggles.

The many risks to the United States and the regional stability of the Middle East were set in stark contrast to what the Israelis were reporting to the Reagan administration. NSC analyst Geoffrey Kemp argued "It would be well to bear in mind this list of horrors when listening to the optimistic tones that Begin will outline [...] the enormous 'benefits' to the West that have come from the Israeli invasion."²⁹⁸ Showing that Israeli arguments for the outcome of the invasion in Lebanon were not anywhere close to the political reality that the Reagan

²⁹⁴ Briefing Paper, "Potential costs to the United States interests of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon", 18 June 1982, RRL.

²⁹⁵ Briefing Paper, "Potential costs to the United States interests of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon", 18 June 1982, RRL.

²⁹⁶ Briefing Paper, "Potential costs to the United States interests of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon", 18 June 1982, RRL.

²⁹⁷ Briefing Paper, "Potential costs to the United States interests of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon", 18 June 1982, RRL.

²⁹⁸ Briefing Paper, "Potential costs to the United States interests of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon", 18 June 1982, RRL.

administration was seeing. The point was made because even though it could be argued by Begin and the Reagan administration that there were benefits to both Israel and the U.S. from Israeli action in Lebanon, the cost greatly outweighed the potential benefits. These benefits included the greatest opponents of the Camp David Accords, Syria, and the Palestinians, being defeated. The briefing on the possible costs of the invasion was made on 18 June, one week after the ceasefire had come into effect. The sheer scope and violence of the Israeli invasion came to surprise the Reagan administration and the “list of horrors” continued to grow.²⁹⁹

The rising cost to the Reagan administration resulted in problems with the administration’s strategy for the peace process. The lack of a firm strategy meant that the administration had to work out its options considering the possible outcomes of the ongoing crisis in Lebanon and how this could affect the future of the peace between Egypt and Israel. There was a call for more consensus across departments, and a confidential interagency working group was established under acting Secretary of State Stoessel. The group was to consider possible actions by the Reagan administration, including its position on Palestinian autonomy, the appointment of a special negotiator, and public statements on the subject.³⁰⁰ It did not appear that this group was linked to the impending withdrawal plan negotiated by special envoy Philip Habib, rather the focus was on the peace process issue. In the following negotiations with Egypt to take part in this plan for Lebanon, it became clear that the Reagan administration tried to keep the crisis in Lebanon and the peace process as two separate entities.³⁰¹

Negotiations with the Egyptian Government

“As most politicians and diplomats understand, the success of a negotiation process depends as much on the dynamics and conditions outside the negotiating room as on what gets discussed inside, including the power dynamics and the internal politics of each of them. Although no outside actor could completely level the playing field, U.S. mediation between Israel and the Palestinians has generally been in the opposite direction: the United States has consistently put its thumb on the scale in Israel’s favor while simultaneously discounting the importance of internal Palestinian political realities.”³⁰²

²⁹⁹ Briefing Paper, “Potential costs to the United States interests of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon”, 18 June 1982, RRL.

³⁰⁰ Memo, William Clark to Walter Stoessel, “U.S. Policy and the Middle East Peace Process”, 12 July 1982, folder, “Middle East General (6/23/82-7/14/82)”, Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³⁰¹ Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 110.

³⁰² Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 3.

To resolve the Lebanon crisis, the United States sent Philip Habib as a special envoy to negotiate between the governments in Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. Throughout July, public opinion within Egypt displayed harsh criticism of the invasion. Parallel to the criticism, the violence in Lebanon continued to escalate, and the consensus was that the main threat was Israel. The Israeli forces were on the border of West Beirut, threatening to attack unless Habib's negotiation efforts succeeded. The plan was to evacuate the PLO out of Lebanon, and in exchange, Israel would not attack Beirut. A multinational force would be stationed between the belligerents to aid the evacuation. The force would also ensure the safety of those being evacuated and the thousands of Palestinian civilians that remained in Beirut.³⁰³

Instead of using its influence and power to attempt to get Israel to withdraw, the United States started a parallel negotiation process with Egypt. The goal was to get the Egyptian government to agree to take in several thousand of the PLO fighters being evacuated: "But there are still 3-4000 men for whom we still need to find a destination, Philip Habib continues to emphasize to the Lebanese and in his reporting that Egypt was absolutely crucial in this regard."³⁰⁴ Instead of the Israeli forces, the administration had opted to get the PLO out of Lebanon first. The plan consisted of getting several Arab countries to agree to take in PLO fighters and leadership isolated in Beirut. The U.S. approach was aided by a declaration by the Arab League. The declaration endorsed the PLO evacuation from Beirut and called for an "international force" to aid the situation.³⁰⁵ The declaration also mentioned that four Arab states, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, would house the PLO coming out of Lebanon.³⁰⁶ Jordan, Syria, and Iraq had already agreed to take in some of the PLO members, Egypt however, was not a part of the Arab League at that point and had not officially agreed to take in any of the PLO situated in West-Beirut.³⁰⁷ The Egyptian refusal became the foundation for which the Reagan administration, through its ambassador in Cairo, Alfred Atherton, would negotiate with the Egyptian government.

³⁰³ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 412.; Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 111.

³⁰⁴ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Response to Egyptian Demarche on West Beirut", 6 August 1982 (DTG:062005Z Aug 82), folder, "Egypt (8/4/82-8/26/82)", Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³⁰⁵ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Progress on Solving West Beirut Problem", 30 July 1982, folder, "Middle East General (7/15/82-8/13/82)", Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³⁰⁶ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Progress on Solving West Beirut Problem", 30 July 1982, RRL.

³⁰⁷ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Your meeting with Kamal Hassan Ali, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of Egypt, July 30, 1982, at 9:55 a.m.", 29 July 1982, folder, "Egypt (7/27/82-8/4/82)", Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

There were several points of contention between the Egyptian and American governments during the negotiation process during the summer and fall of 1982. The U.S.-Egyptian relationship was experiencing growing tension because of the Israeli invasion, and the Egyptian government believed that the Reagan administration was failing in its position in the Middle East.³⁰⁸ The main reason for the negotiations with the Egyptian government was the need for Egypt to accept PLO members being evacuated from Lebanon. One aspect the Egyptian government refusal was the validity behind the claim that the PLO voluntarily wanted to leave Lebanon. The Egyptian government, claimed in contrast to the Arab League declaration and U.S. intelligence, that the PLO in Beirut did not want to leave but were forced out. Even though Philip Habib was convinced that the PLO in West Beirut was aware of the threat posed by Israel and was ready to leave if accepted by the neighboring Arab countries, he was unable to convince President Mubarak of the same.³⁰⁹

However, the Reagan administration knew that due to Egypt's position in the Middle East during the crisis, it was important for Mubarak to tie a possible agreement to Habib's deal with the PLO to the broader peace process and autonomy talks for the Palestinian people.³¹⁰ In a message from Secretary Shultz to President Mubarak at the end of July, before the proper negotiation process regarding the PLO evacuation started, Shultz stated that Egypt's cooperation and contribution to Habib's mission was crucial. Shultz made sure to point out the importance of the peace process and how Egyptian-U.S. cooperation could "give hope for the future to the Palestinians."³¹¹ Secretary Shultz knew that in order to get Mubarak and his closest ministers to agree to help the United States, the Reagan administration needed to "convince Ali, and through him Mubarak, that we are serious about doing what is necessary to move the peace process ahead."³¹² The illusion of commitment and a clear plan for the peace process became the persisting position of the Reagan administration. Nevertheless, the Egyptian government remained firm in its claim that the Palestinian people needed more

³⁰⁸ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Egyptian Position on Accepting PLO", 2 August 1982 (DTG: 021303Z Aug 82), folder, "Egypt (7/27/82-8/4/82)", Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³⁰⁹ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Your meeting with Kamal Hassan Ali, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of Egypt, July 30, 1982, at 9:55 a.m.", 29 July 1982, RRL.

³¹⁰ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Your meeting with Kamal Hassan Ali, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of Egypt, July 30, 1982, at 9:55 a.m.", 29 July 1982, RRL.

³¹¹ Cable, Washington to Cairo, "Oral message from Secretary Shultz for President", 31 July 1982 (DTG: 310424Z Jul 82), folder, "Egypt (7/27/82-8/4/82)", Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³¹² Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Your meeting with Kamal Hassan Ali, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of Egypt, July 30, 1982, at 9:55 a.m.", 29 July 1982, RRL.

compensation for the U.S. and Israel if the PLO were to be evacuated and scattered across the Middle East.

The central part of the Egyptian position was the claim that there needed to be a link between the PLO evacuation and the overall peace process.³¹³ President Mubarak and several Egyptian officials argued that the United States should provide the PLO with a “political bonus” as compensation for being forced out and dispersed among several countries in the Middle East.³¹⁴ Such a direct connection between the Lebanon crisis and the peace process would make the U.S. obligated to acknowledge the Palestinian people or at least agree to bilateral talks or bring them into the negotiation process.³¹⁵

The Egyptian government’s position encompassed the belief that the evacuation under severe Israeli military pressure, without any clear commitment from the United States, would achieve nothing but rising tensions and instability. Egypt made acceptance of evacuated PLO fighters conditional on a “clear and unambiguous” statement from the U.S., mainly so that the evacuation would be based on recognizing Palestinian people’s right to self-determination, as per the Camp David Accords.³¹⁶

The insistence on linkage also applied to Egypt, as it would tie Egypt cooperation with the U.S. and Israel to the peace process. If the Egyptian position was built on a genuine concern for the survival of the Palestinian people and the peace process, or if it was purely used as a bargaining tool to refuse the United States, or a combination of the two was difficult to say. Even though President Mubarak had since his election reaffirmed Egypt’s commitment to Camp David and continued within the foreign policy parameters established by Sadat. However, he insisted on maintaining a level of independence and distance. Evident from the Egyptian position in the negotiations regarding Lebanon, Mubarak aimed to ensure that Egypt did not become a client-state of the United States.³¹⁷

The Reagan administration attempted to counter the pressure from Egypt via Ambassador Atherton in Cairo. Atherton conveyed that demanding a trade-off of change in U.S. policy and

³¹³ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, “Progress on Solving West Beirut Problem”, 30 July 1982, folder, “Middle East General (7/15/82-8/13/82)”, Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³¹⁴ Document, William Clark to President Reagan, “Meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Hassan Ali”, date unknown, folder, “Egypt (7/27/82-8/4/82)”, Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³¹⁵ Document, William Clark to President Reagan, “Meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Hassan Ali”, date unknown, RRL.

³¹⁶ Cable, Washington to Cairo, “Letter to the Secretary from Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Kamal Hassan Ali”, 01 August 1982, folder, “Egypt (7/27/82-8/4/82)”, Box 36, Exec. Sec Country File, RRL.

³¹⁷ Hassan, Gamal. “A revolution without a revolutionary foreign policy”, *Adelphi Series*. Vol.55 (2015): 151-176. Accessed: 27 February 2020. DOI: 10.1080/19445571.2015.1131428. 153.

locking Egypt into such a position could damage U.S.-Egyptian relations, and encouraged President Mubarak on several occasions to “keep an open mind.”³¹⁸ Egypt’s standing in the Middle East was at an unprecedented low after 1979, which could have grave consequences for the regime, and could explain why Mubarak did not give in to the Reagan administration’s requests.³¹⁹ The hit to Egypt’s previous position as a leader in the Middle East could be used in such negotiations, especially since the Arab League had a different position vis-à-vis its declaration. Nevertheless, with several hardliners within the Egyptian government, including Mubarak, Egypt continued firm in its position towards the U.S. and the Lebanon crisis throughout August 1982.

The Reagan administration saw Mubarak’s hard-liner stand exclusively as effort to strengthen his position as the new leader, both among the Egyptian people and the Arab states. The strong emphasis on linkage and the “political bonus” was also argued by NSC member Geoffrey Kemp as Mubarak’s way to avoid being branded as a co-conspirator in the Israeli military actions in Lebanon.³²⁰ Both Clark and Shultz stressed that the administration should keep the two points separate, dealing with the Lebanon crisis and PLO’s evacuation first before discussing the peace process. Thereby avoiding promises in the Lebanon crisis being linked commitment to bring the Palestinians in on eventual autonomy talks. Secretary Shultz also argued that the Egyptians should take on their “fair share” of the PLO leadership and fighters coming out of Beirut as Iraq, Syria, and Jordan had.³²¹ These statements contradicted the analysis Shultz made that the Reagan administration needed Egypt to believe that the U.S. was serious about getting progress in the peace process, particularly regarding the autonomy talks. Nonetheless, Shultz continued the argument that without Egyptian cooperation the Habib mission would fail and cause considerable damage to the peace process; “with Egypt’s cooperation we can avert a tragedy which had terrible implications for the peace process and regional stability.”³²² There was no mention of the lack of cooperation from Israel regarding Lebanon.

³¹⁸ Cable, Washington to Cairo, “Discussion with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ali: Egyptian Position on Accepting PLO”, 1 August 1982 (DTG: 011614Z Aug 82), folder, “Egypt (7/27/82-8/4/82)”, Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³¹⁹ Hassan, Gamal. “A revolution without a revolutionary foreign policy, 154.

³²⁰ Memo, Geoffrey Kemp to William Clark, “Middle East, South Asia: Recent Developments and Trends”, 9 August 1982, folder, “Middle East General (7/15/82-8/13/82)”, Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³²¹ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, “Your Meeting with Kamal Hassan Ali, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of Egypt, July 30, 1982 at 9:55 a.m.”, 29 July 1982, RRL.

³²² Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, “Your Meeting with Kamal Hassan Ali, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of Egypt, July 30, 1982 at 9:55 a.m.”, 29 July 1982, RRL.

Ambassador Atherton conveyed the message from Washington that Egypt would not be alone in taking in the PLO members. He also pressed that it was a critical situation as the Israeli forces were ready to attack West Beirut if Habib failed in his negotiation efforts. Egypt had lost faith that the United States was willing or able to get Israel off its rigid positions regarding Lebanon and the peace process at large. Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Boutros-Ghali stated in a meeting with Atherton that it was his understanding that the fundamental obstacle for a safe evacuation was, in fact, Israel's lack of cooperation. Atherton countered with that although there were Israeli opposition and risk of renewed fighting, and shifted the responsibility back on Egypt with a statement that it was important "Egypt not be caught out and assigned the responsibility for the failure of this initiative."³²³ The need for Egypt to act as a host country in order to appease Israel was met with a severe lack of trust in the U.S. capability and willingness to get Israel off the warpath.³²⁴

Even before the invasion of Lebanon, the Egyptians had mounting concerns about Israel's actions and statements regarding the occupied territories and the Palestinian people residing there.³²⁵ During the summer and early autumn of 1982, Mubarak and his government officials continued to press the Americans for a clear linkage between Lebanon and the broader Palestinian issue. The backdrop for Egyptian policymaking was, in large part, about perception. The United States was seen by many in the Middle East as an accomplice to Israeli military action in Lebanon, and a lack of public criticism of these actions continued to damage the American image. How the Egyptian leadership would be perceived by the Egyptian people and the other Arab states if it relinquished its position in favor of what the U.S. asked for was of great concern.³²⁶ Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Boutros Boutros-Ghali attributed the negative impact the Egyptian position had on relations with the U.S. to a "crisis of confidence" in the United States' policy.³²⁷ He argued that leaders in countries such as France, Britain, and Saudi Arabia were urging Egypt to stand its ground. The reason behind that, as stated by Boutros-Ghali, was "only now when conditions in the region are in flux and

³²³ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Response to Egyptian Demarche on West Beirut", 6 August 1982 (DTG: 062005Z Aug 82), folder, "Egypt (8/4/82-8/26/82)", Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³²⁴ Document, "Meeting with Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Hassan Ali", 30 July 1982, RRL: Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Your Meeting with Kamal Hassan Ali, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of Egypt, July 30, 1982 at 9:55 a.m.", 29 July 1982, RRL.

³²⁵ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Your Meeting with Kamal Hassan Ali, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister of Egypt, July 30, 1982 at 9:55 a.m.", 29 July 1982, RRL.

³²⁶ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Egyptian position on accepting PLO", 2 August 1982 (DTG: 021303Z Aug 82), RRL.

³²⁷ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Egyptian position on accepting PLO", 2 August 1982 (DTG: 021303Z Aug 82), RRL.

U.S. attention was focused intently on its interests in the area would the U.S. be liable to modify its course.”³²⁸ One the specifics of the Arab-Israeli peace process, Egypt was one of few who had any, if very little, influence. The Egyptian government believed that once the situation in Beirut was solved, the United States would return to business as usual. Therefore, Egypt had to stand by its established position. In a clear exemplification of the lack of confidence in the Reagan administration, President Mubarak warned that “the Americans won’t listen to five minutes of talk about the Palestinian question,” once the situation in Lebanon is resolved.³²⁹

From the Reagan administration’s perspective, the drastic policy change encouraged by the Egyptian government could not be done, at least not in the time frame proposed before the ceasefire in Lebanon. There was pressure to get the evacuation plan finalized to keep the Israelis from attacking West Beirut. American commitment to enter a dialogue with the Palestinians would further antagonize Israel and could escalate Israel’s military efforts in Lebanon. Instead of putting pressure on the stronger party in the crisis in Lebanon, Israel, the U.S. continued its “shuttle diplomacy” throughout the Arab countries, which increased pressure on the relatively weaker parties.³³⁰ Through Ambassador Atherton, the Reagan administration continued to reiterate that a lack of cooperation from Egypt would not be well received in Washington. At the same time, the administration encouraged the Egyptian government to “keep an open mind” and not lock itself into a position that could damage American-Egyptian relations.³³¹

The deadlock between the United States and Egypt continued through August 1982. The Reagan administration continued to switch between praising Egypt’s initiative in the peace process and how it did not cooperate with the U.S-Habib plan. The continued argument of a lack of Egyptian assistance in its success would damage Egypt’s relations with the United States. The argument seemed to have no effect on the Egyptian government. The Reagan administration also continued to be vague regarding Israel’s role as one of the main obstacles for progress in Lebanon and the peace process. In a meeting between Secretary Shultz and Egyptian Ambassador to the United States, Ashraf Ghorbal, in Washington on August 20,

³²⁸ Cable, Cairo to Washington, “Egyptian Position on Accepting PLO”, 2 August 1982 (DTG: 021303Z Aug 82), RRL.

³²⁹ Cable, Cairo to Washington, “Egyptian Position on Accepting PLO”, 2 August 1982 (DTG: 021303Z Aug 82), RRL.

³³⁰ Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 5.

³³¹ Cable, “Discussion with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ali: Egyptian position on Accepting PLO”, 01 August 1982, folder, “Egypt (7/27/82-8/4/82)”, Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

Shultz argued that any such position could not be affected by “carrots and sticks,” but rather by a real prospect for peace.³³² The statement did not convince Ghorbal, who countered with the reason that the carrots and sticks approach does not work was that when the U.S. withdraws carrots, it is only to be given back without much consequence. Ambassador Ghorbal continued, “for the past two years the U.S. has not been controlling events, but has been catching up,” and when the United States does not take an active role in the Middle East, Israel “moves in, and presents *faits accomplis*.”³³³ Ghorbal maintained the Egyptian government’s line and urged the U.S. to act and address the self-determination issue and thereby give assurance to the Palestinian people, especially those in the West Bank and Gaza, that they have a role in their future.³³⁴

The Egyptian position was further elaborated on again by Minister of State Boutros-Ghali. The options open for the Egyptian government was strictly limited by its isolation and the public’s anger at the leadership over the Lebanon situation.³³⁵ Because of the resentment being used and exaggerated by the media and political opposition, the Egyptian government had no other choice but to adopt a critical line over Lebanon. Any change in the established position would have to be well justified so as not to cause further dissatisfaction in the Egyptian public, which could eventually harm the regime. There was some evidence that the Reagan administration was privy to the Egyptian government’s predicament.³³⁶ However, the administration continued the same line of argument throughout the war in Lebanon, somewhat altered to the specific situations. Regarding the PLO evacuation, Shultz and Atherton continued to push for Egyptian cooperation with vague statements such as “keep an open mind,” along with vague threats concerning possible blame on Egypt if Habib failed. What they failed to mention was the Israeli military threatening to invade Beirut if Habib did not succeed fast. The imbalance between the strong Israel and weaker Egypt and the Reagan administration’s negotiation tactic shows how the U.S. was unable to sway Israel from pursuing war and territory.

³³² Cable, Washington to Cairo, “Secretary’s meeting with Egyptian Ambassador Ghorbal, August 20”, 21 August 1982 (DTG: 211931Z Aug 82), folder, “Egypt (8/4/82-8/26/82)”, Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³³³ Cable, Washington to Cairo, “Secretary’s meeting with Egyptian Ambassador Ghorbal, August 20”, 21 August 1982 (DTG: 211931Z Aug 82), RRL.

³³⁴ Cable, Washington to Cairo, “Secretary’s meeting with Egyptian Ambassador Ghorbal, August 20”, 21 August 1982 (DTG: 211931Z Aug 82), RRL.

³³⁵ Cable, Cairo to Washington, “Meeting with Minister of State Boutros Ghali, Saturday August 21”, 21 August 1982 (DTG: 211143Z Aug 82), folder, “Egypt (8/4/82-8/26/82)”, Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³³⁶ Cable, Cairo to Washington, “Meeting with Minister of State Boutros Ghali, Saturday August 21”, 21 August 1982 (DTG: 211143Z Aug 82), RRL.

Conclusion

The handling of the crisis in Lebanon by the Reagan administration ended in harsh criticism from both allies and adversaries. The initial split within the administration of whether the invasion was a justified act of self-defense, a distinct blow to international terrorism, or exploitation of American generosity and a disregard of sovereignty. The disagreement between the two sides also illustrated President Reagan's lack of clear leadership and the ability to exert control within his Cabinet. The lack of a firm leadership resulted in the Reagan administration not speaking with one voice and contributed to mixed signals on the diplomatic level towards Egypt. It also yielded a rocky start to the peacemaking efforts in Lebanon.

Although it had been a sincere wish of Sadat that Egypt could be a valuable asset to the United States in its own right, it was in contrast with Mubarak's efforts to remain more distant and try to regain some of Egypt's position in the Middle East.³³⁷ It could be argued that Egypt's relationship with the U.S. depended on Egypt's relations with Israel. How the United States acted in its policies and diplomatic ties with Egypt changed relative to how the situation regarding the peace process between Egypt and Israel changed. For example, when the signing and implementation of the peace treaty was well underway, and relations between the two neighbors were good, the U.S. was willing to be generous towards Egypt. However, when Israel invaded Lebanon and created tensions with Egypt, U.S.-Egyptian relations also suffered.³³⁸ The peace process continued to be used by the Reagan administration as a strategic tool to protect its interests in the Middle East. Like with the European initiative the year before, the Camp David framework and peace process was used when convenient as leverage by the United States to get its partners and allies to proceed according to American interests.

³³⁷ Hassan, "A revolution without a revolutionary foreign policy", 153-154.

³³⁸ Quandt, "American-Egyptian Relations", 8.

Chapter 5

“99 percent frozen”

The Lebanon War, Egyptian-Israeli Relations Chills, and Egyptian Build-Up

The Lebanon crisis brought on several challenges for the United States and the Reagan administration. The challenges came in the form of failed negotiations, risks against the U.S. position in the Middle East, and the Cold War. Before the Israeli invasion, Lebanon had not been of strategic value to the United States. However, after the crisis ensued in June 1982, with both Israel and Syria seeking to influence the new Lebanese government, the Reagan administration considered its interests threatened as Syria had close relations with the Soviet Union.³³⁹ In the years since the Camp David Accords, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian hostage crisis, U.S. image and reliability had eroded. The United States' position as a partner able to aid in security for moderate and Western-friendly Arab countries had lost its credibility, as stated by several leaders of the U.S.' partners in the Middle East such as Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.³⁴⁰ The consensus was that the Reagan administration's actions in Lebanon to defend its interests and objectives was “simply not credible”.³⁴¹ The Lebanon crisis became the primary focus in the Middle East for the Reagan administration in 1982. After the invasion and throughout 1983 and 1984, a significant concern for the administration was to prevent Syrian domination in Lebanon and subsequent leadership amongst the Arab countries in the Middle East. Consequently, Egypt still had a part to play. Nonetheless, the lack of a clear position in its policymaking and President Mubarak's refusal

³³⁹ Paper, “Lebanon: Litmus test for U.S. credibility and commitment”, date unknown, folder, “Middle East Trip (MacFarlane) – Chron Cables (9/28/83-9/30/83), Box 55, Exec. Sec. Subject File, RRL.

³⁴⁰ Paper, “Lebanon: Litmus test for U.S. credibility and commitment”, date unknown, RRL.

³⁴¹ Paper, “Lebanon: Litmus test for U.S. credibility and commitment”, date unknown, RRL.

to follow blindly, meant that the Reagan administration's goal to offset Syrian domination by using the peace process and Egypt fell on deaf ears.

The Reagan Peace Initiative

1 September 1982, President Ronald Reagan held a press conference where he launched his "Peace Initiative."³⁴² The launch of the initiative was his first extensive speech on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The peace initiative, known as the Reagan Plan, was advertised as a "fresh start" and had been launched based on the beliefs that the crisis in Lebanon was on the road towards a solution.³⁴³ The day marked the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut and, according to Reagan, a day to be proud of. President Reagan reiterated that the Camp David Accords and UN Resolution 242 remained the foundation of U.S. policy for the Arab-Israeli conflict. He argued that the framework was the most suitable for future negotiations to reach a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, placing the initiative under the Camp David umbrella.³⁴⁴ Reagan spoke of the success of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty with the withdrawal from Sinai and Mubarak and Begin's bravery. He stated that the next step within the Camp David framework was the autonomy talks, without elaborating on how this would proceed. President Reagan outlined the United States' objectives for the initiative, which all centered around negotiations and the concept of "land for peace" that was used in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty; Israel gave up the occupied territory of the Sinai in exchange for a peace deal with Egypt. As demonstrated by the success of the Sinai withdrawal process between Egypt and Israel, Jordan had to be a part of the negotiation process as Israel would not give up any territory for the Palestinian people alone.³⁴⁵

The initiative was initiated by Secretary George Shultz and put together by people from the State Department and the intelligence community with Middle East experience. It was a combination of displaying the resilience of the U.S.-Israeli relationship and giving additions to the Camp David framework that was clearly at odds with Israel's policy. President Reagan highlighted Israel, its though history and lack of recognition from Arab states, and its right to

³⁴² Speech, "Address to the Nation on United States Policy for Peace in the Middle East", 1 September 1982, RRL. Accessed: 28 February 2020. URL: <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/90182d>:

³⁴³ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 254.

³⁴⁴ Speech, "Address to the Nation on United States Policy for Peace in the Middle East", 1 September 1982, RRL. Accessed: 28 February 2020. URL: <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/90182d>: Quandt, *Peace Process*, 255.

³⁴⁵ Speech, "Address to the Nation on United States Policy for Peace in the Middle East", 1 September 1982, RRL.

exist within secure borders, in line with his pro-Israel policies and an attempt to balance out the focus on the Palestinian people. Reagan also spoke frankly about the “legitimate rights of the Palestinian people” and the *de facto* homelessness of the Palestinians after the Beirut evacuation.³⁴⁶ The bottom line was that the U.S. “ruled out both a Palestinian state and annexation by Israel.”³⁴⁷ The official speech that launched the peace plan displayed the overarching ambivalence that characterized the United States’ relationship with the Palestinian people. While arguing for their right to autonomy, President Reagan denied that the U.S. would support a Palestinian state. To ensure confidence in the plan amongst Arab countries, he called for a settlement freeze by Israel. As stated by an American diplomat, the launch of the Reagan Plan was to regain the momentum of the Egyptian-Israeli treaty, which had been their “first priority to implement.”³⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Reagan and Secretary Shultz, the principal architect behind the peace initiative, made the mistake of both assuming that the administration could treat the Lebanon crisis and the peace process as separate entities as well as assuming that the Lebanon crisis was over after the PLO had been evacuated.³⁴⁹

Egyptian Reaction

The initial Egyptian reaction to the Reagan Plan was positive overall, as the renewed involvement by the United States in the peace process came at a critical time for Egypt. Since Mubarak’s election the previous year, he and his government had been under pressure from the dissatisfaction of the Egyptian public. As a central element of the Camp David Accords and, therefore, closely associated with both the U.S. and Israel led to significant criticism of the Mubarak government after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The discontent among the Egyptian public caused by the isolation and the weak economy had been sharpened by the Lebanon crisis and the political opposition. For example, the political opposition had taken to characterize the government as a “Do-nothing leadership.”³⁵⁰ To curb the negative trend towards his government, President Mubarak informed U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Samuel Pierce, that the perception of the United States had been severely damaged in Egypt. He urged the U.S. to contribute with aid to specific projects like the

³⁴⁶ Speech, “Address to the Nation on United States Policy for Peace in the Middle East”, 1 September 1982, RRL.

³⁴⁷ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 415.

³⁴⁸ Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 114.

³⁴⁹ Cannon, *President Reagan*, 355.; Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 115.

³⁵⁰ Cable, Cairo to Washington, “Meeting with President Mubarak – Request for massive urban infrastructure project”, 29 August 1982 (DTG: 291247Z Aug 82), folder, “Egypt (8/27/82-9/20/82)”, Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

planned water and sewage improvements so that the Egyptian people had some concrete evidence of U.S. aid in their daily lives.³⁵¹

Outside of Egyptian domestic politics, the Egyptian government continued to voice its support to the Camp David framework and, by extension, to the Reagan Plan. President Mubarak urged the Reagan administration to keep the momentum moving forward regarding talks with Palestinian moderates. He warned that if the U.S. did not deal with the Palestinian problem now, it would “mean a resumption of PLO terrorism and terrible problems for the U.S..”³⁵² Mubarak further criticized statements by the Israeli government, “especially by Sharon.”³⁵³ These statements included Lebanon, calling Jordan a Palestinian state, and statements on the continuing growth of settlements, and regarding the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza. He argued that such statements by Israel would make it difficult to assure the Egyptian people and other Arab states of the legitimacy of the Reagan Plan and the administration’s commitment to the peace process.³⁵⁴

Although positive to the initiative in private meetings with U.S. officials, the Egyptian government did not immediately endorse the plan publicly. There were several aspects of the Reagan Plan that the Egyptian government was hesitant about, and the initiative needed to be discussed in public. It could also be a tactic to not further enrage the public, which could be seen as an immediate endorsement as Egypt blindly following the United States’ lead. The formal reply from the Egyptian government did not come until mid-October in a letter delivered to Ambassador Atherton in Cairo. The response continued the line of argument that the initiative was “a positive step,” however the Egyptians believed that the plan “overemphasizes Israel’s security and concept of defensible borders.”³⁵⁵ The letter also pointed out the vague position on the Palestinian right to self-determination.³⁵⁶ President

³⁵¹ Cable, Cairo to Washington, “Meeting with President Mubarak – Request for massive urban infrastructure project”, 29 August 1982 (DTG: 291247Z Aug 82), RRL.

³⁵² Cable, Cairo to Washington, “Codel Solarz – Meeting with President Mubarak”, 1 September 1982 (DTG: 011510Z Sep 82), folder, “Egypt (8/27/82-9/20/82)”, Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³⁵³ Cable, Cairo to Washington, “Codel Solarz – Meeting with President Mubarak”, 1 September 1982 (DTG: 011510Z Sep 82), RRL.

³⁵⁴ Cable, Cairo to Washington, “Codel Solarz – Meeting with President Mubarak”, 1 September 1982 (DTG: 011510Z Sep 82), RRL.

³⁵⁵ Memo, Geoffrey Kemp to William Clark, “Bi-Weekly Update on Events in the Middle East/South Asian Countries (with the exception of Israel and Lebanon)”, 18 October 1982, folder, “Middle East General (9/2/82-10/21/82)”, Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³⁵⁶ Memo, Kemp to Clark, “Bi-Weekly Update on Events in the Middle East/South Asian Countries (with the exception of Israel and Lebanon)”, 18 October 1982, RRL.

Mubarak continued on the course of staying close to the United States while retaining some degree of independence and reinforcing ties to the Arab countries.

Israeli Reaction

The demands made by President Reagan in his speech regarding settlements and the Palestinian people were obvious points that Begin and his government would oppose, which they did. There was an immediate and fierce rejection from the Israelis, mainly because of the Reagan Plan calling for relinquishment of territory in favor of the Palestinians.³⁵⁷ In a meeting between special envoy and diplomat Philip Habib and Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, the Israeli position on the peace initiative was made clear. In an “obviously preplanned” presentation, Sharon stated that any future negotiations concerning the peace process would not be held based on anything other than the Camp David Accords, even though President Reagan connected his initiative and the Accords.³⁵⁸ Sharon continued his statement with “Israeli military forces will remain in the West Bank and Gaza for five years and beyond.”³⁵⁹ This referred to a point from the Camp David Accords regarding the withdrawal of Israeli forces and a transitional period of five years. Sharon’s statement and interpretation were challenged by U.S. ambassador to Israel, Samuel Lewis, who pointed out that necessary security measures were to be worked out in this period, which did not automatically authorize Israeli forces to remain there for “five years and beyond.”³⁶⁰

Sharon ended the summary of the Israeli position by stating, “Israel will remain in charge of internal security as it related to anti-terrorist activities: Israeli settlements will continue to grow and multiply: there can be no change whatsoever in the status of Jerusalem.”³⁶¹ He ended his statement by claiming, “there must be no ‘second’ Palestinian state.”³⁶² Israeli rejection of the Reagan plan shows Israel’s intention to maintain control. Prime Minister Begin had been able to mold the language of the Camp David Accords to be vague enough to

³⁵⁷ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 255.

³⁵⁸ Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, “Middle East Peace: Sharon comments on the Reagan Initiative”, 1 October 1982 (DTG: 011758Z Oct 82), folder, “Arab-Israel Peace Process: Cables, Sep 1982 (2of4)”, Box 1, Geoffrey Kemp Files, RRL.

³⁵⁹ Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, “Middle East Peace: Sharon comments on the Reagan Initiative”, 1 October 1982 (DTG: 011758Z Oct 82), RRL.

³⁶⁰ Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, “Middle East Peace: Sharon comments on the Reagan Initiative”, 1 October 1982 (DTG: 011758Z Oct 82), RRL.

³⁶¹ Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, “Middle East Peace: Sharon comments on the Reagan Initiative”, 1 October 1982 (DTG: 011758Z Oct 82), RRL.

³⁶² Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, “Middle East Peace: Sharon comments on the Reagan Initiative”, 1 October 1982 (DTG: 011758Z Oct 82), RRL.

suit his political goals. The clear indication from the Reagan administration stated in the Reagan Plan of the illegality of the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian people's rights did not comply with Israel's political and military ambitions.³⁶³ Nonetheless, despite the harsh Israeli position and the strain the Lebanon crisis had put on U.S.-Israeli relations, a "former Presidents' briefing", which are prepared for former presidents regarding current events and policies, indicated that the argument in Washington "had been muted".³⁶⁴

The Egyptian government tried to warn the Reagan administration about Israel and its actions in the time following President Reagan's September 1-speech. The outright rejection from Israel, notably the announcement of new settlements, was a direct contradiction of Reagan's statement in his speech that the United States would not support new settlements. Egyptian Minister Foreign, Boutros-Ghali stated that although the response to President Reagan's initiative had been positive overall in the Middle East, he feared Israeli tactics intended to drown the momentum of the proposed plan. Boutros-Ghali warned Ambassador Atherton that the first test of U.S. resolve was already here, just nine days after the President's speech. He argued that so far, the U.S. had only had words: "all you've done is give a speech" and that Egypt and surly other Arab countries hoped for more concrete action.³⁶⁵ If not, the situation would only favor Israel. In response to Atherton's point that "the U.S. statement had been among the strongest he had heard in his years of dealing with Middle East issues," Boutros-Ghali argued that U.S. credibility had been severely damaged.³⁶⁶ The Arab countries had seen the United States back off from Israeli pressures too many times already. The public did not, according to Boutros-Ghali, understand the nuances of the diplomacy necessary in peace negotiations. Therefore, concrete action was the only thing that could push the momentum of the initiative forward.³⁶⁷ There were several scenarios where Israel could derail the Reagan initiative, like provoke a confrontation with Syria or further military actions in Lebanon. Ambassador Atherton did not comment on Israeli action after the September 1 speech and stated that instead much depended on the Arab side, again deflecting focus from Israel's actions.³⁶⁸

³⁶³ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 375, 382.; Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 115-116.

³⁶⁴ Memo, Kemp and Teicher to Clark, "Former Presidents' Briefing", 13 October 1982, folder, "Middle East Briefing Papers (Oct-Dec 1982)", Box 5, Geoffrey Kemp Files, RRL.

³⁶⁵ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Ghali on Peace Initiative", 10 September 1982 (DTG:101502Z Sep 82), folder, "Egypt (8/27/82-9/20/82)", Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³⁶⁶ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Ghali on Peace Initiative", 10 September 1982 (DTG:101502Z Sep 82), RRL.

³⁶⁷ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Ghali on Peace Initiative", 10 September 1982 (DTG:101502Z Sep 82), RRL.

³⁶⁸ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Ghali on Peace Initiative", 10 September 1982 (DTG:101502Z Sep 82), RRL.

Another point of contention on the Egyptian side was that while the Reagan administration's arguments and positions regarding the peace plan were vague, Egypt was all the same asked to play advocate for the initiative. Like in the aftermath of Camp David, Egypt would again stand alone between the Israeli and Arab rejectionists. Because of the isolation, Boutros-Ghali stated that Egypt would not rely on oral commitments from the United States, but demanded the U.S. provide some form of written disclaimer of its position, "U.S. could not continue to give commitments to Israel, while asking Egypt to act on faith. The United States had to help Egypt overcome its own crisis of credibility."³⁶⁹

Both the United States and Egypt had lost credibility in the Middle East. The Egyptian government was now protesting that the U.S. would use Egypt to help its integrity among the Arab countries in the Middle East without helping its partner. One example where the United States needed Egypt's help was concerning the peace process and Jordan. The Reagan Plan distinctly moved the spotlight from Egypt to Jordan. The Reagan administration called for the Palestinian people to gain authority over its land and resources. However, it was on the condition of Jordanian involvement, as it was stated in the "Framework for peace in the Middle East."³⁷⁰ Egypt supported Jordanian involvement in the process, although the Egyptian government was aware that Jordan had not supported the Camp David Accords from the beginning.³⁷¹ Therefore, the Reagan administration needed Egypt's assistance to get Jordan to participate, as the Egyptian government reported that relations with Jordan had started to mend after the isolation following the Camp David Accords.³⁷²

The American position in the Middle East after the speech on September 1, in response to Egypt's demand for a written disclaimer, was that it would be unreasonable for Egypt and the other Arab countries to expect "changes or elaborations of those positions prior to opening of negotiations."³⁷³ As Ambassador Atherton conveyed to Egyptian officials, the United States had stated its position, and other parties were welcome to do the same, but that the focus should be on Jordan and the Palestinians instead of other issues or particulars. In conversations with Egyptian officials in that critical time after the launch of the initiative, there was avoidance by the Reagan administration about discussing both its own and the

³⁶⁹ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Ghali on Peace Initiative", 10 September 1982 (DTG:101502Z Sep 82), RRL.

³⁷⁰ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 255.

³⁷¹ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Codel Solarz – Meeting with President Mubarak", 1 September 1982 (DTG: 011510Z Sep 82), RRL.

³⁷² Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Codel Solarz – Meeting with President Mubarak", 1 September 1982 (DTG: 011510Z Sep 82), RRL.

³⁷³ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Ghali on Peace Initiative", 10 September 1982 (DTG:101502Z Sep 82), RRL.

Israeli position, as well as how Israel was acting in defiance of the initiative. There was also no clear plan for how the U.S. could get Israel to the negotiating table with a realistic and pragmatic plan. Boutros-Ghali again cautioned Atherton against Israeli action in the aftermath of the Reagan peace initiative. The only way the United States could strengthen its credibility was through concrete action.³⁷⁴ The Egyptian government remained distanced from the United States and the Lebanon crisis, and continued its harsh criticism of both the U.S. and Israel.

Another aspect of the American position that remained from the negotiations with Egypt before the Beirut evacuation was the attempt to keep the Lebanon crisis and the peace process separate. Although it would serve the U.S. not to link one to the other by pressing for concessions on the peace plan in exchange for withdrawal for Lebanon, it showed an unwillingness to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the Middle East. Even though the Arab-Israeli conflict had been a central part of American Middle East policy for years, it was not an isolated question.³⁷⁵ For instance, the outcome of the Iran-Iraq war could affect the Lebanon crisis, or an event in Lebanon could affect the peace process. The Reagan administration would continue to argue for the Lebanon crisis and the peace initiative to be separate entities on its agenda in its encounters with the Egyptians.³⁷⁶ However, there seemed not to be full consensus on that issue within the administration. NSC members Geoffrey Kemp and Howard Teicher, argued that the Reagan Plan was designed to be a linkage between the Lebanon crisis and the peace process.³⁷⁷ However, throughout discussions with Egyptian officials regarding the situation in Lebanon, Ambassador Atherton time and again underlined the need to keep the two situations separate. Those discussions occurred parallel with the Reagan administration urging Egypt to continue the normalization process with Israel to keep the peace process progress going.

Lebanon Crisis Continues

On 14 September, newly elected President of Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel, was assassinated by a bomb placed in the building where he was addressing fellow Phalangists. Gemayel had been

³⁷⁴ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Ghali on Peace Initiative", 10 September 1982 (DTG:101502Z Sep 82), RRL.

³⁷⁵ Haig, *Caveat*, 318-319.

³⁷⁶ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Meeting with Kamal Hassan Ali: Lebanon", 19 September 1982 (DTG: 191539Z Sep 82), folder, "Egypt (8/27/82-9/20/82)", Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³⁷⁷ Memo, Geoffrey Kemp and Howard Teicher to William Clark, "Former President' Briefing", 13 October 1982, folder, "Middle East Briefing Papers (Oct-Dec 1982)", Box 5, Geoffrey Kemp Files, RRL.

a central piece of Israel's policy, and the assassination derailed the entire plan for the pro-Israel political order in Lebanon. With the fear that the prospect for a pro-Israeli regime in Lebanon was disappearing, the assassination was used as a pretext to invade West Beirut, where Sharon allowed the Phalangists to attack two Palestinian refugee camps, Sabra and Shatila. What followed was a terrible massacre where hundreds of men, women, and children were killed over the span of three days.³⁷⁸ The massacre led to strong reactions everywhere, including in Israel, and the focus of the newly publicized peace initiative was reverted back to Lebanon.

The American reaction was to put Lebanon back on the top of the list of priorities. The official U.S. statement on the massacre pointed out that Israel was in charge of security at the camps and therefore responsible for the security violation that led to the massacre.³⁷⁹ American military forces which had been withdrawn shortly after the PLO-evacuation, was sent back to Beirut, and the negotiations to get all Israeli and Syrian forces out of Lebanon effectively pushed the peace initiative to the side.³⁸⁰

Once again, as the Egyptian officials had warned, the United States was left to catch up to the situation in the Middle East. The withdrawal of the American forces from Lebanon and the massacre that followed was another instance of the lack of communication and President Reagan's passive leadership style. There had been disagreements on deploying U.S. forces to begin with, Secretary Shultz and Philip Habib had been in favor of keeping the forces there for longer. However, Secretary Weinberger had managed to convince Reagan that pulling them out was the right thing to do as it would show that the administration kept its promise to have the forces out of Lebanon within thirty days.³⁸¹ Prior to 14 September, at a White House press briefing announcing the withdrawal of the American forces, Reagan read a statement prepared by the NSC staff and took no questions, and the internal disagreements concerning the withdrawal was never mentioned. Following the Beirut massacre, Reagan retreated and did not take charge of either the situation or his administration. The conflict between Secretary Weinberger and Secretary Shultz intensified. Weinberger stood by his decision to withdraw the American forces, while Shultz and Clark believed that the withdrawal had led to the assassination of Gemayel and the massacre.³⁸² Avoiding the controversial situation, a

³⁷⁸ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 415-416.

³⁷⁹ Memo, Kemp and Teicher to Clark. "Former Presidents' Briefing", 13 October 1982, folder, "Middle East Briefing Papers (Oct-Dec 1982), Box 5, Geoffrey Kemp Files, RRL.

³⁸⁰ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 256.

³⁸¹ Cannon, *President Reagan*, 355-357.

³⁸² Cannon, *President Reagan*, 355-357.

statement was released in Reagan's name expressing the appall for what had happened. In order to try and rectify the United States' image and position in the Middle East, Weinberger had lost the ability to influence Reagan on the matter. Less than a week passed before President Reagan announced that a second MNF would be established and sent back to Lebanon.³⁸³

Normalization Freeze

In the aftermath of the Israeli invasion into Lebanon in June of 1982, the Egyptian reaction had been relatively harsh, continuing throughout the fall. Egypt was not able to react by military force, and still being isolated from its Arab neighbors. The Egyptian government had distanced itself from the United States. It had refused any part of the evacuation plan for getting PLO out of Beirut. As to not be seen as an accomplice of the actions perpetrated by Israel, Mubarak had to remain firm against the U.S. The Egyptian media had shown no mercy as it had drawn parallels from the Israeli invasion and subsequent siege of Beirut to that reminiscent of Nazism.³⁸⁴ Egyptian media had since the peace treaty with Israeli been skeptical about Israel's intentions. Since the invasion, the presentation of Israel had grown to be significantly more abusive, which led to even harsher media attention after the Beirut massacre. According to an Israeli correspondent in Egypt, even Egyptian officials used the terms "Nazi" and "genocide" while referring to Israeli actions.³⁸⁵ Israel played the victim role in response to Egypt's reaction to its role in the Lebanon crisis. According to Israeli officials in conversations with the Reagan administration, Egyptian behavior, particularly that of the media needed to be challenged. Analysts within the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the Lebanon crisis and Egypt's inability to act against Israeli would teach Egypt a lesson and "moderate future Egyptian behavior vis-a-vis Israel" in the future.³⁸⁶

³⁸³ Cannon, *President Reagan*, 356-357.: Speech, "Address to the Nation Announcing the Formation of a New Multinational Force in Lebanon", 20 September 1982, RRL. Accessed: 20 May 2020. URL: <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/92082f>

³⁸⁴ Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, "Middle East Peace: Sharon comments on the Reagan Initiative", 1 October 1982 (DTG: 011758Z Oct 82), RRL.

³⁸⁵ Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, "Middle East Peace: Sharon comments on the Reagan Initiative", 1 October 1982 (DTG: 011758Z Oct 82), RRL.

³⁸⁶ Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, "Israeli-Egyptian relations: A rocky road ahead", 1 October 1982 (DTG: 011758Z Oct 82), folder, "Arab-Israel Peace Process: Cables, Sep 1982 (2of4)", Box 1, Geoffrey Kemp Files, RRL.

The Egyptian government's argument for the harsh critique of Israel was derived from Israel's demonstration that it followed a "militarism over diplomacy" kind of policy.³⁸⁷ Israeli actions convinced Egyptian officials that they needed to regain a leadership position in the Middle East and strengthen its military capabilities to be able to counter-balance Israel in the future.³⁸⁸

The Egyptian government recalled its ambassador stationed in Israel shortly after the Beirut massacre. In lack of other possible retaliation, the government effectively put a freeze on the normalization process, which was agreed upon in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and had begun when Israel withdrew from Sinai. The Egyptian government did not explicitly state it was breaking relations with Israel not to breach the treaty. However, it was in direct correlation with the Sabra and Shatila massacres, to show Egyptian "displeasure."³⁸⁹ Foreign Minister Ali was quoted in Egyptian media before the massacre stating that "the normalization process with Israel is '99 percent frozen'" while implicating that the U.S position needed to change.³⁹⁰

Long before the atrocities in Beirut, the Egyptian government signaled its displeasure with both Israel and the U.S. That position remained as President Mubarak stated that the ambassador's stay in Egypt would depend "on how things develop."³⁹¹ The Reagan administration, as stated by U.S. Ambassador in Israel Samuel Lewis, feared that the newfound Egyptian-Israeli relations would continue to "nose-dive" in the wake of the Lebanon crisis.³⁹² The deterioration between Egypt and Israel affected the Reagan administration's aim of both aiding Israel's security needs and the desire to build up Egypt to recruit Jordan to continue the peace process.³⁹³ However, the administration's willingness to do something about the turn for the worse between the two neighbors, was not evident. The United States had done little in order to curb Israeli military action in Lebanon. Therefore, it

³⁸⁷ Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, "Israeli-Egyptian relations: A rocky road ahead", 27 August 1982 (DTG: 271436Z Aug 82), RRL.

³⁸⁸ Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, "Middle East Peace: Sharon comments on the Reagan Initiative", 1 October 1982 (DTG: 011758Z Oct 82), RRL.

³⁸⁹ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Recall of Egyptian Ambassador from Israel", 20 September 1982 (DTG: 200813Z Sep 82), folder, "Egypt (8/27/82-9/20/82)", Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³⁹⁰ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Cairo Press Review for August 4", 4 August 1982 (DTG: 041539Z Aug 82), folder, "Egypt (7/27/82-8/4/82)", Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³⁹¹ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "Egyptian Reaction – U.S. response to Beirut massacres", 22 September 1982 (DTG: 221644Z Sep 82), folder, "Egypt (9/22/82-10/28/82)", Box 36, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

³⁹² Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, "Israeli-Egyptian relations: A rocky road ahead", 27 August 1982 (DTG: 271436Z Aug 82), RRL.

³⁹³ Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, "Israeli-Egyptian relations: A rocky road ahead", 27 August 1982 (DTG: 271436Z Aug 82), RRL.

would be reasonable to argue that Israel being unhappy with Egypt's behavior was not on top of the list of priorities for the Reagan administration. Egypt was not in a position to make any rash actions against Israel. Israel knew it had the upper hand both militarily and regarding the internal unrest within Egypt.³⁹⁴ Nonetheless, the issue of the Egyptian ambassador being recalled would continue to be a thorn in the U.S.-Egyptian relationship as President Mubarak would not be returned the ambassador to Tel Aviv until 1986.³⁹⁵

The deterioration of the situation in Lebanon showed how hasted the Reagan Plan was and how it made the United States' strategic position in the Middle East more complicated. As a consequence of the Reagan Plan being launched in the middle of the Lebanon crisis, the administration's and particularly Secretary Shultz's wish to keep the peace process separate, fell on deaf ears amongst the Arab countries.³⁹⁶ Perhaps the risks were not thoroughly evaluated or the conditions in Lebanon was not fully understood. Nonetheless, the Reagan Plan seemed to increase the difficulties for the administration in the Middle East. Egypt, Israel, and Jordan all did not abide by American pleas to keep the two situations separate. For example, Egypt and Jordan both made it clear there would be no negotiations with Israel in the current climate in Lebanon or without an understanding with the PLO. On the other side, Syria and Israel both wanted to delay its withdrawal from Lebanon to deflect focus from the Palestinian question that had gotten more attention from the Reagan Plan.³⁹⁷

U.S. Credibility at Stake

As 1983 drew closer, the Reagan administration was increasingly preoccupied with Lebanon and the negotiations between Lebanon, Israel, and Syria. The peace initiative lost its momentum as Israeli and Syrian forces continued its presence in Lebanon. The Reagan administration felt the pressure to rectify its own image after the Sabra and Shatila massacres. Almost six months after the launch of the Reagan Plan, National Security Adviser William Clark pleaded with President Reagan for decisive action in the Middle East. He stated that the continued reviews of the U.S. position and ways to proceed evoked a sense of "deja-vu" and that the impact of the Reagan Plan had been allowed to slip away.³⁹⁸ Clark argued that the

³⁹⁴ Cable, Tel Aviv to Washington, "Israeli-Egyptian relations: A rocky road ahead", 27 August 1982 (DTG: 271436Z Aug 82), RRL.

³⁹⁵ Quandt, "American-Egyptian Relations", 8.

³⁹⁶ Elgindy, *Blind Spot*, 114.

³⁹⁷ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 421-423.

³⁹⁸ Memo, William Clark to President Reagan, "The Middle East", 4 February 1983, folder, "Middle East General (1/10/84-2/6/84)", Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

time had come for President Reagan to decide where to invest his time for the next two years in order to “leave a legacy of progress.”³⁹⁹ Peace in the Middle East would be one of these areas.⁴⁰⁰ However, as the following year would show, the decisive actions remained absent.

The Reagan administration had a few overall objectives for the year ahead, which primarily was to ensure a “broadly-based, friendly Lebanese government” and thereafter withdrawal of foreign forces.⁴⁰¹ After that came the belief that the Reagan Plan could be fulfilled even after the resounding Israeli rejection and the worsening situation in Lebanon. The goal was to shape conditions so that Jordan and Israel could enter negotiations concerning the peace process and the Palestinian people. These objectives all served the broader goal of “maintaining American dominance of Middle East diplomacy and reducing the Soviet role in the area.”⁴⁰² National Security Advisor William Clark stated, “The setbacks of the last few weeks put our credibility as a great power and our reliability as mediators at stake,” which had been the aim to preserve since Reagan took office in January 1981.⁴⁰³ The United States had since Henry Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy and Sinai agreements in the mid-1970s, and the Camp David Accords in 1978 and 1979, taken on the role as the primary mediator in conflicts in the Middle East. As shown by the European Peace Initiative and the effort to protect that role and control of the process. The perception of its role and place in the Middle East reverted to the protection of its interests, allies and partners, and the Cold War by limiting the Soviet Union’s influence.

The makeup of the crisis in Lebanon in 1983 was complex. The fragile Lebanese government, Israel with its significant military power but waning domestic support, the PLO who had been disbursed across the Middle East. Lastly, there was Syria, which had been a part of the Lebanon crisis for several years, was a Soviet ally and staunch opponent to the Camp David Accords. After Egypt fell from the position of leader in the Arab world, Syria had started to take more of a leading position.⁴⁰⁴ Iran and Iraq were in the midst of war, and the more

³⁹⁹ Memo, Clark to President Reagan, “The Middle East”, 4 February 1983, RRL.

⁴⁰⁰ Memo, Clark to President Reagan, “The Middle East”, 4 February 1983, RRL.: Memo, Clark to President Reagan, “The Prospect for Progress in US-Soviet Relations”, 4 February 1983, folder, “Middle East General (1/10/84-2/6/84)”, Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

⁴⁰¹ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, “Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East”, 13 October 1983, folder, “NSPG0072 14 Oct 1983 (Middle East)”, Box 91306, Exec. Sec. NSPG, RRL.

⁴⁰² Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, “Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East”, 13 October 1983, RRL.

⁴⁰³ Document, “Talking points for Judge Clark to Introduce the NSPG”, 22 April 1983, folder, “NSPG 0062 22 Apr 1983 (Middle East)”, Box 91306, Exec. Sec. NSPG, RRL.

⁴⁰⁴ ⁴⁰⁴ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, “Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East”, 13 October 1983, RRL.: Paper, “Lebanon: Litmus test for U.S. credibility and commitment”, date unknown, folder, “Middle East Trip (MacFarlane) – Chron Cables (9/28/83-9/30/83), Box 55, Exec. Sec. Subject File, RRL.

moderate countries such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan did not take the role as leader. Syria in a leading position amongst Arab countries in the Middle East was not something the Reagan administration wanted. It disrupted the U.S. plan for the war in Lebanon, its policy for the Middle East. Syria was both an opponent to the Camp David Accords and an ally to the Soviet Union, which meant that the Soviets could get a stronger foothold in the Middle East by bolstering Syrian military capabilities.⁴⁰⁵ To tackle the complex and fragile situation, Reagan appointed a new special envoy to conduct shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East. Deputy National Security Adviser, Robert “Bud” McFarlane, “a veteran in diplomatic and bureaucratic battles,” took over after Philip Habib.⁴⁰⁶

Even after the United States brokered an Israeli-Lebanese agreement in May 1983, the Syrian government aimed to undo this to strengthen its position along with that of the Soviet Union.⁴⁰⁷ The Reagan administration throughout 1983 feared that Syria could tilt the power balance in the Arab world, which would weaken countries close to the U.S. such as Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. This could in turn make these countries “less willing to take risks for peace,” by extension less willing taking risks for the United States.⁴⁰⁸ In order to offset Syrian leadership, the Reagan administration wanted to gather support from other moderate Arab countries to reinstate Egypt in this leadership role. Instead, “our overall strategy, therefore, must be to accumulate all possible counterweights to Syria to block its gains.”⁴⁰⁹ There was no clear plan for how to proceed in that respect, however, the U.S. desire to knock Syria off the leadership position was a definite priority for 1983 and 1984.

1983 also brought on more changes in the administration. National Security Adviser Clark seemed to have taken on more than he could handle, and friction between Clark and Secretary Shultz had started to influence the administration negatively. The tensions between Clark and Shultz were brought to the President, who opted for more private meetings with Shultz, whom he considered his leading adviser in foreign policy.⁴¹⁰ When the position of Secretary of the

⁴⁰⁵ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, “Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East”, 13 October 1983, RRL.; Paper, “Lebanon: Litmus test for U.S. credibility and commitment”, date unknown, RRL.

⁴⁰⁶ Weisman, Steven R. “Man in the News: New Man on Reagan’s Mideast Team”. *The New York Times* Published, 23 July 1983. Accessed, 10 May 2020. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/23/world/man-in-the-news-new-man-on-reagan-s-mideast-team.html?searchResultPosition=9>

⁴⁰⁷ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, “Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East”, 13 October 1983, RRL.

⁴⁰⁸ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, “Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East”, 13 October 1983, RRL.

⁴⁰⁹ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, “Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East”, 13 October 1983, RRL.

⁴¹⁰ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 147-148.

Interior opened up, Clark took the opportunity and asked to be nominated. Less than two years after he became National Security Adviser, Clark left the position. His deputy, Robert McFarlane, was appointed the new National Security Adviser, the third so far in the Reagan administration. While McFarlane lacked the same personal relationship with Reagan, he had extensive knowledge and experience in the foreign policy field.⁴¹¹

The Reagan administration's focus on perception and prestige continued through this first presidential period. Continuing the negotiations regarding Lebanon and securing a "satisfactory" political outcome for the country remained a primary objective.⁴¹² A lot was dependent on the outcome in Lebanon. In a strategy overview by Secretary Shultz, he stated that the outcome in Lebanon affected the United States' "standing in the Middle East and our prospects for bringing the Marines home in honorable circumstances."⁴¹³ To ensure such an outcome, the Reagan administration had to maintain the power balance in its favor in the Middle East to limit Syrian power. The policymaking for this endeavor involved bringing Egypt back into the Arab fold. It was still important for the U.S. to show the other Arab countries that they could benefit to turn away from the Soviet Union. Even though Jordan had become a more important player in the continuation of the peace process, as stated in Reagan's September 1 speech, Egypt still had a part to play: "Egypt remains crucial. Indeed, the American position in the Middle East depends to a great extent on the perception that Egypt has gained by its turn toward peace and toward us."⁴¹⁴ After the assassination of Anwar Sadat in October 1981, it could be perceived, as stated by Secretary Haig, that the United States had failed both Sadat and Egypt. It thereafter became more of a priority to show Egypt and other Arab countries that the United States could protect its partners and was a better choice than the Soviet Union.

As the end of 1983 drew near, the Reagan administration was certain that some form of power sharing arrangement would come about in Lebanon. Crucial for the administration was whether they or Syria would end up capable of dictating the outcome. Another critical aspect was what effect the potential outcome in Lebanon would have on U.S. "credibility and

⁴¹¹ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 147-149.

⁴¹² Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East", 13 October 1983, RRL.

⁴¹³ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East", 13 October 1983, RRL.

⁴¹⁴ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East", 13 October 1983, RRL.

posture in one of the world's most vital regions."⁴¹⁵ Syria's domination in the Middle East was based on intimidation. Therefore, the Reagan administration argued that just isolating the country would not be enough to reduce Syria's position. Isolating Syria would not be enough because Israel seemed to have become demoralized from the extensive war efforts and lack of domestic support. Contrasted with Syrian military superiority as a result of Soviet build-up meant further effort was needed to stop Syrian domination in the Middle East. Secretary Shultz argued that a military victory in Lebanon, especially if presented as a humiliation of the United States, would have profound effects on the political landscape of the Middle East. It would strengthen Syria and, by extension, strengthen the Soviet Union's position; it would also weaken moderate U.S. friendly countries such as Egypt. Although Shultz accepted that Syria had "legitimate interests" in Lebanon, he was convinced that under the regime at the time, it would "work ruthlessly to sabotage the peace process as we know it."⁴¹⁶

Meanwhile, notable differences between Egypt and Israel could be standing in the way for the Reagan administration's goals for Lebanon and Syria, especially from the Egyptian side. While Israel was preoccupied in Lebanon and established as the one with superior military capabilities, Egypt's only way of action was diplomacy. Egypt froze the normalization process in response to the Lebanon crisis and still kept its ambassador to Israel at home. Egypt was still crucial to the Reagan administration: "We must encourage both Israel and Egypt to maintain their peace treaty as a centerpiece of their foreign policies and to work to overcome their differences," as Shultz stated.⁴¹⁷ However, as the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel was not a primary objective in 1983, it did not receive much attention from the Reagan administration except for pushing Mubarak to send the ambassador back and restart the normalization process.⁴¹⁸ The two main objectives for the Middle East were to revive its relationship with Israel, which had suffered due to the Lebanon crisis, and to ensure that Israel did not leave a power vacuum in Lebanon ready to be taken by Syria. The other objective was to isolate Syria.

⁴¹⁵ NSPG Meeting paper, from William Clark, "National Security Planning Group Meeting", 13 October 1983, folder, "NSPG 0072 14 Oct 1983 (Middle East)", Box 91306, Exec. Sec. NSPG, RRL.

⁴¹⁶ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East", 13 October 1983, RRL.

⁴¹⁷ Memo, Secretary Shultz to President Reagan, "Our Strategy in Lebanon and the Middle East", 13 October 1983, RRL.

⁴¹⁸ Cable, Cairo to Washington, "McFarlane/Fairbanks mission: Call on Foreign Minister Ali, August 20", 21 August 1983 (DTG:211516Z Aug 83), folder, "Middle East Trip (McFarlane) -Chron Cables (8/20/83-8/22/83)", Box 54, Exec. Sec. Subject File, RRL.

The State Department had in late 1983 drawn up a strategy highlighting the potential of a build-up of Egypt's position to isolate Syria. However, there was no clear plan of action. NSC member, Donald Fortier argued: "Merely wanting this, however, will not make it so."⁴¹⁹ Nonetheless, Fortier pointed out that Egypt in a leading position in the Middle East was not a far-fetched idea as other Arab countries would see the value of Egyptian military protection and would need little pressure from the U.S. to lighten the isolation of Egypt. One way to accomplish the goal was to recruit Egypt to the Lebanon MNF. However, because of the Egyptian government's hardline position during the PLO evacuation negotiations and its harsh criticism of both the U.S. and Israel, Egypt would not join the MNF just because the Reagan administration asked.⁴²⁰

The plan to get Egypt to join the multinational force in Lebanon contained similar aspects with Shultz's plan for the PLO evacuation. The objective was to get President Mubarak and his ministers to believe the Reagan administration was genuinely dedicated to the peace process and the Palestinian people. Fortier argued that the administration needed to play on Egyptian fears of Syrian domination, and the administration needed to "appear to have a credible and serious plan for countering Syrian power."⁴²¹ The lack of decisive action in Lebanon by the Reagan administration, given its political investments in the conflict, could do extensive damage to the administration's position in the Middle East and with its allies. Fortier had in September 1983, forwarded a paper on the situation in Lebanon to special envoy, McFarlane, and highlighted that the criticisms of the incompetence the administration had shown in foreign policy would erode U.S. credibility to mediate the conflict. Fortier feared that the show of capability by the Soviet Union via Syria would make U.S. allies less willing to follow U.S. policy and instead rely on their independent approaches.⁴²² Whether or not the Reagan administration should take bold military and political steps in Lebanon at that point or wait would not necessarily determine if the crisis would get better or worsen. However, the NSC analyst argued that the administration needed to have "a clear and realistic view of where things are headed," to influence the actions of Lebanon, Israel, and Syria.⁴²³

⁴¹⁹ Memo, Donald Fortier to Robert McFarlane, "Thoughts for the Middle East NSPG and Beyond", 18 October 1983, folder, "NSPG 0073 18 Oct 1983 (Middle East)", Box 91306, Exec. Sec. NSPG, RRL.

⁴²⁰ Memo, Donald Fortier to Robert McFarlane, "Thoughts for the Middle East NSPG and Beyond", 18 October 1983, RRL.

⁴²¹ Memo, Fortier to McFarlane, "Thoughts for the Middle East NSPG and Beyond", 18 October 1983, RRL.

⁴²² Cable, Washington to Beirut, "Ross/Fortier thoughts on Lebanon", 2 September 1983 (DTG: 020215Z Sep 83), folder, "McFarlane File, Middle East Trip (09/02/1983) (1)", Box 117, Exec. Sec. Cable File, RRL.

⁴²³ Cable, Washington to Beirut, "Ross/Fortier thoughts on Lebanon", 2 September 1983 (DTG: 020215Z Sep 83), RRL.

While Egypt could over time better its relationships with Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the Reagan administration might have overestimated the U.S. position and Egypt's ability to retake the leading position from Syria. Syrian President, Hafez al-Assad, pointed out to McFarlane that even Egypt with such a long history and strong Arab identity had a population that was very unhappy with the newfound relations with Israel. Assad had taken notice of Mubarak's shift back towards the Arab fold: "Israel's unilateral process of sniping at each country will not lead to peace. Even Egypt is returning to Arabism and Arab ranks."⁴²⁴ In a clear example of how Syria saw the United States and Israel, despite Assad's willingness to talk to Mubarak, McFarlane stated that he would help Assad approach Egypt *if* he signed a peace agreement. Assad answered: "Ah Ha! You are indeed tied to Israel! The U.S. is indeed not fair! Israel's policy is in fact executed by the U.S..⁴²⁵ Even if Egypt might be able to approach Syria, the United States damaged position and the disdain for Israel, presented severe challenges for McFarlane's negotiation efforts. The hostilities continued and the United States found itself more and more entangled in Lebanon.⁴²⁶

Military Cooperation – The Example of Ras Banas

Military cooperation with Egypt had been a central part of the United States' interests in the Middle East. The U.S. had shifted its focus considerably to the Persian Gulf at the beginning of the term in line with the shift to a more Cold War-centric policy. A primary goal for the administration had been to gain a military base in the Gulf. The United States lacked useful military facilities in the Middle East where a contingent could be placed to be able to react quickly to potential conflicts or provocation from the Soviet Union or one of its client states.⁴²⁷ Previously the United States and Egypt had cooperated militarily outside of Egypt, for example, defending Chad from a Qadhafi-supported invasion, as well as Sudan.⁴²⁸ These operations demonstrated that strategic cooperation between the U.S. and Egypt was possible despite differences in other areas.⁴²⁹ Tensions emerged between Egypt and the U.S. when it

⁴²⁴ Cable, Beirut to Washington, "McFarlane/Fairbanks Mission: Meeting with Assad", 10 August 1983 (DTG: 101505Z Aug 83), folder, "McFarlane Middle East Mission (8/10/83)", Box 44, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

⁴²⁵ Cable, Beirut to Washington, "McFarlane/Fairbanks Mission: Meeting with Assad", 10 August 1983 (DTG: 101505Z Aug 83), RRL.

⁴²⁶ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 258-259.

⁴²⁷ Cable, Washington to Cairo, "U.S.-Egyptian Strategic Cooperation", 20 August 1983 (DTG: 200231Z Aug 83), folder, "Middle East (McFarlane) – Cables from Secretary Shultz", Box 53, Exec. Sec. Subject File, RRL.

⁴²⁸ Cable, Washington to Cairo, "U.S.-Egyptian Strategic Cooperation", 20 August 1983 (DTG: 200231Z Aug 83), RRL.

⁴²⁹ Cable, Washington to Cairo, "U.S.-Egyptian Strategic Cooperation", 20 August 1983 (DTG: 200231Z Aug 83), RRL.

came to allowing the United States a permanent base on Egyptian territory as it had with allowing an American contingent in the Sinai MFO.

Since the United States and Egypt entered a partnership, including military assistance and cooperation, the issue of the military base Ras Banas in Egypt had been on the negotiation table. The Egyptians had not been using the base for quite some time, and the facilities were in need of maintenance. Even though it was not in use, the Egyptian government had, for a long time, been hesitant about allowing an outside power to establish military facilities on its territory. President Sadat, despite his dedication to the relationship with the U.S., had been reluctant to grant American military forces access to the base, and his successor, President Mubarak, had been even more so.⁴³⁰ Mubarak had taken a more independent position regarding its relationship with the United States than Sadat had, and he pursued a realignment with most of the Arab countries in the Middle East.⁴³¹ The Egyptian public was already sensitive to an outside power because of the history of both the British and the Soviet Union's strong military presence in the country. In an effort to further consolidate his power, Mubarak had to carefully weigh the costs and benefits of a "military relationship" with the United States to prevent the public from rising against him.⁴³²

In the fall of 1983, the Ras Banas negotiations were at a "make or break" point.⁴³³ Secretary Shultz argued that if the administration failed with either the U.S. Congress or the Egyptian government at that point, it could "affect the quality of our strategic relationship and the substance of our planning for the defense of the region."⁴³⁴ If the Egyptian government were to reject the American proposal for the base, it could raise doubts within the administration about how committed President Mubarak was to the strategic relationship. Vice versa, if Congress were to reject funding for Ras Banas, similar doubts would be raised on the Egyptian side concerning the Reagan administration and whether the U.S. only wanted the strategic relationship on its terms. Therefore, the administration's main priority was to conserve its regional plans without harming relations with either the Egyptian government or Congress. Secretary Shultz, although wary of the difficulties of the project, remained

⁴³⁰ Quandt, "American-Egyptian Relations", 6.

⁴³¹ Shama, *Egyptian Foreign Policy from Mubarak to Morsi*, 160-161.

⁴³² Cable, Washington to Cairo, "U.S.-Egyptian Strategic Cooperation", 20 August 1983 (DTG: 200231Z Aug 83), RRL.

⁴³³ Cable, Washington to Cairo, "U.S.-Egyptian Strategic Cooperation", 20 August 1983 (DTG: 200231Z Aug 83), RRL.

⁴³⁴ Cable, Washington to Cairo, "U.S.-Egyptian Strategic Cooperation", 20 August 1983 (DTG: 200231Z Aug 83), RRL.

optimistic that strategic cooperation with Egypt was beneficial to the administration in bilateral relations with the Egyptian government and the broader aspects of the Middle East.⁴³⁵

Nonetheless, the example of the military base came to illustrate the limitations of the U.S.-Egyptian relationship. After several rounds of negotiations with the Egyptian government and the U.S. Congress, the process ended with President Mubarak's rejection of the proposal for Ras Banas. A purely American military base, in contrast to the multinational force in the Sinai, would be too closely linked to the British occupation of Egypt. Mubarak had since his election in 1981 attempted to lessen Egypt's dependency on the United States that Sadat had pursued and recognized that a rejection of the Ras Banas proposal would reinforce U.S. position and legitimacy.⁴³⁶ Despite the rejection, the strategic relationship between the U.S. and Egypt continued and was strengthened throughout the 1980s and 1990s.⁴³⁷

Conclusion

The most apparent difference in the U.S.-Egyptian relationship from the beginning of the Reagan presidency to the aftermath of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon was President Mubarak. While Anwar Sadat had broken from Nasser's ambitions plan for Egypt in the Middle East and changed direction towards the United States and peace with Israel, Mubarak utilized a combination of both Nasser and Sadat's policies. The United States and other countries in the Middle East regarded Mubarak's position as weak and was uncertain if he would last as President. Nevertheless, while continuing Sadat's "semi-authoritarian" rule allowing some political parties and opposition to voice their critiques, Mubarak started to tilt Egypt back towards the Arab world and did not seem as infatuated with the United States.⁴³⁸

The continuation of the war in Lebanon showed that the Reagan administration continued to employ policies and strategies in order to catch up to earlier mistakes. The Reagan Plan was launched prematurely, and the hostilities that followed in 1982 and 1983 made it even more clear how the U.S. had little to no influence over Israel. Further, when the situation in Lebanon worsened, President Reagan turned to Israel for closer strategic cooperation to

⁴³⁵ Cable, Washington to Cairo, "U.S.-Egyptian Strategic Cooperation", 20 August 1983 (DTG: 200231Z Aug 83), RRL.

⁴³⁶ Shama, *Egyptian Foreign Policy from Mubarak to Morsi*, 163-164.

⁴³⁷ Shama, *Egyptian Foreign Policy from Mubarak to Morsi*, 164.

⁴³⁸ Shehata, Dina. *Islamists and Secularists in Egypt: Opposition, Conflict & Cooperation*. London: Routledge (2009) DOI: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uio.no/10.4324/9780203863480>. 33.

“punish” Syria.⁴³⁹ The notion that Egypt could be bolstered to the degree of former glory in the Arab world to help the U.S. position presented a unrealistic time line and expectations. The Egyptian government under Mubarak had proved more independent than Sadat. Although still Western-friendly, Mubarak aimed at rebuilding Egypt’s relations with neighboring Arab countries on his terms. Despite conflicts and mistrust the crises of 1982 and 1983 did not do permanent damage to the U.S.-Egyptian relationship.

⁴³⁹ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 258-259.

Chapter 6

Epilogue

“One way or another there needs to be a peace process”

By the end of Reagan’s first term, the peace process had died down amid war in Lebanon, negotiations with Israel and Syria regarding withdrawal, and domestic politics. Secretary of State George Shultz, who had initiated the Reagan Plan, argued that activity within the peace process had served U.S. interests since the early 1970s. Further, he argued that the United States could not allow a vacuum to take hold because they could risk losing the advantages the U.S. had gained from the peace process.⁴⁴⁰ The respective parties of the peace process in the Middle East: Egypt, Israel, and Jordan, did not have it high on the list of priorities. Israel was focused on domestic issues and the economy after a shift in government. Prime Minister Begin had resigned in August 1983 and left the reigns to Yitzhak Shamir, who only held the position for eleven months before Shimon Peres took over from 1984-1986. Jordan was focused on Palestinian relations, and the Egyptian government did not want to initiate anything within the process.⁴⁴¹

The Reagan administration could not let hostilities reignite between Egypt and Israel because it would be a risk to regional stability. A breakdown in Egyptian-Israeli relations would also worsen the U.S.’s position in the Middle East due to the bias America had towards Israel negatively affected its relationships with Arab countries. Egypt was committed to regain its leadership role parallel to managing relations with the U.S. and Israel.⁴⁴² As Reagan had been reelected, Secretary Shultz argued that while the U.S. was occupied in Lebanon it should start

⁴⁴⁰ Memo, Secretary Shultz to the President, “Next Steps in the Middle East”, 5 December 1984, folder, “Middle East General (12/5/84-12/19/84)”, Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

⁴⁴¹ Memo, Howard Teicher to Robert McFarlane, “Secretary Shultz’ November 26 Discussions of the Peace Process”, 27 November 1984, folder, “Middle East General (10/25/84-11/27/84)”, Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.

⁴⁴² Memo, Shultz to the President, “Next Steps in the Middle East”, 5 December 1984, RRL.

to lay the ground work for further progress in the peace process. The next step, as it had been following the Reagan Plan, was active participation by Jordan.⁴⁴³

Military Cooperation

Despite the failure to agree on the military base Ras Banas, U.S.-Egyptian military cooperation continued. Egypt had taken an active role in the Iran-Iraq war in favor of Iraq. Like Egypt as the go-between in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Egypt also took on the role between the U.S. and the Gulf Arabs. Transit of U.S. military vehicles via Egypt to the Persian Gulf became of critical strategic importance in the late 1980s and 1990s.⁴⁴⁴

U.S.-Egyptian military cooperation continued to deepen and broaden in the decades to come. Washington and Cairo cooperated during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and Egypt supported the United States War on Terrorism. The cooperation against terrorism predates the 2001 attacks, with Egypt bringing the issue to the UN on a yearly basis in addition to intelligence exchange between Cairo and the FBI.⁴⁴⁵ Despite several disagreements and crises, the relationship endured. Egypt became dependent on American equipment and training, along with the steady flow of financial aid. On the Egyptian side, Mubarak needed to maintain the relationship with the U.S. to secure his rule. With continuous U.S. financial and military aid, his military remained satisfied, and the regime remained intact.⁴⁴⁶

The power balance between the two partners was far from equal. Egypt was dependent on the United States in almost every aspect: political, financial, militarily, diplomatic. The U.S., on the other hand, was not as dependent on Egypt. After the Cold War ended, the race to secure allies in the Middle East ended. However, the protection of U.S. interests did not. As it shows by the continued cooperation, Egypt retained some of its usefulness.

⁴⁴³ Memo, Shultz to the President, "Next Steps in the Middle East", 5 December 1984, RRL.

⁴⁴⁴ Memcon, "Meeting with Egyptian Presidential Adviser on April 12, 1984", 12 April 1984, folder, "Middle East General (4/17/84) (1)", Box 45, Exec. Sec. Country File, RRL.: Shama, *Egyptian Foreign Policy from Mubarak to Morsi*, 161-163.

⁴⁴⁵ Shama, *Egyptian Foreign Policy from Mubarak to Morsi*, 161-163.

⁴⁴⁶ Shama, *Egyptian Foreign Policy from Mubarak to Morsi*, 164.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The Reagan administration's approach to its relationship with Egypt during President Ronald Reagan's first term was characterized by convenience and ambivalence. Policies and decisions regarding Egypt were often made to reach goals concerning other areas of U.S. Middle East policy. Another characteristic in U.S.-Egyptian relations was the lack of consistency in the communication regarding the peace process and Egypt's place in U.S. foreign policy. After the signing of the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, both Egypt and the Accords became symbols of the peace process. Egypt also became means to an end for American ambition in the Middle East. The U.S.-Egyptian relationship had in large part been defined by President Jimmy Carter and President Anwar Sadat and the peace process which became the cornerstone of the relationship. Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign had directed more focus to the Cold War, the Soviet Union and Israel. The Arab-Israeli conflict and the Camp David Accords were hardly mentioned. With less concern for the peace process and more focus on Israel and the Soviet Union there were uncertainties for Egypt when Reagan took office in 1981.

Reagan himself did not always take an active part in shaping the administration's Middle East policies, which left his Secretaries of State and Defense, as well as presidential aides, to argue between themselves to forward their chosen policies. Internal conflict and lack of communication characterized the first years of the Reagan administration and highlighted the unpredictability in policymaking. Central posts, such as Secretary of State, the National Security Adviser, was changed multiple times. Because President Reagan was more focused on the Cold War and to win against the Soviet Union, Washington returned to view the world through the "Cold War lens" in the 1980s, which also translated to the Middle East. The Cold War essentially became a "competition for allies," especially in the Middle East, where Egypt

was considered a vital country, both because of its size and position.⁴⁴⁷ Therefore, the U.S.'s newfound relationship with Egypt gained importance as it represented a success in protecting American national interests. The Reagan administration's overarching aim was to protect its interests, support Israel's security needs, and halt Soviet influence in the Middle East. On several occasions these goals led to policies towards Egypt where the relationship was used out of convenience. The relationship was also used by the United States to continue its fight against the Soviet Union.

A Convenient Peace Treaty

As scholar and former NSC member William Quandt puts it, "If one can speak of a honeymoon in the U.S.-Egyptian relationship, it began in 1974 and came to a close sometime around 1980."⁴⁴⁸ 1980 was an election year, which usually took most or all of the attention in Washington, and the winner in November was Ronald Reagan. Reagan was a Cold Warrior who highlighted the U.S.-Israeli relationship throughout his campaign, and merely acknowledged Egypt or the Accords. In January 1981, President Reagan and his Secretary of State Alexander Haig announced that the main focus of the United States in the Middle East would be to limit the "evil" influence of the Soviet Union, setting the tone of U.S. Middle East policy. Haig stated in a press conference one week after the inauguration that although the administration would continue to support Camp David, there was no need for urgency on the matter. However, before Reagan was elected, the United States had already gained substantial headway concerning the Cold War and its security obligation to Israel by engaging in a partnership with Egypt. The 1978 Accords and the subsequent 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty was an advantage to U.S. Middle East policy as it seemed to solve several entangled goals at the same time: Israel had signed a peace treaty with Egypt, which meant that the largest Arab military power was no longer a threat to Israel. The *de facto* alliance that now existed between Cairo and Washington ensured that the Soviet Union had no influence in Egypt. However, managing both Israel and Egypt as allies of the United States came with its own set of challenges.

Only the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of the two frameworks had seen any progress since its signing. In other respects, the peace process had stalled. The European Community believed it

⁴⁴⁷ Shama, *Egyptian Foreign Policy from Mubarak to Morsi*, 156.

⁴⁴⁸ Quandt, "American-Egyptian Relations", 4.

should take a greater part in promoting progress, especially for the Palestinian people. Even though the Reagan administration had downgraded the importance of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the European peace initiative was the first instance of the period for this thesis, where the Reagan administration used Camp David as a means to an end. The aim was to remain the primary facilitator of the peace process to protect U.S. interests in the Middle East, including Israel. The European peace initiative, derived from the Venice Declaration, explicitly mentioned the Palestinian people, Jerusalem, and the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza. Topics both the U.S. and Israel would like to remain in the vague language of the Camp David Accords. The diplomatic effort to drown the European peace initiative at the beginning of 1981 stands as an example of policy developments that followed throughout Reagan's first term.

Sinai Multinational Force and Observers

The Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty stipulated a peacekeeping force to oversee the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. The United Nations was explicitly mentioned in the treaty, and Egypt expressed a desire for a UN force to police the Sinai because it would be more welcomed by the Egyptian public than a purely American force. Nonetheless, in a curious turn of events, the Soviet Union threatened to use its veto power even though that would allow a fully American military force in a strategic place in the Middle East. Nonetheless, after several negotiation attempts, the UN force was ruled out for the withdrawal period. The opportunity for the United States to lead the Sinai multinational force (MFO) became a possibility for the Reagan administration to secure a stronger military presence in the Middle East and have military contingencies closer to the Persian Gulf, the main focus of the administration in 1981. The Reagan administration knew the United States would most likely front the largest part of the Sinai force as well as most of the costs. In the development phase of the Sinai MFO, the NSC discussed other ulterior purposes for the American contingent. These discussions highlighted the differences between parts of the administration, in particular that of the Department of Defense, the State Department, and President Reagan himself. While Secretary Weinberger and Deputy Secretary of Defense, Frank Carlucci, underlined the restrictions because of the mandate and peacekeeping nature of the force, Reagan displayed a lack of knowledge and care for the local sensitivities and nuances of the Middle East, with no objections from Secretary Haig.

Sadat and Mubarak

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat had taken a substantial turn after he came to power in 1970. He broke from Nasser's Pan-Arabism ambitions, evicted the Soviet advisers from Egypt and turned towards the United States. He followed all of this with an unprecedented trip to Jerusalem and acknowledged Israel's existence. Although he gained trust among the Americans, he made Egypt very unpopular in the Middle East as well as giving way to resentment in the Egyptian public. Sadat was one of the architects of the Camp David Accords and enjoyed a close friendship with President Jimmy Carter. That relationship and the Camp David Accords set the foundation for the Egyptian dependency on U.S. aid and military assistance. Sadat continued to be popular in the U.S. after President Reagan took office and continued to make Egypt more dependent on American financial and military aid. In the fall of 1981, Sadat initiated a crack-down on his opposition and critics resulting in massive arrests. His controversial actions both domestically and in foreign politics, resulted in his assassination on 6 October 1981. The assassination came as a shock to the Reagan administration, especially to Secretary Haig. Sadat's death influenced Haig to urge President Reagan to prioritize the peace process and strengthen Egypt. The fear of Egypt returning to the Arab fold, which Haig connected to a tilt towards radicalism, made the Secretary of State acknowledge the consequences of not maintaining the relationship with Egypt. In his autobiography, *Caveat*, he remembered that the assassination could not be another instance of the United States failing its friends.⁴⁴⁹ Despite this stint of fear and uncertainty, Haig's attention was focused on internal conflict and the rising tensions in Lebanon. Following 6 October, the topic of succession and the future of Egypt became a major uncertainty for the Reagan administration. Questions raised within the administration was: who would follow as the new Egyptian President, what political line the new President would take, and would Egypt stay within the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. It was quickly concluded that in order to ensure that Egypt remained moderate and friendly to the West, Egypt had to be strengthened. Sadat's successor, Vice President Hosni Mubarak, was unknown to Washington. American and Israeli governments considered Mubarak's position as weak and did not expect him to last very long as President. The uncertainties regarding the succession made the final stage of the Sinai withdrawal even more important. The possibility of failure affected the administration's

⁴⁴⁹ Haig, *Caveat*, 323.

Middle East policy as it could reignite the hostilities between Egypt and Israel, it could spark anti-American radicalism in both Egypt and other Arab countries as well as cause significant damage to the United States image and position in the Middle East. The administration sent a delegation to Cairo and Tel Aviv to ensure the withdrawal went as planned, in addition to the increased financial aid Reagan pledged to Mubarak in February 1982.

Even though the Sinai withdrawal got attention in the first year of the Reagan administration, Mubarak had experienced first-hand with Sadat the costs of the relationship with Israel and did not wish to follow Sadat to the grave. However, because of Sadat's dependency it had become very costly for Egypt to not follow obligations of the Accords. Therefore, other aspects of the Camp David Accords such as the autonomy talks remained an elusive concept and a bargaining chip in other negotiation processes, such as in the Lebanon war in 1982. The conflict in Lebanon also provided an incentive for Mubarak to put the normalization process between Egypt and Israel on pause, much to the dismay of the Reagan administration.

The 1982 Lebanon War's Impact on U.S.-Egyptian Relations

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 would end up dictating the Reagan administration's Middle East policy for the following years. The invasion came as no surprise to the United States. Israeli officials had been open about Israeli plans for Lebanon, but from the start of the invasion, the Reagan administration did not act in a united or decisive manner in order to end the war. President Reagan was travelling in Europe when Israel invaded and retreated to Camp David upon his return. The passive leadership left Secretary Haig to answer special envoy Philip Habib's questions and requests. The tensions were already running high in Washington, and the Lebanon crisis fueled these conflicts. At the end of June Haig resigned and George Shultz was soon after confirmed as his successor. The shift in the administration also caused some shift in the Middle East policy development. Shultz was less pro-Israel than Haig and wanted stronger focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, because of the ongoing conflict in Lebanon, progress on the peace process was not a priority. Nonetheless, as with the Sinai MFO, the peace process could again be utilized by the administration to get Egypt to cooperate with the U.S.'s plan in Lebanon.

Philip Habib was the main U.S. mediator in the Lebanon crisis and in July and August he negotiated with Lebanon, Syrian, and Israel for an evacuation of the PLO from Beirut. In exchange, Israel would loosen its grip in Lebanon and end the siege of Beirut. The Reagan

administration wanted Egypt to accept members of the PLO as part of the deal but was met with resistance and harsh criticism. The negotiation in the fall of 1982 became the first clash of the more decisive, independent Mubarak government and the divided, ambivalent Reagan administration. Egypt and the U.S. continued negotiations in a roundabout way where the Reagan administration persisted with the same line of argument throughout. The communication between Washington and the U.S. embassy in Cairo showed the Reagan administration's lack of a coherent strategy: the same arguments of pleas to the Egyptian government to "keep an open mind", threats that refusal would negatively affect relations with the United States and blame if Habib's mission failed. After weeks of Egyptian refusal and critique directed at the administration, the argument for Egyptian cooperation remained the same. The Reagan administration did not display any effort in adapting its tactic towards Egypt.

The war in Lebanon put Egypt in a difficult situation. Not only was Egypt unable to respond to Israel's action with any considerable force, it was challenged by the dissatisfied Egyptian public to protect the Palestinian cause and not blindly follow the United States. Most of the Arab countries in the Middle East considered Israel as an enemy and Egypt as disloyal for signing the peace treaty. Mubarak's plan to improve Egypt's relations with for example Jordan meant Egypt could not sit on the sidelines and just accept the U.S. or Israeli actions in Lebanon. Secretary Shultz, Habib and Ambassador Atherton most likely expected some resistance from the Egyptian government. However, if they expected the resistance to remain consistent throughout 1982 and 1983 is unclear. Nonetheless, the pretense of a strong commitment to the peace process for the sake of peace and the Palestinian people continued as part of the argument to get Egypt to cooperate. The Egyptian refusal of the PLO could have been multifaceted: it was one way for Mubarak to show his disdain for the United States and Israel regarding the war in Lebanon without breaching the peace treaty. Another aspect was the domestic situation and Mubarak refusing pleas from the United States was a tactic to secure his position. Nonetheless, Habib succeeded in evacuating the PLO from Beirut, without Egypt's cooperation.

In September 1982, the Reagan administration mistakenly believed that the conflict in Lebanon was mostly resolved after the PLO evacuation. Therefore, the administration marked the occasion with a new peace initiative that became known as the Reagan Plan. Secretary Shultz sought Mubarak's support for the new peace initiative he had worked on since he became Secretary of State, despite the failing to convince Mubarak to cooperate on the

evacuation. The launching of the initiative ended up hurting the U.S. position in the Middle East. The administration also failed to follow through which highlighted the administration's lack of resolve and confirmed its commitment to Israel. The initiative quickly lost its momentum as Israel blatantly rejected it. Both Israel and Syria remained in Lebanon. Just two weeks after President Reagan's speech, Lebanon's newly elected President was assassinated, and the subsequent Sabra and Shatila massacres by his supporters, unraveled all of Habib's diplomatic progress in Lebanon. Lebanon turned into a disaster for the U.S. Middle East diplomacy and the U.S.-mediated peace process.

Egypt's criticism of the United States and Israel continued after the launch of the Reagan Plan. Egyptian Minister of State Boutros-Ghali was frank when he told Atherton that Israel would try to stop the peace initiative. Boutros-Ghali urged the Reagan administration to act and follow through on its warnings to Israel. Both Boutros-Ghali and Mubarak argued that too often had the U.S. threatened to hold back aid or support and too often had it not followed through and allowed Israel to continue its warfare in Lebanon. However, no such decisive action occurred, and the war in Lebanon continued. The Reagan administration did not take any decisive action against Israeli military activity and continued to negotiate with Egypt and other Arab countries such as Jordan instead.

The administration struggled with Syria and its increased power within the Arab world. Syria was a Soviet Union ally and very anti-Israel. Syria had also taken Egypt's place as the greatest threat towards Israel. The Reagan administration considered Syria as a danger to the U.S.' position in the Middle East, especially regarding its connection to the Soviet Union. The Reagan administration concluded that it could bolster Egypt's position to act as a counterweight to Syria. This could act as another example of the lack of a clear strategy as well as the Egyptian government's statement to the administration that it was merely catching up to the situation in the Middle East rather than controlling the outcome.

U.S.-Egyptian Relations, 1981-1983

When Ronald Reagan took office in January 1981, the U.S.-Egyptian relationship had moved through the honeymoon phase of the Carter-Sadat era and into something new and unexplored. At beginning of the Reagan era there was a lack of interest and priority towards Egypt. There was ambiguity in acting committed to both the country of Egypt, its position and its place within the peace process. Juxtaposed with the Reagan administration's motives for

the Cold War, and its own ambition for the Middle East. To continue the marriage analogy: even though the honeymoon was over, and the structure had changed, divorce was not an option for either the United States or Egypt. Costs for both if the relations ended would outweigh the costs of managing the relationship. The U.S. would lose a strategic ally in the Middle East and in the Cold War. There would also be greater risk for another Arab-Israeli war, and the further spread of anti-American radicalism. On the other hand, Egypt had become thoroughly dependent on the U.S. in the few years since Sadat had turned from East to West. Lastly, Egypt was not equipped militarily or politically for another war against Israel.

The Reagan administration's policy towards Egypt between 1981 and 1983 was heavily influenced by appearance and convenience. They needed to *appear* to have a strategy, they needed to *appear* to have a credible plan, and they needed to *appear* to be fully committed to the peace process and the resolution to the Palestinian question. All in an effort to get Egypt to follow along and cooperate with the administration's other strategic efforts in the Middle East. Secretary Shultz argued prior to the PLO evacuation in 1982, that in order to get Mubarak to agree to host members of the PLO, the U.S. needed to convince him that it was serious about getting progress in the peace process. When discussing the possible build-up of Egypt's position to counter Syrian dominance, NSC member Fortier argued that the Reagan administration needed to "appear to have a credible and serious plan."⁴⁵⁰ The illusion of a credible plan was on several occasions met with resistance from the Egyptian government. President Mubarak was less willing to let Egypt follow the United States and acted more independently in foreign policy. Where Sadat had been more captivated by the benefits of U.S. relations, Mubarak sought to combine the policies of Nasser and Sadat. He pursued relations with Arab countries and lessen Egypt's isolation, while balancing relations with the United States.

The overarching commitment to Israel was a predominant factor in the Reagan administration's Middle East policy and it affected its policy towards Egypt. After Sadat's death, time and again was the illusion of commitment to the peace process broken by the United States being unable or unwilling to be decisive and consistent. Except in its commitment to Israel. One example was the failure to get Israel to cooperate during the Lebanon crisis, and again with the Reagan Plan. When Israel rejected U.S. policies and actions, the Reagan administration turned to its friends in the Arab world to help mend the

⁴⁵⁰ Memo, Donald Fortier to Robert McFarlane, "Thoughts for the Middle East NSPG and Beyond", 18 October 1983, folder, "NSPG 0073 18 Oct 1983 (Middle East)", Box 91306, Exec. Sec. NSPG, RRL.

situation. Israel was militarily superior to its neighbors and had shown to act unilaterally. This left the American Middle East policy to catch up to Israeli actions, rather than control the U.S. position.

The “cold peace” concept was indeed very real between Egypt and Israel during the 1980s, characterized by the formal agreements and conflict prevention in addition to suspicion and uncertainty.⁴⁵¹ In the decades after the Reagan era the Egyptian relationship with both the United States and Israel remained. Egypt and Israel moved over from a cold peace towards a more strategic peace, with examples from security cooperation in the Gaza Strip and the common interest in containing Iran.⁴⁵² However, the relationship was still tense and filled with suspicion exemplified by Egypt’s attempts to stop Israel’s diplomatic approach to other Arab countries such as the Israel-Jordan treaty and negotiations in 1994.⁴⁵³ As for the United States, Egypt continued to be the second largest recipient of U.S. aid as of 2019, and Egypt became a strategic part of the United States’ Global War against Terror after 9/11. Just a year ago, current U.S. President, Donald Trump, referred to Egyptian President Sisi as a “fantastic guy” and Egypt as a friend to the United States, despite the repressive regime under Sisi.⁴⁵⁴ One such example to highlight the durability of the U.S.-Egyptian relationship is aid, both financial and military. Since the Camp David Accords in 1978 and the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli treaty in 1979, U.S. aid to Egypt have consistently been over the one-billion-dollar mark from 1979 all the way to 2019.

The main question of this study was what influenced the Reagan administration’s policy towards Egypt, and how the relationship between the two countries endured after the honeymoon stage of the 1970s. The relationship went from being a central aspect of U.S. Middle East policy in 1978-1979, to being downgraded and labeled less important by 1981. The assassination of Sadat, the success of the Sinai withdrawal, and the war in Lebanon brought renewed relevance, political failure, and harsh criticisms. The mutual dependency, the United States’ need for a strategic ally in the Cold War, and Egypt need of aid and protection, gave way for the U.S.-Egyptian relationship. Even though the United States and Egypt barely

⁴⁵¹ Aran, Amnon and Rami Ginat. “Revisiting Egyptian Foreign Policy towards Israel under Mubarak: From Cold Peace to Strategic Peace”. *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol.37 No.4 (2014): 556-583. Accessed: 20 May 2020. DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2014.923766

⁴⁵² Aran and Ginat, “Revisiting Egyptian Foreign Policy towards Israel under Mubarak”, 571-575

⁴⁵³ Eldar, Dan. “Egypt and Israel: A Reversible Peace”. *Middle East Quarterly* Vol.10 No.4 (2003): 57-65. Accessed: 20 May 2020. URL: <https://dev.meforum.org/565/egypt-and-israel-a-reversible-peace>

⁴⁵⁴ Underwood, Alexia. “Egypt’s president tried to stop a 60 Minutes interview from airing. It’s now clear why.” *Vox*. Published: 7 January 2019. Accessed: 20 May 2020. URL: <https://www.vox.com/world/2019/1/7/18171234/president-sisi-60-minutes-interview-egypt-israel>

had history with one another prior to Anwar Sadat's political leaps, the U.S.-Egyptian relationship has endured over four decades and continue to do so.

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Box 45

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Box 27

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Box 53

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Box 54

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Box 55

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Box 1

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Appendix – List of Characters

Egypt

Faruk al-Awwal

King Faruk I, last king of Egypt

Gamal Adbel Nasser

Free Officer

Prime Minister (1954)

President (1956-1970)

Muhammad Anwar el-Sadat

Free Officer

President (1970-1981)

Muhammad Hosni el-Sayed Mubarak

Vice President (1975-1981)

President (1981-2011)

Kamal Hassan Ali

Minister of Foreign Affairs (1980-1984)

Boutros Boutros-Ghali

Deputy Foreign Minister

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (1977-1991)

Ashraf Ghorbal

Ambassador to the United States (1973-1984)

Osama el-Baz

Diplomat

Presidential adviser under Mubarak

The Reagan Administration

Alexander Haig

Secretary of State (1981-1982)

Alfred Atherton

U.S. ambassador to Egypt (1979-1983)

Caspar Weinberger

Secretary of Defense (1981-1987)

Donald Fortier

Political Affairs Directorate, NSC (1982)

Political Military Affairs Directorate, NSC (1983-1984)

Edwin Meese, III

Counselor to the President (1981-1985)

Geoffrey Kemp

Political Affairs Directorate, NSC (1981-1982)

Near East and South Asia Directorate, NSC (1983-1985)

George H. W. Bush

Vice President (1981-1989)

George Shultz

Secretary of State (1982-1989)

Howard Teicher

Political Affairs Office, NSC (1982-1983)

Near East and South Asia Directorate, NSC (1983-1985)

James Baker, III

Chief of Staff (1981-1985)

Michael Deaver

Deputy Chief of Staff (1981-1985)

Nicholas A. Veliotis

Diplomat

Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asian Affairs (1981-1984)

Philip Habib

Special Envoy to the Middle East (1981-1983)

Raymond Tanter

Political Affairs Directorate, NSC (1981-1982)

Richard V. Allen

National Security Adviser (1981-1982)

Robert McFarlane

Deputy National Security Adviser (1982-1983)

National Security Adviser (1983-1985)

Robert Neumann

U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia (May-July 1981)

Ronald Reagan

40th President of the United States (1981-1989)

Samuel Pierce

Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (1981-1989)

Walter Stoessel

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (1981-1982)

Deputy Secretary of State (Feb. 1982- Sep. 1982)

William J. Casey

Director of Central Intelligence (1981-1987)

William P. Clark

Assistant Secretary of State (1981-1982)

National Security Adviser (1982-1983)

Miscellaneous

Ariel Sharon

Israeli Minister of Defense (1981-1983)

Bashir Gemayel

Leader of the Phalange Militia and the Kataeb Party

President elect, Lebanon (1982)

Donald J. Trump

45th President of the United States (2017-)

Fahd bin Abdulaziz al Saud

Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia

Hafez al-Assad

President of Syria (1971-2000)

Henry Kissinger

National Security Adviser (1969-1975)

Secretary of State (1973-1977)

Jimmy Carter

39th President of the United States (1977-1981)

Menachem Begin

Israeli Prime Minister (1977-1983)

Sherwood Goldberg

Chief of Staff to the Secretary of State

Zbiginiew Brzezinski

National Security Adviser (1977-1981)