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Peace Before Freedom: Diplomacy and Repression in Sadat's Egypt

JASON BROWNLEE

The Egyptian–Israeli Peace Treaty of April 1979 capped four major wars and inaugurated a new U.S.–Egyptian relationship. Henceforth, U.S. presidents would regard the Egyptian–Israeli treaty as a cornerstone of American interests and values in the region. In 2003, President George W. Bush recognized Egypt as a trailblazer of peace and urged the country to “show the way toward democracy in the Middle East.”¹ The remark spoke to Washington’s success reconciling historic adversaries and its ostensible hope for political reform in Cairo. Between the U.S. and Egyptian governments, though, peace and democracy had been at odds since the treaty’s drafting. The autocratic prerogatives of President Anwar Sadat (r. 1970–1981) were a *sine qua non* of successful bargaining. Negotiators on all sides presupposed tight policing within Egypt. At this crossroads of diplomacy and domestic politics, Sadat fused international peace and internal repression.

After Sadat’s assassination, President Hosni Mubarak (r. 1981–2011) upheld the treaty with Israel, and played a key role in Israeli–Palestinian peace negotiations and U.S. regional strategy. Following his predecessor’s mold, he also expanded the internal security apparatus and detained thousands of Egyptians calling for a freer press, constitutional reform, and fairer elections. In 2008, an estimated 1.7 million security personnel and support staff oversaw a domestic population of 80 million.² The resulting staff-to-population ratio (about 1:47) was reminiscent of the human resources East Germany devoted to internal monitoring.³

¹ George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy,” United States Chamber of Commerce, Washington, DC, 6 November 2003.

² Abdel-Halim Qandil, *Al ayam al akhirah* [The Last Days] (Cairo: Dar al-thaqafah al-jadidah 2008), 19.

³ Timothy Garton Ash, *The File: A Personal History* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), 84.

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Although peacemaking and repression in Egypt evolved concurrently, the link was neither mechanistic nor exceptional.⁴ Under Sadat and Mubarak, security within Egypt was permissive, compared to the climate in states like Tunisia and Syria, which have not signed treaties with Israel.⁵ Therefore, the present research asks: Why, during the 1977–1982 period, did the Egyptian security apparatus start regaining the powerful role it played under Gamal Abdel Nasser (r. 1952–1970)? Betraying the promise of political reform, why did Egypt become more like the intrusive regimes of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali’s Tunisia and the Assads’ Syria, rather than less? Addressing these questions, the present article accounts for why Egypt revived practices typically associated with unabashed tyrannies. It chronicles how the last years of Sadat’s presidency were the crucible of a durable peace and a police apparatus redolent of Nasser’s rule.⁶ It also shows why Mubarak’s 11 February 2011 resignation evoked anxiety abroad about how the Egyptian–Israeli treaty would fare in a potentially more-democratic Egypt.⁷

⁴ Some of Mubarak’s critics go so far as to say he has turned Egypt into a “police state.” See, for example, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Egypt’s Unchecked Repression,” *The Washington Post*, 21 August 2007, and the columns of Egyptian editor Ibrahim Eissa. The current article refrains from this categorical charge, while documenting a considerable increase in domestic coercion. Internal security within Egypt, even at its most repressive under Nasser, has not atomized public life in the manner of classic police states. Miles Copeland, *The Game of Nations: The Amoral of Power Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), 106.

⁵ Jill Crystal, “Authoritarianism and Its Adversaries in the Arab World,” *World Politics* 46 (January 1994): 262–289; Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995).

⁶ Methodologically, this project takes cues from exemplary studies of transnational politics, including Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Technopolitics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Robert Vitalis, *America’s Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Julian Go, “Chains of Empire, Projects of State: Political Education and U.S. Colonial Rule in Puerto Rico and the Philippines,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (April 2000): 333–362; and Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, & the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

⁷ Joel Greenberg, “Israel quietly watches chaos unfolding around it,” *The Washington Post*, 28 January 2011, accessed at <http://global.factiva.com>, 25 April 2011; Helene Cooper and Mark Landler, “U.S. trying to balance Israel’s needs in the face of Egyptian reform,” *The New York Times*, 5 February 2011, accessed at <http://global.factiva.com>, 25 April 2011; Aaron David Miller, “Having dealt with the Israelis,” *The Washington Post*, 6 February 2011, accessed at <http://global.factiva.com>, 25 April 2011; Ethan Bronner, “Israel worries that Egypt’s new face may not be a friendly one,” *The New York Times*, 12 February 2011, accessed at <http://global.factiva.com> 25 April; Janine Zacharia, “Netanyahu welcomes Egypt’s promise to honor treaty,” *The Washington Post*, 13 February 2011, accessed at <http://global.factiva.com>, 25 April 2011; Isabel Kershner, “As Egypt begins to calm down, so do Israeli nerves,” *The New York Times*, 14 February 2011, accessed at <http://global.factiva.com>, 25 April 2011.

THE ROOTS OF REPRESSION

Social scientists often credit Sadat with establishing a durable peace and launching an abortive experiment at political liberalization. On the first point, the empirics are clear: Egypt and Israel have not fought a war against one another since 1973. Students of international bargaining routinely, and appropriately, include the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty as a lasting settlement.⁸ Classifying the bilateral peace as a successful dispute resolution, however, occludes a tumultuous government–society relationship on the Egyptian side. In addition to the dramatic fact that the treaty’s signer, Sadat, died violently while in office, there is the larger question of the political context that accompanied peacemaking. As Egyptian leaders closed the chapter on war with Israel, they generated new tensions with the opposition. Domestic security was integral to the bargaining process.⁹

The conjoining of peacemaking and repression speaks to comparative politics work on Egypt. Scholars aver that Sadat introduced liberal reforms, which Mubarak later retrenched. The leading version of this narrative begins with the introduction of limited multi-party polls in 1976.¹⁰ A “wave of liberalization” under Sadat was followed by the “relative expansion of liberties in the early 1980s,” before Mubarak resorted to violence once more.¹¹ With one eye on Sadat’s storied multi-partyism and the other on his successor’s brutality, comparativists treat Egypt as an erstwhile liberalizer and, until Mubarak’s ouster, a case of durable authoritarianism.¹² The roots of that

⁸ For recent examples, see Virginia Page Fortna, “Scraps of Paper? Agreements and the Durability of Peace,” *International Organization* 57 (Spring 2003): 337–372; Suzanne Werner and Amy Yuen, “Making and Keeping Peace,” *International Organization* 59 (Spring 2005): 261–292; Michael Mattes, “The Effect of Changing Conditions and Agreement Provisions on Conflict and Renegotiation Between States with Competing Claims,” *International Studies Quarterly* 52 (June 2008): 315–334; Kyle Beardsley, “Agreement without Peace? International Mediation and Time Inconsistency Problems,” *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (October 2008): 723–740.

⁹ For more on the relationship between internal Egyptian politics and Sadat’s international negotiations, see Shibley Telhami, *Power and Leadership in International Bargaining: The Path to the Camp David Accords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

¹⁰ See, among others, Holger Albrecht and Oliver Schlumberger, “‘Waiting for Godot’: Regime Change without Democratization in the Middle East,” *International Political Science Review*, 25 (October 2004): 373; Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, “The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt’s Wasat Party,” *Comparative Politics* 36 (January 2004): 215.

¹¹ Mustapha K. Al-Sayyid, “Slow Thaw in the Arab World,” *World Policy Journal* 8 (Fall 1991): 712; Eberhard Kienle, “More than a Response to Islamism: The Political Deliberalization of Egypt in the 1990s,” *Middle East Journal* 52 (Spring 1998): 220.

¹² Barbara Geddes, “Authoritarian Breakdown: Empirical Test of a Game Theoretic Argument” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, GA, 2–5 September 1999); Eva Bellin, “The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective,” *Comparative Politics* 36 (January 2004): 139–157; Ellen Lust-Okar, *Structuring Contestation in the Arab World: Incumbents, Opponents, and Institutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen

problem, however, stretch beyond the circumscribed space of domestic elections under Mubarak. Egypt's "robust coercive apparatus" grew in the shadows of its liberal experiment, as Sadat expanded his international ties and security organizations.¹³

The diplomatic history of Sadat's repression fills two other niches in political science. With respect to the "two-level game" of international negotiations, Egyptian-Israeli talks provide a mixed autocratic-democratic dyad. Strong home constituencies tugged on and bolstered the G-8 delegations of Robert Putnam's seminal article.¹⁴ By contrast, Sadat was unencumbered by electoral politics at Camp David and was thus "free" to make substantial concessions. With respect to the international dimensions of authoritarianism, the U.S.-Egyptian relationship contradicts arguments that American "linkage and leverage" with Middle Eastern governments is low.¹⁵ U.S. aid to Egypt totaled about \$60 billion in military and economic assistance through 2006, with some \$34 billion in the form of foreign military financing.¹⁶ Nor are the benefits one-sided. Cairo has helped Washington logistically as the United States prosecuted wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁷ In the global war on terror, Egypt has been a key node in the network of extraordinary renditions.¹⁸

These points, novel in North American social science, are commonplace in the writings of Egyptian dissidents. Abdel-Halim Qandil, leader of the Kefaya! (Enough!) organization, tied Mubarak's despotism to Sadat's peacemaking and calls for reasserting Egyptian sovereignty, especially in the demilitarized Sinai Peninsula.¹⁹ Likewise, Tarek El-Bishri advocated civil disobedience against Mubarak, ending U.S. influence in Egypt, and returning to the Arab

Lust-Okar, "Elections under Authoritarianism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 403-422.

¹³ Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East," 143.

¹⁴ Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42 (Summer 1988): 430.

¹⁵ Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "Linkage versus Leverage. Rethinking the International Dimension of Regime Change," *Comparative Politics* 38 (July 2006): 380; cf. Laurie A. Brand, "The Effects of the Peace Process on Political Liberalization in Jordan," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 28 (Winter 1999): 52-67; Sean L. Yom and Mohammad H. Al-Momani, "The International Dimensions of Authoritarian Regime Stability: Jordan in the Post-Cold War Era," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30 (Winter 2008): 39-60.

¹⁶ U.S. Government Accounting Office, "Security Assistance: State and DOD Need to Assess How the Military Financing Program for Egypt Achieves U.S. Foreign Policy and Security Goals," *GAO-06-437* (April 2006): 1.

¹⁷ GAO, "Security Assistance," 17.

¹⁸ Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "Disappearing Act: Rendition by the Numbers," *Mother Jones*, 3 March 2008; Human Rights Watch, "US/Jordan: Stop Renditions to Torture," 7 April 2008; Jane Mayer, *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How the War on Terror Turned into a War on American Ideals* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

¹⁹ Qandil, *Al ayam al akhira*, 11-13.

solidarity that preceded Camp David.²⁰ Egyptian political elites, says economist Galal Amin, are middlemen carrying out the instructions of Washington.²¹ In sum, these authors trace repression to the efforts of Egyptian rulers, and their non-Egyptian partners, at imposing an agenda on the Egyptian public. This process is both domestic and international, for it is constituted within the U.S.–Egyptian relationship. It suggests an alternative to treatments that treat authoritarianism in Egypt as a self-contained domestic problem.²²

An earlier generation of American research looked closely at the role of foreign powers, particularly the United States, in the police practices of developing governments. This scholarship, led by the monographs of Michael Klare, Noam Chomsky, and Edward Herman, peaked in the late 1970s, just as the current U.S.–Egyptian relationship was taking off.²³ During that period, Middle East specialists were also paying attention to the “mukhabarat (intelligence) state” and the international patronage it enjoyed. This article picks up that line of research, which, ironically, subsided beneath the search for democracy and its portents.²⁴ At the same time, I refrain from treating Egypt as a “client state,” a moniker that can understate the mutuality of influence.²⁵ Instead, Jimmy Carter’s and Sadat’s language of a partnership remains apt.²⁶ The ambitions and miscalculations of both men shaped their diplomatic

²⁰ Tarek El-Bishri, *Misr: bayn al ’asyan w al tafakkuk* [Egypt: Between Disobedience and Disintegration] (Cairo: Dar al shorouk, 2008), 12–13, 44, 55.

²¹ Galal Amin, *Misr w al misriyun fi ’ahd Mubarak (1981–2008)* [Egypt and Egyptians in the Age of Mubarak] (Cairo: Merit, 2009), 212.

²² Maye Kassem, *In the Guise of Democracy: Governance in Contemporary Egypt* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1999), 48–49; Eberhard Kienle, *A Grand Delusion: Democracy and Economic Reform in Egypt* (New York: I.B. Tauris), 90; c.f., Moheb Zaki, *Civil Society & Democratization in Egypt, 1981–1994* (Cairo: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 1995), 188–189.

²³ Michael T. Klare, *Supplying Repression* (New York: Field Foundation, 1977); Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, vol. 1 (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1979); Michael T. Klare and Cynthia Arnson, *Supplying Repression: U.S. Support for Authoritarian Regimes Abroad* (Washington, DC: Institute for Policy Studies, 1981). During this era, aid to governments of Latin America and Asia, including the defunct South Vietnamese state, loomed large. When Chomsky and Herman diagrammed the recipients of U.S. patronage, Latin American and East Asian countries made up 18 of the 26 client states and accounted for nearly three-quarters of military assistance. To the extent that Middle Eastern governments entered the framework, it was Iran and Saudi Arabia, not Egypt, that drew attention. For more recent treatments of the same period and countries, see Greg Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); Jeremy Kuzmarov, “Modernizing Repression: Police Training, Political Violence and Nation-Building in the ‘American Century,’” *Diplomatic History* (April 2009): 191–221.

²⁴ On this turn see, Michael Hudson, “After the Gulf War: Prospects for Democratization in the Arab World,” *Middle East Journal* 45 (Summer 1991): 408.

²⁵ Chomsky and Herman, *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, 42.

²⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor, 1977–1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), 234.

success, which presupposed political actions within Egypt for preserving the treaty.²⁷

From here I turn to Sadat's peacemaking and policing, when the United States instructed and supplied the country's burgeoning security apparatus. Sadat is conventionally credited with steering Egypt toward democracy in 1976, but his approach to domestic dissent belied his "democratic experiment."²⁸ Rather than inaugurating an era of new freedoms, 1976 closed an interregnum in domestic policing that had begun under Nasser.²⁹

"DOWN WITH THE INTELLIGENCE STATE"

After toppling the Egyptian monarchy in July 1952, Nasser and his Revolutionary Command Council instituted a republic. By 1956, the young regime was decidedly autocratic, and ultimate authority was vested in Nasser.³⁰ His domestic intelligence apparatus soon pervaded the country—a bulwark against foreign spies, domestic unrest, and the perennial threat of a second coup.³¹ U.S. and Israeli sources described a ubiquitous network of informants, and in 1963, one British official called Egypt "a complete police State."³² "We could rule this country the way Papa Duvalier rules Haiti," Nasser allegedly mused in May 1967.³³ Within a month, though, the Israeli military had trounced Egypt, Jordan, and Syria and shaken Nasser's coercive apparatus to its core. The June 1967 "Setback" (Nasser's euphemism for a war that left Israel controlling the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Golan Heights) posed an acute domestic crisis.

Nasser rode out the storm and exploited the public outrage to clean house. After dispatching the commander of the military, Hakim 'Amer, Nasser reined in his security forces. The disreputable Salah Nasr had led the General Security Services for over a decade. Nasser jailed him as a suspected

²⁷ The production of repression in Egypt also fed back into politics within the United States. Egypt would become an exemplar in the "war on terrorism." Such aspects of the U.S.–Egyptian relationship fall beyond the scope of the present article, which traces one branch in a genealogy of repression, as it stemmed from U.S., Egyptian, and Israeli actors.

²⁸ "Kalamat al ra'is Muhammad Anwar al Sadat al jumhuriyyah illa al sha'b ba'd tarshihhi li mansib ra'is li fatrat al ri'asah al qadamah," 25 August 1976, accessed at <http://sadat.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=488>, 16 July 2010.

²⁹ Mark N. Cooper, *The Transformation of Egypt* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 128; Mohammed El Sayed Said, *Al-intiqal al-dimuqrati al-muhtajaz fi Misr* [The blocked democratic transition in Egypt] (Cairo: Merit, 2006), 8.

³⁰ Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Nasser Years* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 122–123.

³¹ Raymond William Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution under Nasser and Sadat* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 99.

³² Owen Sirrs, *History of the Egyptian Intelligence Services* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 59–60, 72, 84, 87.

³³ Copeland, *The Game of Nations*, 89.

conspirator.³⁴ In November, Nasser delivered a supposedly unscripted “heart to heart” before the Egyptian Parliament. Striking notes of introspection and magnanimity, he vowed deep changes in government and offered leniency toward lifetime political detainees. “Centers of power,” he explained, had corrupted the intelligence services; those responsible would be tried before a revolutionary court. Their “intelligence state,” Nasser pledged, was no more, and its demise eliminated one of Egypt’s weightiest problems.³⁵ Some Egyptians may have been mollified by Nasser’s words. Others needed more tangible evidence of change.

On 20 February 1968 the government seemed to be renegeing: Air Force leaders charged with negligence in the June War received light sentences, of no more than 15 years. Outraged workers in the industrial town of Helwan began demonstrating the next day. Soon, thousands of students in Cairo and Alexandria were in the streets. For six days, their protests constituted the biggest student uprising in 14 years.³⁶ The demonstrators demanded not only a resentencing of the derelict military leadership, but an end to police interference in the universities and citizens’ private lives—a campaign epitomized by the *cri de coeur* “Down with the Intelligence State!”³⁷

Nasser responded publicly on 30 March, promising to clean up the ruling party through new elections, strengthen the legislature, ensure the right of Egyptians to litigate in court, and limit the tenure of top office holders.³⁸ A popular referendum on 2 July ratified the declaration, but its immediate impact on the ruling party and government was negligible.³⁹ In the fall of 1969, U.S. reports depicted an “extensive and efficient intelligence apparatus which reaches into almost every corner of Egyptian society.”⁴⁰ In his memoirs, Sadat records that “Instances were rife of men... who spied on their own kin just like the Fascist regimes.”⁴¹ Although the intelligence state was alive and well, the spirit of February 1968 lingered after Nasser’s death in September 1970 and Sadat’s succession to the presidency.

The new president soon turned an emergency personnel shakeup into a political earthquake.⁴² Preempting a putsch by disgruntled Nasserists, Sadat

³⁴ Beattie, *Egypt During the Nasser Years*, 212; Sirrs, *History of the Egyptian Intelligence Services*, 106.

³⁵ “Kalamat Gamal Abdel-Nasser fi iftitah dawr al in’iqad al khamis li majlis al ummah,” 23 November 1967, accessed at <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1224>, 15 July 2010.

³⁶ Beattie, *Egypt During the Nasser Years*, 214–215; El-Sayed Said, *Al-intiqal al-dimuqrati al-muhtajaz fi Misr*, 6.

³⁷ Ahmed Abdalla, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1985), 149–153.

³⁸ “Bayan ra’is Gamal Abdel Nasser illa al ummah: Bayan March 30,” 30 March 1968, accessed at <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1234>, 15 July 2010.

³⁹ Cooper, *Transformation of Egypt*, 54–55.

⁴⁰ Sirrs, *History of the Egyptian Intelligence Services*, 112–113.

⁴¹ Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 209.

⁴² El-Sayed Said, *Al-intiqal al-dimuqrati al-muhtajaz fi Misr*, 6.

swept away most of the top-ranking political, military, and police leadership on 15 May 1971. This “corrective movement” left him with tremendous latitude, which he used to announce an era of new freedoms.⁴³ Literally consigning the intelligence state to the ash heap, Sadat publicly incinerated the Ministry of Interior’s surveillance tapes.⁴⁴ He also declared the closing of detention centers and an end to arbitrary arrests.⁴⁵ As a capstone to these moves, the Egyptian republic got its first “permanent” constitution. The document allotted tremendous powers to the chief executive. It also enshrined some of the changes Nasser had promised in March 1968, including an expansion of judicial institutions and property rights.⁴⁶

Sadat’s changes to Egyptian foreign policy were as theatrical as his domestic moves. While he defended the political direction of Nasser’s final years, Sadat veered away from his predecessor’s ideology. In 1972, he expelled 20,000 Soviet military advisors and began courting the USSR’s rival superpower. In October 1973, Sadat stunned the world by sending Egyptian forces to the east bank of the Suez Canal and challenging Israeli control of the Sinai. It was a political masterstroke, even if a military stalemate, and communications between Egypt and the United States intensified.⁴⁷ On 28 February 1974, Washington and Cairo restored diplomatic relations. Nixon soon appropriated \$250 million in economic aid to Egypt, an unprecedented disbursement for the two countries, but insufficient to avert a looming economic crisis.⁴⁸

SADAT OPENS EGYPT FOR BUSINESS

After two major wars in seven years, Egypt desperately needed capital for infrastructure and economic recovery. In the “October Paper” of April 1974, Sadat called on Egyptians to lead the reconstruction effort but admitted that

⁴³ R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Egypt Under Nasir: A Study in Political Dynamics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1971), 309; Ahmad Hamrush, *Thawrat 23 yulyu al-juz al-thalith* (Cairo: Al-he’a al-misriya al-a’ma li al-kitab, 1993), 246.

⁴⁴ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Domestic Developments in Egypt,” in William B. Quandt, ed., *The Middle East: Ten Years after Camp David* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1988), 24; Cooper, *Transformation of Egypt*, 140.

⁴⁵ Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 224.

⁴⁶ Nathan Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Gulf* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 95–96; Tamir Moustafa, *The Struggle for Constitutional Power: Law, Politics, and Economic Development in Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 69–74; El-Sayed Said, *Al-intiqal al-dimuqrati al-muhtajaz fi Misr*, 7.

⁴⁷ Patrick Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988).

⁴⁸ Joe Stork, “Bailing out Sadat,” *MERIP Reports* 56 (April 1977); Jeremy M. Sharp, “Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations,” *CRS Report for Congress*, 26 March 2009, 31–32.

“we still have a great need for foreign resources.”⁴⁹ His strategy was *Infitah*, the “opening” of Egypt’s economy. Codified in Law 43/1974, *Infitah* stripped away state intervention, provided major tax exemptions for foreign companies, and lifted the requirement that foreign companies be partly Egyptian-owned. The neoliberal move began attracting capital from abroad, but not in the quantity or form Sadat needed. Between October 1973 and October 1975, \$4.45 billion poured in from the Gulf, much less than the windfall Sadat craved from Arab oil wealth. Moreover, most of the money went into the non-productive sectors of residential construction, mainly housing and tourism facilities.⁵⁰ Non-Arab financiers were three times as likely as their Arab counterparts to invest in industry.⁵¹

During the Cold War, there was a clear ideological upshot to embracing neoliberalism. *Infitah* boosted Sadat’s standing in Washington. From 1974 to 1977, American bilateral aid and food subsidies to Egypt grew from \$250 million to over \$1 billion annually.⁵² And the closer Sadat grew to the White House, the more brazenly he defied the Kremlin. On 14 March 1976, he had Parliament cancel the Egyptian–Soviet Friendship and Cooperation Treaty, a marker of solidarity Sadat had signed during his first year in office.⁵³ That same month, the United States ended its arms embargo on Egypt and sold C-130 military transport aircraft. In April, Sadat denied Soviet ships access to Egyptian ports (even so, the Soviet Union remained, for the time being, Egypt’s largest trading partner).⁵⁴ As U.S.–Egyptian relations thawed, Americans enjoyed a “honeymoon” period of positive impressions and high hopes among Egyptians.⁵⁵

Even without delivering an economic boom, Sadat’s foreign policy shifts appeared sensible strategically. Because of America’s close relationship with Israel, many Egyptians expected that a U.S. president would be more effective than any Soviet premier at returning the Sinai to Egypt. The administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford validated this belief. After the October 1973 war, a series of U.S.-brokered deals made Sadat’s work credible.⁵⁶ The first and second Sinai disengagement agreements built up a UN buffer zone between

⁴⁹ Anwar Sadat, “Tasks of the Stage: Or a Comprehensive Civilisation Strategy,” April 1974, available at http://sadat.umd.edu/archives/written_works.htm, accessed 10 October 2011, 54; Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution*, 135; Cooper, *Transformation of Egypt*, 89.

⁵⁰ Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution*, 144–145.

⁵¹ Cooper, *Transformation of Egypt*, 109.

⁵² Stork, “Bailing out Sadat.”

⁵³ “Soviet-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation,” 27 May 1981, English translation, reproduced at the National Archives, accessed at <http://www.sadat.umd.edu/archives/correspondence/AAAC%20Egyptian-Soviet%20Friendship%20Treaty%205.27.71.pdf>, 19 January 2010; Joe Stork, “The Carter Doctrine and US Bases in the Middle East,” *Merip Reports* (September 1980), 29.

⁵⁴ Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution*, 139–140.

⁵⁵ Ibrahim, “Domestic Developments in Egypt,” 26.

⁵⁶ Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution*, 138.

Egyptian and Israeli forces. Egypt retained a presence on the East Bank of the Suez, and Israel withdrew further back into the Sinai.⁵⁷

The lack of major gains for the other “frontline” states of Syria and Jordan did not yet bother most Egyptians. Much of the intelligentsia argued their country was entitled to the benefits of its military success and, further, that peace with Israel could ameliorate Egypt’s mounting economic difficulties.⁵⁸ Some even adopted a kind of Egyptian chauvinism, as reflected in contemporary press accounts:⁵⁹

Their [Egyptian] sacrifices in war casualties stood at 100,000 and in money at \$30 billion... No other Arab country matched their sacrifices... The United States will never allow Israel to be defeated and the Soviets will never give Egypt enough arms to decisively win in war... Egypt’s severe economic problems are due to the continuous state of war with Israel... Egypt is heavily indebted while the rich Arabs are depositing billions of dollars in foreign banks... The Syrians and Palestinians are not interested in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict because they are benefiting from it along with their Soviet patron.⁶⁰

Raising hopes of a peace dividend, billboards in fall 1975 declared “Mother Egypt,” “Egypt First,” and “Egypt First, Second, and Last.”⁶¹ Beneath the slogans economic grievances deepened.

Infitah had unleashed “consumption liberalization” without alleviating the strain on Egyptian families.⁶² The cost of living had risen by a staggering 20 percent.⁶³ Exports as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) had declined since 1974, and domestic consumption swallowed nearly three-quarters of the GDP.⁶⁴ In January 1975, aggrieved workers protested publicly in Cairo; two months later, 40,000 laborers in the industrial town of Mahalla went on strike.⁶⁵ As social turmoil loomed, Egyptians faced the limits of their president’s forbearance. Security forces toting clubs and machine guns pushed back, striking Cairo bus drivers in September 1976.⁶⁶ Against this backdrop of repression, Sadat ended single-party rule the following month by allowing voters to choose between rightist, center, and leftist “platforms.” Three people died

⁵⁷ “Chronology November 16, 1973–February 15, 1974,” *Middle East Journal* 28 (Spring 1974): 160; “Chronology August 16, 1975–November 15, 1975,” *Middle East Journal* 30 (Winter 1976): 64.

⁵⁸ Ali Eddin Melal Dessouki, “Egyptian Foreign Policy since Camp David,” in Quandt, ed., *The Middle East*, 96.

⁵⁹ Abdel Monem Said Aly, “Egypt: A Decade after Camp David,” in Quandt, ed., *The Middle East*, 71.

⁶⁰ Ibrahim, “Domestic Developments in Egypt,” 27.

⁶¹ Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution*, 142.

⁶² Cooper, *Transformation of Egypt*, 107.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 118–119.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁶⁵ Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution*, 167.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

in election-related violence, but the undercurrent of working-class protest proved a more-instructive bellwether.⁶⁷ Nationwide riots gripped Egypt in January 1977, and Sadat's leadership changed irrevocably. The previously bullish president, hero of 1973, became defensive, isolated, and erratic.⁶⁸

FANGED DEMOCRACY

By the end of 1976, Sadat's cabinet faced a \$2 billion budget deficit. Foreign debt exceeded GDP, and debt repayments were an estimated 70 percent of exports.⁶⁹ Desperate to dig out of this hole, Sadat and his ministers decided to cut state subsidies on cooking gas, rice, and sugar.⁷⁰ The costs of these subsidies had skyrocketed from \$175 million in 1972 to \$1.7 billion in 1976, and the reductions, it was hoped, would generate \$600 million. Such savings would stop the budget from hitting a projected \$3.25 billion deficit in 1977. The decision to retrench subsidies, rather than curb military spending, debt servicing, or investment, reflected the government's priorities about placating domestic and foreign elites.⁷¹ Price changes threatened a 15 percent increase in the cost of living for an Egyptian of mean income.⁷² Sadat's cabinet neither consulted nor notified the recently elected Parliament before publicizing the cutbacks.⁷³

On 18 January, the surprise subsidy reductions sparked a social explosion in Egypt unlike anything since the last months of the monarchy. For two days, thousands rioted in cities up and down the Nile. At one point, 30,000 demonstrators were battling police in Cairo.⁷⁴ The situation prompted Sadat, far removed in southern Egypt, to rescind the austerity measures and use the military to regain control. When the army finally pacified the crowds, an estimated eighty people had been killed, hundreds were wounded, and 1,200–2,000 had been arrested.⁷⁵

Egypt's economic predicament had become an acute political problem for Sadat. Then–Minister of Defense Abd al-Ghani Gamassy recalled that Sadat “was 100 percent changed by the experience” and “became aggressive.”⁷⁶

⁶⁷ Stork, “The Carter Doctrine,” 29.

⁶⁸ Mohammed Heikal, *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1983); Ibrahim, “Domestic Developments in Egypt,” 25.

⁶⁹ Cooper, *Transformation of Egypt*, 122.

⁷⁰ Kirk J. Beattie, *Egypt during the Sadat Years* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 311 ff. 315.

⁷¹ Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution*, 165–167.

⁷² Cooper, *Transformation of Egypt*, 236.

⁷³ Cooper, *Transformation of Egypt*, 240.

⁷⁴ Baker, *Egypt's Uncertain Revolution*, 166.

⁷⁵ Joe Stork and Danny Reachard, “Chronology: U.S.–Egypt Military Relationship” *MERIP Reports* (September 1980), 27; Cooper, *Transformation of Egypt*, 236; Beattie, *Egypt during the Sadat Years*, 208.

⁷⁶ Beattie, *Egypt during the Sadat Years*, 213.

Indeed, the President, still fancying himself a reformist, warned that “democracy has fangs 100 times sharper than the extraordinary measures” of dictatorship.⁷⁷ During a nearly two-hour broadcast address on 3 February, he pinned the riots on Soviet agents and sketched a plan for foiling future such conspirators.

It was a fantastic story with a grim moral. Communists had infiltrated the government during Nasser’s final years in office. These sleeper agents had orchestrated the January attacks on official buildings and public transportation. All Egyptians, Sadat intoned, must be more vigilant; otherwise communist plants would undermine Egypt’s negotiating power at an expected peace summit in Geneva. The President then explained how Egypt would preserve national unity and prevent another “uprising of thieves.” Key to this effort would be to modulate his earlier reforms, while stopping short of a “reversal in democracy, freedom, and the rule of law.” Egypt’s enemies had exploited the November elections, which Sadat called “100% clean,” to sow doubt and propaganda. He would therefore criminalize strikes and demonstrations (on penalty of life in prison with hard labor) and limit electoral competition to government-sanctioned parties. “We hereby end one period,” Sadat proclaimed, “and we begin a new one.”⁷⁸ A 10 February plebiscite approved the measures with a near unanimous 99.4 percent.⁷⁹

While Sadat answered public grief with repressive laws, he continued courting the United States, then under the administration of Jimmy Carter. The two met in Washington in April, communed about the threats of “Soviet-influenced” Ethiopia and Sudan, and shared their hopes for a Middle East peace treaty. Regarding relations with Israel, Sadat stated that, even under the best circumstances, diplomatic recognition could only “come after five more years.” Afterward, Carter described his counterpart as a “shining light” in the Middle East.⁸⁰ Likewise, Sadat seemed ebullient about U.S.–Egyptian relations. Confident that he could extricate Egypt from its economic morass during Carter’s presidency, he asked his fellow Egyptians to “Wait Until 1980” for relief.⁸¹

⁷⁷ “kalamat al ra’is anwar al-sadat fi liqa’ihi bi `adaa’ al majles al `uliya li al jama`at” [Speech of President Anwar al-Sadat in his meeting with the members of the higher council for universities], 30 January 1977, accessed at <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=539>, 29 January 2010.

⁷⁸ “al ra’is anwar al-sadat y`alan fi khitab ham li al sh`ab;,” *Al-Akhbar*, 4 February 1977, 3–4, 7; Marie-Christine Aulas, “A Very Strange Peace,” *MERIP Reports* 82 (November 1979), 20; Stork and Reachard, “Chronology,” 29.

⁷⁹ Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution*, 155.

⁸⁰ That same month, the State Department licensed New York-based Jonas Aircraft and Arms Co. to sell the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior 100,000 tear and pepper gas grenades, over six times what Egypt had acquired the prior year and a sturdy cache for future riot control (Klare and Arnson, *Supplying Repression*, 144–145).

⁸¹ Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution*, 168.

THE PEACE INITIATIVE

Carter and Sadat's collaboration suffered its first major setback on 17 May, when Israeli elections produced a Likud government led by Menachem Begin. The hard-right premier balked at the Geneva summit format, the extant method for incremental negotiations, and spoke of the West Bank as part of Israel.⁸² Carter remained optimistic, regarding Begin as "a strong leader, quite different from [ex-premier Yitzhak] Rabin."⁸³ Meanwhile, in Egypt, Sadat was being the "good friend" Carter had dubbed him during a White House toast. Sadat had sent pilots to help U.S. ally Mobutu Sese Seko battle communists, and on 25 May, about three weeks later, the U.S. House passed \$750 million in military aid for Egypt.^{84,85}

Carter then leaned on Sadat to surmount Begin's opposition to a summit: "[I] decided to play my only hole card – a direct appeal to President Sadat."⁸⁶ Driven by desperation as much as audacity, Sadat set aside the Geneva approach, which Carter had expected him to bolster, and instead announced that he was ready to visit Jerusalem. The move promised to shatter a long-standing taboo against Arab rulers offering even tacit recognition of Israel's legitimacy. On 19 November 1977, accepting an invitation from the Israeli government, he went there. The next day he addressed the Israeli Knesset and called for comprehensive peace: "total Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands and the recovery of the Palestinians' rights, including their right to set up an independent state."⁸⁷ Although the economic upshot of Sadat's initiative was ambiguous, the Knesset address galvanized support among cash-strapped and war-weary Egyptians.

There were opponents, such as Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy, who had resigned his post shortly before Sadat visited Jerusalem.⁸⁸ One survey at the time, though, showed 77 percent approval for the President's approach, versus 18 percent for the "PLO strategy," primarily among "leftists, Nasserites, and Islamic militants."⁸⁹ Among student respondents at the American University of Cairo, a proxy of the "westernized bourgeoisie," the bulk agreed that: 1. "Egypt should make peace with Israel only on condition that she returns *all* the occupied Arab territories, including the Golan Heights of Syria, and permits creation of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank of

⁸² Ibid., 143.

⁸³ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam, 1982), 282–285, 288, 290.

⁸⁴ Stork and Reachard, "Chronology," 29.

⁸⁵ Dessouki, "Egyptian Foreign Policy since Camp David," 106.

⁸⁶ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 292–293, 295.

⁸⁷ Lester A. Sobel, *Peace-Making in the Middle East* (New York: Facts on File, 1980), 165.

⁸⁸ Ibrahim, "Domestic Developments in Egypt," 26.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 27.

the Jordan” (60.0 percent).⁹⁰ Comprehensive peace was nowhere in sight, though, for while Begin had welcomed Sadat’s visit, he had offered no territorial concessions in return. Months rolled by with little to show for the President’s daring statecraft.

Egyptians experienced additional political curbs in 1978, as Sadat tried to muffle his critics. In its ongoing conflict with the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Israel briefly attacked southern Lebanon early in the year, killing over a thousand civilians and emboldening Egyptian skeptics of peace.⁹¹ Police cracked down on the leftwing Tagammu’ Party, a leader in the anti-peace camp, freezing production of the party’s newspaper *Al-Ahali*. Sadat then held a referendum on expelling dissident members of Parliament (MPs) for inciting “a bloodbath and class warfare.”⁹² Officially, 98.29 percent of voters on 21 May approved the six-point measure. Minister of the Interior Nabawi Ismail called for “responsible freedom, sound democracy, and honest opposition,” but his addressees preferred to close shop instead.⁹³ Protesting the new restrictions, the Tagammu suspended publication of *Al-Ahali*. The center-right Wafd Party also shuttered its operations.⁹⁴ Bullying tactics had again bought Sadat a respite, at least through the approaching Camp David talks.

ASYMMETRIC BARGAINING

American, Egyptian, and Israeli negotiators began their work at Camp David on September 5, 1978. Their goal was “to seek a framework for peace in the Middle East.”⁹⁵ Unlike “two-level games” among democracies, Carter’s peace-making benefited and suffered from the incongruence of participating governments.⁹⁶ It benefited in the sense that Sadat was not beholden to his country’s electorate and could, ostensibly, concede much more than the U.S. and Israeli leaders. The principals understood and exploited Sadat’s comparatively free hand in domestic affairs. In striking a deal, Carter, Begin, and Sadat relied on and reinforced the Egyptian’s penchant for unilateral rule.⁹⁷ By disregarding domestic opinion, Sadat played a “one-level” game and, while shifting far from his starting position, enabled a historic agreement. That skewed outcome

⁹⁰ Raymond A. Hinnebusch, “Children of the Elite: Political Attitudes of the Westernized Bourgeoisie in Contemporary Egypt,” *Middle East Journal* 36 (Autumn 1982): 546.

⁹¹ Baker, *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution*, 143; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 311.

⁹² Simone Mundesir, “Sadat and Democracy,” *Arab Report*, 14 February 1979, 9.

⁹³ Christopher S. Wren, “98% Endorse Sadat’s Curbs,” *The New York Times*, 23 May 1978.

⁹⁴ “Chronology February 16, 1978–May 15, 1978,” *Middle East Journal* 32 (Summer 1978): 160; “Chronology May 16, 1978–August 15, 1978,” *Middle East Journal* 32 (Autumn 1978): 460–461.

⁹⁵ Sobel, *Peace-Making in the Middle East*, 221.

⁹⁶ Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics,” 430.

⁹⁷ For a critique of the literature that emphasized Sadat’s personality, see Ibrahim A. Karawan, “Sadat and the Egyptian–Israeli Peace Revisited,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (May 1994): 249–266.

diverged from what most Egyptians supported. Consequently, the deal required an undemocratic ruler not only for its inception but for its future preservation as well.

Carter recalls that from the start, “Sadat seemed to trust me too much, and Begin not enough.”⁹⁸ Indeed, Sadat mistakenly thought he had already won the White House over. He treated Carter as his confidante while regarding his own ministers as gadflies. Sadat’s “freedom of action,” from his fellow Egyptians left him wholly dependent on Carter, a weakness the U.S. president was willing to exploit.⁹⁹ When the talks were on the brink of collapsing, Carter stipulated that if Sadat did not accept the text needed for concluding a framework, their friendship would end. As U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski writes: “President Sadat, who saw Camp David as an opportunity to collude with the United States against Israel, ended with much of the pressure directed against him. His choices were either to walk out or to agree to whatever we could get the Israelis to accept. Sadat chose the latter...”¹⁰⁰

Although he could rule with an iron fist, Sadat showed a weak hand at the negotiating table, backtracking across his fallback position and bottom line over thirteen days of talks.¹⁰¹ From the “six no’s” Carter had identified in Begin’s stance (no withdrawal from the West Bank, no end to settlement activity, no withdrawal from the Sinai, no acknowledgment that UN Resolution 242 applied to the West Bank and Gaza, no Palestinian self-rule, no consideration of refugees), the president would extract a single “yes” (Sinai withdrawal).¹⁰² On Day 3 of the conference (September 7), Carter had identified 13 issues of contention between Sadat and Begin, most of them pertaining to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights.¹⁰³ Sadat’s position was fully adopted on one issue, the return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egyptian control. Meanwhile, he baffled his fellow Egyptians by oscillating between defiance and submission.¹⁰⁴

Carter and Begin encouraged and even counted on Sadat’s penchant for lone decision-making. “It is generally held that Sadat is flexible,” Carter told the Egyptian team, “while his close associates are hard-liners; and that Prime

⁹⁸ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 322.

⁹⁹ Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel, *The Camp David Accords: A Testimony by Sadat’s Foreign Minister* (London: KPI, 1986), 290.

¹⁰⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 274.

¹⁰¹ Shibley Telhami, “The Camp David Accords: A Case of International Bargaining,” unpublished paper, n.d., 15.

¹⁰² Jimmy Carter, *We Can Have Peace in the Holy Land: A Plan that Will Work* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 35.

¹⁰³ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 354–355.

¹⁰⁴ This hierarchical top-down structure did not characterize the Israeli delegation. In that group, vigorous debate often left Begin at odds with his top advisers, but those around him perceived the premier giving ground in response to their input. Moshe Dayan, *Breakthrough: A Personal Account of the Egypt–Israel Peace Negotiations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 154.

Minister Begin is a hard-liner while his close associates are flexible... [I]f it is true, then it constitutes a useful and desirable balance.”¹⁰⁵ But Sadat did not counterbalance Begin. Even if the two sides, overall, could be equally obstinate, the Egyptian team lost influence as Sadat became the fulcrum of debate. In one of their casual chats, Carter, Begin, and Sadat communed over their shared preference for democratic government, and Sadat said that he “was very proud to be shifting his country toward democracy.”¹⁰⁶ These sentiments took a momentous turn when Carter and Begin called upon Sadat’s prerogatives as an unchecked executive and expected him to mold public opinion in his country.

Carter records Begin making a “good debating point” as the Israeli premier described how Sadat had realigned Egypt from Soviet to American support and taken his country from war to peace: “It was obvious that under strong leadership, the opinion of the Egyptians could be changed.”¹⁰⁷ By contrast, the Israeli premier answered to a broad governing coalition. Begin’s point echoed a previous remark by foreign minister Ezer Weizman to Sadat: “We all admire the step you took, but you must consider that Begin has a problem too. His problem may be more difficult than yours—it is much easier for you to push decisions through.” Weizman continues:

I tried to put it tactfully without offending him. Sadat continually spoke of agreement or disagreement on the part of the Egyptian people even though he was clearly able to ensure the adoption of almost any decision he wanted, whereas Begin had to consider many others, in his party and out.¹⁰⁸

Consistent with this understanding of Sadat’s domestic leverage, Begin would induce Carter to convince other Israeli politicians, first by tying the Sinai withdrawal to Knesset approval, later by requiring the treaty to be acceptable to his cabinet.¹⁰⁹

The U.S. election calendar also worked to Sadat’s disadvantage. Congressional midterm elections loomed in November, and the peace process was fraught with implications for Carter’s presidential reelection in 1980.¹¹⁰ Pushing too aggressively on Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank would, he told Sadat, “cost me my job.”¹¹¹ This was not the first time Carter turned to Sadat

¹⁰⁵ Kamel, *The Camp David Accords*, 308.

¹⁰⁶ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 352.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 358; see also Kamel, *The Camp David Accords*, 149.

¹⁰⁸ Ezer Weizman, *The Battle for Peace* (New York: Bantam, 1981), 165–166.

¹⁰⁹ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 410. Sadat would also enjoy the cover of parliamentary approval, but this step did not imply an equivalent amount of political wrangling on the Egyptian side. Sadat’s party held over three-quarters of seats in the legislature and the institution had historically reflected the preferences of the president. See Dayan, *Breakthrough*, 180; Kamel, *The Camp David Accords*, 356.

¹¹⁰ William B. Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1986), 236, 258.

¹¹¹ Kamel, *The Camp David Accords*, 371.

for alleviating domestic pressure; the “bold initiative” of going to Jerusalem had earlier saved Carter from a growing chorus within the United States claiming he was being too tough on Israel.¹¹² Mindful of his own constraints within the United States and Begin’s in Israel, Carter approached Sadat from the opposite tact, on a personal basis that presumed Sadat could act independently of his constituents in Egypt. Meanwhile, Carter ignored the opinions of other Egyptians: “On any controversial issue, I never consulted Sadat’s aides, but always went directly to their leader.”¹¹³

This direct appeal could become intense pressure, as happened on 15 September (Day 11), when Sadat and his team were on the verge of leaving Camp David. Carter warned that if Sadat exited early, the two men’s friendship would be over and the nascent bond between their governments doomed.¹¹⁴ Sadat got the message, agreed to stay, and told his delegation he “would sign anything proposed by President Carter without reading it.”¹¹⁵

In his study of the peace negotiations, Shibley Telhami found that Sadat’s surfeit of power “impaired Egypt’s ability to bargain with Israel.”¹¹⁶ This weakness was itself a product of the dynamic among the principals, not a preexisting deficit. The Israeli delegation was much more effective than its counterpart at advocating for their domestic constituents. Thanks to President Carter’s eleventh-hour arm twisting, though, Sadat became convinced that getting some kind of treaty, no matter the particulars, was paramount. His disregard for popular and elite opinions in Egypt, reinforced by the arguments of his interlocutors, was crucial for the deal that emerged.¹¹⁷

AMERICA’S CONSTABLE

Sadat’s volte-face startled the Egyptian delegates, especially Foreign Minister Mohammed Ibrahim Kamel. A rare exchange between Carter and Kamel shows that the Egyptian suspected Sadat and Carter of building bilateral military ties, not comprehensive peace. In a chance encounter on Day 8 (12 September), Carter explained to Kamel that they could not “solve all problems at once.” Conclusive negotiations over the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem would need to occur later. Egypt, though, should seize the benefits of making peace with Israel.

¹¹² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 234.

¹¹³ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 356.

¹¹⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 272.

¹¹⁵ Kamel, *The Camp David Accords*, 357.

¹¹⁶ Shibley Telhami, “Evaluating Bargaining Performance: The Case of Camp David,” *Political Science Quarterly* 107 (Winter 1992–1993): 630.

¹¹⁷ Courtney Jung, Ellen Lust-Okar, and Ian Shapiro, “Problems and Prospects for Democratic Settlements: South Africa as a Model for the Middle East and Northern Ireland?” *Politics & Society* 33 (2005): 277–326.

The United States also had a major stake in resolving the conflict between Egypt and Israel, as Carter described:

The Soviet Union is roaming freely in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East because it knows that Egypt has five whole regiments pinned down along the Suez Canal which cannot be moved. Were we to reach a peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, there would be no need for the five regiments to be held up on the Canal. President Sadat would be free to deploy them in whichever manner he chose. This would force the Soviet Union to rethink its strategy and make it more likely to observe more caution.

This rationale suggested that geopolitics was trumping regional peace, and Kamel replied in exasperation, “Pardon me, Mr. President, but we are meeting here to find a solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict, not to deal with the policies of the Soviet Union!”¹¹⁸

Although Carter’s plans stunned Kamel, they pleased Sadat, who even volunteered to send Egyptian forces to secure the West Bank, in the Palestinian territories.¹¹⁹ In Kamel’s eyes:

President Sadat... aspir[ed] to become not only America’s ally, but also America’s policeman in the area. He believed that the way to gain United States support, and assistance, was to adopt a firm and hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union and to assume on its behalf the role of confronting Soviet infiltration in the Middle East and Africa.¹²⁰

American grand strategy was eclipsing any hopes of a broader peace. Kamel feared that a watered-down blueprint for Palestinian autonomy would leave the West Bank to “be chewed up by Israeli settlements.”¹²¹ Indeed, existing settlements already presented one of the most intractable issues. The talks nearly foundered on Begin’s insistence that 2,000 Israeli settlers remain in the eastern Sinai Peninsula after Israel had withdrawn.

After 12 days of negotiations (four times the planned duration), the Israeli premier agreed to evacuate the settlement only by making the pullout contingent on Knesset approval.¹²² Begin thus anchored an unpalatable concession in domestic electoral institutions, a tactic unavailable to Sadat. Even the return of the Sinai to Egypt, Sadat’s chief accomplishment at Camp David, required flexibility from the Egyptian side. Thanks to Carter, the Israeli pullout would stretch, fatefully, over a three-year period, not the two years Sadat preferred.¹²³ The Accords did not specify that Israel vacate other occupied territories, and

¹¹⁸ Kamel, *The Camp David Accords*, 341.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 335.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 342.

¹²¹ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 383; Kamel, *The Camp David Accords*, 372.

¹²² Weizman, *The Battle for Peace*, 372; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 312; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 270.

¹²³ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 362, 380, 394.

Kamel resigned in protest.¹²⁴ A day after the signing ceremony, Begin criticized the agreed framework for peace and Carter belatedly understood Kamel's concern: "It seemed that suspicions at Camp David were proving well founded. Begin wanted to keep two things: the peace with Egypt — and the West Bank."¹²⁵

Back in the Middle East, furious Arab rulers took the same lesson. In November 1978, the Arab League agreed to expel Egypt if Sadat went forward with signing a formal peace treaty. In response, Sadat severed ties with those governments denouncing him.¹²⁶ His gambit for U.S. patronage got an unexpected boost in January–February 1979, when the Iranian Revolution toppled one of the U.S. two "pillars" of Persian Gulf security.¹²⁷ As the White House struggled to adapt, Sadat stepped forward. In mid-February 1979, U.S. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and Sadat discussed expanding Egypt's role in regional security, primarily in the Horn of Africa, but potentially in the Persian Gulf as well.¹²⁸ Sadat reportedly seized the chance for "offering Egypt as a substitute for Iran on an even grander scale than had been assumed by that country under the shah."¹²⁹

With unwitting irony, Sadat explained to journalists his plans for repelling alien influences in the Middle East: "As long as I live here, I shall be defending my country, my Arab colleagues, anyone in the area against any foreign intervention. For that I am asking for arms for my country and for my colleagues in the Arab world..."¹³⁰ Brown had communicated that the United States could provide more aid, but additional assistance would be hard to obtain until after Sadat had signed a formal peace treaty with Israel.¹³¹ It was a polite understatement of the conditions for U.S. support, which would end abruptly if Sadat rejected the treaty.¹³² Under these circumstances, Carter found that his Egyptian counterpart was as agreeable as ever.

Although the Camp David Accords prefigured a formal treaty, subsequent negotiations were fraught with difficulty. On 7 March 1979, Carter flew to

¹²⁴ They were the "Framework for Peace in the Middle East" and the "Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel."

¹²⁵ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 405.

¹²⁶ William B. Quandt, "Introduction" in Quandt, ed., *The Middle East*, 7.

¹²⁷ The other pillar was the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Tore T. Petersen, *The Decline of the Anglo-American Middle East, 1961–1969: A Willing Retreat* (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2006), 30; Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of Chapel Hill, 2008), 139.

¹²⁸ Stork and Reachard, "Chronology," 30.

¹²⁹ John M. Goshko, "Sadat Seeking Arms, Broader Pro-West Role," *Washington Post*, 21 February 1979. Carter's public remarks were more subdued. See John M. Goshko, "Carter on Regional Stability: A Vision of Mideast at Peace," *Washington Post*, 23 February 1979.

¹³⁰ NBC Evening News, 17 February 1979. From the Television News Archive, Vanderbilt University, accessed 14 January 2010.

¹³¹ Stork and Reachard, "Chronology," 30.

¹³² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 277.

Cairo in hopes of closing the deal.¹³³ In this clutch, he again expected Sadat to compromise: “Once more, I wanted Begin to have his way with particular phrases and depended on Sadat to be flexible on language and to take the long view concerning the effect of the agreement.” Brzezinski adds that Carter needed “major concessions” from his Egyptian counterpart and he got them: “In effect, Sadat gave Carter *carte blanche* for his subsequent negotiations with the Israelis.”¹³⁴ Reprising the pattern of Camp David, Carter relished Sadat’s autocratic efficiency: “Over the opposition of some of his closest advisers, Sadat accepted the troublesome texts, and *within an hour* he and I resolved all the questions which still had not been decided after all these months.”¹³⁵

Whereas it took an hour for Carter to get a deal in Egypt, his work in Israel stretched for three days. During that time, he lobbied Begin, the cabinet, and eventually the entire Knesset.¹³⁶ With a modified text in hand, Carter hopped back to Egypt for final approval: “There was some equivocation among his advisers, but after a few minutes Sadat interrupted to say, ‘This is satisfactory with me.’”¹³⁷ In accepting the deal, Sadat was enticed by Carter’s promise of a “massive” U.S.–Egyptian military and economic relationship once the treaty was signed.¹³⁸ But brisk diplomacy cloaked widespread concern. While harmonizing the Egyptian and Israeli positions, Carter had galvanized Sadat’s critics.

DOMESTIC REPRESSION

The dawning of a lucrative U.S.–Egyptian strategic partnership did not quiet the objections of Sadat’s countrymen and women. On 26 March 1979, while Sadat signed the treaty with Begin in Washington, DC, the mood in Egypt was tense, “more like a country in a state of siege... than one rejoicing for the coming of peace.”¹³⁹

Thirteen MPs wrote a letter faulting Sadat for accepting a separate peace with Israel, for allowing Israel to infringe on Egyptian sovereignty in the Sinai, and for wasting precious resources on military adventures in Africa.¹⁴⁰ From exile, General Saad El-Din El-Shazli, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the 1973 War, denounced a treaty brokered not with Egypt but with Sadat alone: “If Carter and Begin think they will achieve piece in the Middle

¹³³ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 415–416.

¹³⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 283.

¹³⁵ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 417, emphasis added.

¹³⁶ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 422–425.

¹³⁷ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 425.

¹³⁸ Quandt, *Camp David*, 302.

¹³⁹ Irene Beeson, “Egypt jittery on eve of treaty,” *The Guardian*, 26 March 1979; Stork and Reachard, “Chronology,” 30.

¹⁴⁰ Stanley Reed, “Peace Treaty Blues in Egypt,” *Arab Report*, May 9, 1979, 6.

East through this treaty they are delusional. The treaty is tied to Sadat personally; if Sadat falls, the treaty falls with him.”¹⁴¹ Carter also saw the Egyptian President pushing against public opinion but lauded him for it: “With the exception of Sadat, moderate Arab leaders were not strong enough to buck this tide of emotion-filled prejudice.”¹⁴²

Sadat’s strength entailed a familiar blend of voting and violence. On 11 April 1979, 329 MPs in the People’s Assembly approved the Egyptian–Israeli Peace treaty. Thirteen parliamentarians stood in opposition, too much for Sadat to tolerate.¹⁴³ In a 90-minute televised address that night, he announced a public referendum on the treaty and a series of changes for “consolidating democracy.”¹⁴⁴ Eight days later, a 99.95 percent result stuck the dual blows of ratifying the peace agreement and initiating elections for a fresh and presumably more-pliant assembly.¹⁴⁵ Foreign television crews recorded overt ballot box stuffing behind this implausible display of unanimity.¹⁴⁶ The corrupt referendum presaged electoral conditions on 7 and 14 June.

During an abbreviated six-week campaign period, candidates were barred from criticizing the treaty and, in state-dominated media, struggled to publicize their positions.¹⁴⁷ Incumbent and would-be MPs from the Tagammu’ were effectively purged; none of the party’s 31 candidates even made it to a run-off.¹⁴⁸ Only two peace treaty critics were reelected. One was Mumtaz Nasr, whose supporters brandished submachine guns and forced the police to count ballots on the spot.¹⁴⁹ The other was former Free Officer Kemal al-Din Hussein. In the run-off, he recalled, government forces “kicked out my representatives,

¹⁴¹ Al Jazeera, “al Salaam al murr` bayn misr wa isra’il” [The Bitter Peace Between Egypt and Israel]. Originally broadcast 26 March 2009. Accessed at <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/4BD91528-3DEB-40FF-B3BB-A0CE5F27FAF9>, 15 January 2010. Begin’s Minister of Defense shared this view: “The dangers facing the first agreement [the bi-lateral peace treaty] hinge on Sadat. In the whole Camp David mosaic, Sadat constitutes the key link whose fracture would lead to disintegration of the entire chain.” Weizman, *The Battle for Peace*, 376.

¹⁴² Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 428.

¹⁴³ “Egypt Assembly Approves Pact,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 April 1979; Aulas, “A Very Strange Peace,” 19.

¹⁴⁴ Christopher S. Wren, “Sadat Sets April 9 Vote on Peace Pact,” *The New York Times*, 12 April 1979.

¹⁴⁵ The same referendum began the process of creating a second parliamentary body (the Consultative Assembly) and a supreme council overseeing the press. Anwar Sadat, “biyan al ra’is Muhammad anwar al-sadat illa al-ummah,” 11 April 1979, accessed at <http://sadat.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=819>, 2 February 2010; Thomas W. Lippman, “Egyptians Vote on Treaty with Israel,” *The Washington Post*, 19 April 1979; LexisNexis, accessed 2 February 2010.

¹⁴⁶ NBC Evening News, 19 April 1979. From the Television News Archive, Vanderbilt University, accessed at <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/>, 14 January 2010.

¹⁴⁷ “Egypt Votes and Sadat’s Sitting Pretty,” *The Montreal Gazette*, 7 June 1979.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas W. Lippman, “Victory by Sadat’s Party Strengthens his Control,” *Washington Post*, 11 June 1979; Aulas, “A Very Strange Peace,” 18–19.

¹⁴⁹ Stanley Reed, “Sadat does it again,” *Arab Report*, 20 June 1979; Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 104, 207.

put in fake ballots, and did everything imaginable to make me lose, but I won despite the rigging to ensure a pro-Camp David People's Assembly."¹⁵⁰ Pro-Sadat "opposition" candidates got 8.4 percent of contested seats, while the President's National Democratic Party took 86.4 percent.¹⁵¹

The construction of a pro-peace legislature helped Sadat develop Egypt's role in U.S. regional strategy. After the treaty, Egypt began receiving approximately \$1 billion in economic and food aid and slightly larger amounts in military grants and loans.¹⁵² Insufficient for an economic recovery, the aid helped prepare the Egyptian armed forces for a local security role. Egypt would not guard the Persian Gulf, but could help the United States project power there.¹⁵³ By February 1980, to take an early example, Egypt was helping the United States arm the Afghan *mujahadeen* in their fight against the Soviet occupation.¹⁵⁴ Collaboration with the White House, though, did not solve the President's troubles at home. Sadat's bad-cop tactics and lofty pledges were rapidly losing whatever domestic efficacy they ever had.

In March 1980, Sadat received the deposed and ailing shah, who arrived in Cairo like a royal harbinger of doom. *The New York Times* tallied the President's mounting problems:

President Sadat's repeated promises about 1980 being the dawn of prosperity for the hard-pressed Egyptians have failed to materialize. The new decade is beginning with inflation running at about 30 percent a year, signs of increasing repression by the Egyptian regime and an almost total reliance on the United States for aid, food and weapons. The high hopes that peace with Israel might lead to a resolution of the Palestinian issue have been dashed by the Begin Government policy of multiplying Israeli settlements on the occupied West Bank.¹⁵⁵

Not surprisingly, the first anniversary of the Egyptian–Israeli treaty brought little cause for celebration, despite newly opened Egyptian and Israeli embassies in Cairo and Tel Aviv.¹⁵⁶

"Normalization" was a precondition for Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, but while Egyptian–Israeli ties grew, negotiations about the West Bank and Gaza stalled. When the 26 May 1980 deadline for concluding autonomy talks for the Palestinians came and went, it seemed clearer than ever that Sadat had signed a separate peace. To most observers, wrote former Carter national security

¹⁵⁰ Beattie, *Egypt under Sadat*, 242.

¹⁵¹ Stanley Reed, "Sadat stage-manages the elections," 6 June 1979, 9; John Waterbury, *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 371.

¹⁵² Ann Crittenden, "Supporting Treaty is Costly for U.S.," *The New York Times*, 26 March 1979; Sharp, "Egypt," 31–32.

¹⁵³ Stork, "The Carter Doctrine," 9.

¹⁵⁴ Stork and Reachard, "Chronology," 31.

¹⁵⁵ Youssef M. Ibrahim, "U.S. Stake in Egypt Rests on One Man—Anwar el-Sadat," *The New York Times*, 30 March 1980.

¹⁵⁶ Joel Beinin, "The Cold Peace," *MERIP Reports* 129 (January 1985), 5.

staffer William Quandt, “the Camp David approach to Middle East peace is at a dead end.”¹⁵⁷ Sadat had seen it coming and sent voters to the polls four days prior. With a 98.96 percent result, the plebiscite made Islam the main source of legislation and removed the term limits that would have compelled Sadat to leave office in 1982.¹⁵⁸ It also criminalized transgressive speech through Law 33/1980 “protecting values from shameful conduct,” soon derided as the “Law of Shame.”¹⁵⁹ If comprehensive peace lay beyond reach, Sadat would tighten his grip at home.

Repression had at its limits, though, and draconian measures like the Law of Shame substantiated the opposition’s case against Sadat. After the 1980 referendum, Tagammu’ leader Khaled Mohieddin remarked: “[A] lot of intellectuals who did not believe in Camp David did feel that democracy might prevail in this country after the peace treaty. But all those hopes have gone.”¹⁶⁰ Former MPs and previously quiescent intellectuals soon mobilized as a National Front. In a pair of missives that summer, some 70 notables of the coalition demanded a more-assertive foreign policy and a more-accountable government. Sadat’s arbitrary and unpredictable maneuvers had not established an “outright dictatorship,” they wrote, but he was also not ruling through “a democracy, nor even a pseudo-democracy.”¹⁶¹

NO MORE WAITING

When Carter left the White House in January 1981, a political panacea still eluded Sadat. Egypt had become a junior partner in the White House’s regional designs without reaping a massive peace dividend. The long-awaited year of prosperity had come and gone without an economic revival. Moreover, Sadat had squandered Egyptians’ earlier confidence in his foreign policy, which seemed feckless and out of touch with developments in the region. Rather than ushering in regional peace, Egypt’s bilateral treaty seemed to enable Israeli expansionism.¹⁶²

In 1977, most Egyptians had supported Sadat’s peace initiative. By early 1981, even the President’s hand-picked “opposition,” the Socialist Labor Party

¹⁵⁷ William B. Quandt, “May 26: Now What?” *Washington Post*, 26 May 1980.

¹⁵⁸ “Sadat Gets Overwhelming Mandate, Egypt Reports,” *The New York Times*, 24 May 1980; “98.9% of Egyptians Vote to Allow Sadat as Many Terms as He Wants,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 May 1980.

¹⁵⁹ Mohamed Sid-Ahmed, “Shifting Sands of Peace in the Middle East,” *International Security* 5 (Summer 1980): 75. Waterbury, *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat*, 372; Kienle, *A Grand Delusion*, 19.

¹⁶⁰ Robert Fisk, “Why the Red Major sees democracy ebbing from Egypt,” *The Times of London*, 10 April 1980.

¹⁶¹ Raymond William Baker, “Sadat’s Open Door: Opposition from Within,” *Social Problems* 28 (April 1981), 383–384; Waterbury, *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat*, 372–373.

¹⁶² Mustapha K. El-Sayed, “Egyptian Popular Attitudes toward the Palestinians Since 1977,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18 (Summer 1989): 39.

rescinded its approval of the peace treaty in protest of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.¹⁶³ Movement toward Palestinian autonomy had ground to a halt, and Begin renewed his commitment to retaining “Judea and Samaria” (the biblical names he used to refer to the West Bank). That summer, the Israeli leader showed his country’s security concerns stretched further; airstrikes in Beirut and a June 1981 attack on the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq made Sadat appear complicit or simply inept. The new White House leadership offered little help at easing regional tensions. In early August, Ronald Reagan hosted Sadat and extolled the Egyptian’s “majestic sense of decency and dedication to universal human principles.” Privately, however, Reagan brushed off Sadat’s pleas for help.¹⁶⁴

The regional situation bore little resemblance to Sadat’s November 1977 call for “total Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands.”¹⁶⁵ Still, he wagered that when Israel completed its withdrawal from the Sinai on 25 April 1982, his work would be vindicated. All that stood between Sadat and that moment of triumph was a handful of months and a legion of dissidents. Fearing the opposition would sabotage the Israeli pullout to discredit him, he reverted to Nasserist levels of surveillance.¹⁶⁶ According to a sympathetic biographer of Sadat’s, tapes of salons and private discussions confirmed that his presidency was politically bankrupt: “Reports were presented to Sadat, video reports and audio recordings on the discussions that were circulating in these meetings. They were all against the peace treaty. The question was... ‘Where was the prosperity that Sadat had promised the masses?’”¹⁶⁷

In autumn of 1981, Sadat’s futile pursuit of a peace dividend reached a tragic end. In September, the embattled President had answered his critics in the idiom of the intelligence state. Frantically trying to buy time, Sadat detained over 1,500 political activists and leading cultural figures. He even detained the Coptic Pope and arrested the supreme guide of the Muslim Brothers.¹⁶⁸ The dragnet swept up secularists, leftists, liberals, and Islamic activists, including a young man in southern Egypt named Mohamed Islambouli. On 6 October Mohamed’s brother Khaled and three fellow Islamic militants assassinated Sadat during a military parade commemorating the 1973 War.¹⁶⁹ Vice President Hosni Mubarak, an air commander in that war, was also in attendance. He survived the assault and assumed the presidency.

¹⁶³ Ibrahim, “Domestic Developments in Egypt,” 41–42.

¹⁶⁴ Ronald Reagan, “Toasts of President Reagan and President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt at the State Dinner,” 5 August 1981, accessed at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=44148>, 3 February 2010; Ibrahim, “Domestic Developments in Egypt,” 26.

¹⁶⁵ Sobel, *Peace-Making in the Middle East*, 165.

¹⁶⁶ Moussa Sabri, *Al-Sadat: Al haqiqah wa al usturah* [Sadat: The reality and the legend] (Cairo: Al maktab al misri al hadith, 1985), 166.

¹⁶⁷ Sabri, *Al-Sadat*, 165.

¹⁶⁸ Ibrahim, “Domestic Developments in Egypt,” 25.

¹⁶⁹ Caryle Murphy, *Passion for Islam* (New York: Scribner, 2002), 62–63.

On 25 April, Israel's forces completed their redeployment, by which time "the active peace constituency [in Egypt] had nearly vanished." Six weeks later, Israel invaded Lebanon, generating in Egypt what Saad Eddin Ibrahim describes as "active hatred and total distrust of the Jewish state."¹⁷⁰ The outbreak of war capped the final and largest wave of opposition to Sadat's initiative. Rather than leading to a complete regional settlement, the Egyptian–Israeli treaty, a separate peace, had allowed Israel to attack other Arabs.¹⁷¹ Anis Mansour, a peace advocate known for his collegiality toward Israeli writers, captured the public mood in his 17 July 1982 column: "We had reconciled with Israel, looking forward to a comprehensive peace.... It turned out to be a mistake.... The most optimistic among us knows now that it will take another 34 years to correct that mistake."¹⁷²

In the face of local outrage toward Israel and the United States, Mubarak bore the millstone of his predecessor's diplomacy. Calling the 1979 treaty a "legal obligation to be observed and respected," he ensured that the Egyptian–Israeli peace and Egyptian–American partnership would endure.¹⁷³ Mubarak quickly became a major figure in the interminable Middle East peace process, shuttling around the region, overriding Egyptian calls for punitive measures against Israel (such as cutting off oil exports) and hosting international summits at Sharm el-Sheikh. Domestic policing continued as well. Rather than reopen the debate over Camp David and the peace treaty, Mubarak honed the coercive arsenal forged by Sadat.¹⁷⁴

Repressive measures—the Law of Shame, election rigging, domestic spying, a ubiquitous police presence, and the state of emergency in force throughout Mubarak's tenure—remained the ultimate guarantor of the government's security and its international obligations. Protests over Israeli policies and Palestinian rights were never the sole or even the foremost impetus for government violence. During the 1990s, the Islamic Group, an offshoot of the conspirators who killed Sadat, waged a prolonged militant campaign against the Ministry of Interior and foreign tourists. While religious radicalism waxed and waned, however, criticisms of U.S. and Israeli policies, and Egyptian complicity in them, prevailed in popular politics.¹⁷⁵ From rallying for the first intifada (1987) to protesting Operation: Cast Lead (2008/2009), foreign policy-related demonstrations mobilized more Egyptians than any other single cause until the 25 January uprising.

¹⁷⁰ Ibrahim, "Domestic Developments in Egypt," 33.

¹⁷¹ Said Aly, "Egypt," 73, 88–89.

¹⁷² Ibrahim, "Domestic Developments in Egypt," 19.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Springborg, *Mubarak's Egypt: Fragmentation of the Political Order* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 99, 101, 125 fn. 1.

¹⁷⁵ Dessouki, "Egyptian Foreign Policy since Camp David," 98; Ibrahim, "Domestic Developments in Egypt," 33–34.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This article has revisited Egyptian peacemaking and liberalization, chronicling how Sadat's spectacular diplomacy depended on substantial repression. The Camp David talks and subsequent Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty presupposed Sadat could control domestic politics. He assumed that role with aplomb and expected that a United States-brokered peace dividend would ultimately placate the skeptics. Yielding to Carter, Sadat overruled his own diplomatic team and accepted a bilateral peace rather than the comprehensive settlement he had originally advocated. Offering his country as a Middle East gendarme for Washington, Sadat enjoyed record amounts of U.S. economic and military assistance, but not enough to revive Egypt's flagging economy. In the wake of the summit and treaty signing, Sadat alienated the Egyptian public faster than he could win them over.

Most of his critics did not object to peace *per se*, but they were appalled by how his concessions emboldened Israel, left the Palestinians in the lurch, and wrenched Egypt from the community of Arab states it had previously led. As Sadat struggled to maintain control at home, he revived methods of the Nasserist “Intelligence State.” Egyptians who opposed him faced nighttime raids and mass detentions. In the fall of 1981, this violent maelstrom spun out of control and the Egyptian President fell to a hail of bullets. His legacy then suffered a posthumous blow in June 1982 when the Israeli military, six weeks after ceding the Sinai to Egypt, invaded Lebanon. Contrary to the regional solution Sadat had envisaged in his 1977 Jerusalem trip, Egyptians saw their country's separate peace strengthening Israel and jeopardizing Arab security.¹⁷⁶

As noted earlier, this history informs research in international relations on the conditions of durable peace and successful bargaining, as well as comparative politics work on authoritarianism and liberalization. The account also illustrates the reciprocal power and fluidity of international and domestic forces, a point long intuited by participants in Egyptian politics.

Although ties between Egyptian rulers and the United States and Israel have been a centerpiece of knowledge production within Egypt, those relationships remain marginal in North American social science. Unlike their Egyptian peers, U.S. researchers have tended to assign less meaning to demonstrations over foreign policy issues. Reactions to the Palestinian intifadas and the Gulf wars receive short shrift compared to protests about elections, Islamic law, or labor rights. But distinctions between a supposedly external sphere of foreign affairs (about international trade and wars) and an internal realm of domestic politics (about elections and presidential authority) says more about disciplinary divisions within political science than about contentious politics in

¹⁷⁶ Dessouki, “Egyptian Foreign Policy since Camp David,” 98.

Egypt. As Egyptians lambasted Sadat for jeopardizing national sovereignty, they demonstrated the “internality” of foreign policy. Thus the distinction between “international” and “domestic” risks fragmenting processes that are more clearly understood holistically.

The National Front of 1980, and kindred movements demanding foreign policy change and a more accountable government, embodied a political struggle quite different from the focus of democratization studies. They did not take part in a transition from authoritarianism to democracy, or the blocking of such a transition. Rather, they joined an ongoing and multi-directional tug of war between rulers and citizens over what issues would be debated and what subjects would be consigned to the taken-for-granted. Post-Camp David conflict can thus be studied as a Gramscian “war of position” (separate from a “war of maneuver” over state institutions).¹⁷⁷ Although Sadat had advanced the nation’s interests through war, his subsequent realignment amounted to a serious capitulation. Critics of his initiative gained the upper hand in shaping what Egypt’s “normal” stance toward the United States and Israel should be. Henceforth, the Egyptian government was physically fierce and ideologically frail.

The vulnerability of Egyptian leaders and their international commitments constitutes a major concern in U.S.–Egyptian relations during and after the Sadat–Mubarak era. White House and congressional statements treat the Sadat–Carter–Begin collaboration as a template for resolving other conflicts and a step toward Egypt’s eventual democratization. The desirable outcomes of peace and democracy will reinforce one another; as in modernization theory, eventually “all good things... go together.”¹⁷⁸ Peacemaking and democratization, though, were mutually exclusive during Sadat’s presidency and remain at odds.

The current prospect of alternative leadership in Egypt could endanger the treaty with Israel and alliance with the United States, as a recent Council on Foreign Relations study forecast:

Washington would no longer be able to rely on Cairo to undertake initiatives that are profoundly unpopular with the Egyptian people. Prominent among these are various types of security cooperation with both the United States and Israel.¹⁷⁹

It follows that the most-oft-invoked quandary of U.S. democracy promotion in Egypt, a potential electoral victory by the Society of Muslim Brothers,

¹⁷⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971); Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State*; Ian S. Lustick, “Hegemony and the Riddle of Nationalism,” in Leonard Binder, ed., *Ethnic Conflict and International Politics in the Middle East* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1999), 340.

¹⁷⁸ Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 267.

¹⁷⁹ Steven A. Cook, “Political Instability in Egypt,” *Contingency Planning Memorandum No. 4*, Council on Foreign Relations, August 2009, 2.

understates Washington's quandary. Even if the Brothers did not dominate free elections in post-Mubarak Egypt, a mix of Islamist and secularist candidates could reformulate the government's international commitments. The nightmare of "one man, one vote, one time" may trouble U.S. policymakers less than the prospect of one vote, new foreign policy.¹⁸⁰ Opinion polls show overwhelming support for the Egyptian–Israeli treaty; a more popularly based Egyptian government is unlikely to abrogate the treaty or abandon other mainstays of the country's foreign policy.¹⁸¹ At the same time, a more-democratic Egyptian leadership may behave more assertively than Sadat or Mubarak toward Washington, and bear greater resemblance to the government of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

In closing, Sadat established international ties that encircled Mubarak and that Egypt's new leaders may find difficult to shake off. Under Mubarak, Egypt made little headway on a comprehensive peace that would legitimate its bilateral treaty with Israel. Government surveillance and repression helped preserve an unpopular but lucrative foreign policy. Conditions within Egypt are intertwined with Cairo's transatlantic partnership, an arrangement that is currently ill-suited to advance human rights. Therefore, any meaningful U.S. bid to restrain official Egyptian repression would require that America rescind its approbation of and participation in those methods, whether by the provisional military government or its successor. Until that point, proposals for enticing reform through added military assistance¹⁸² or conditional economic aid¹⁸³ will be precluded ab initio. The historic conjunction of regional peacemaking and internal policing means that any meaningful shift will entail tradeoffs. The status quo under Sadat and Mubarak sustained a controversial alignment through force; freer and less-policed Egyptians may revise their country's regional security role.*

¹⁸⁰ Edward P. Djerejian, "The US and the Middle East in a changing world," U.S. Department of State Dispatch, 8 June 1992.

¹⁸¹ A spring 2011 poll showed 63 percent of respondents "somewhat" or "much more" likely to support a party that "favors keeping Egypt's peace with Israel." "Egypt National Survey," International Peace Institute, accessed at <http://www.ipinst.org/images/pdfs/egypt-poll-results-april2011.pdf>, 26 April 2011.

¹⁸² Steven A. Cook, "The Right Way to Promote Arab Reform," *Foreign Affairs* 84 (March–April 2005): 97.

¹⁸³ Tamara Cofman Wittes, *Freedom's Unsteady March: America's Role in Building Arab Democracy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 118–119.

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