

KEY REASONS FOR THE EGYPT-ISRAELI PEACE AGREEMENT THAT CAME OUT
OF THE CAMP DAVID NEGOTIATIONS

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KEY REASONS FOR THE EGYPT-ISRAELI PEACE AGREEMENT THAT CAME OUT OF THE CAMP DAVID NEGOTIATIONS

Introduction

The peace treaty signed at Camp David by the Egyptian and Israel leaders aimed at restoring peace between the two nations. In the run-up to the signing of the treaty in 1979, key players like the US and the UN offered different reasons for the need to have the two nations live peacefully and enjoy cordial international relations. In responding to the key reasons for the Egypt-Israeli peace agreement that came out of the negotiations at Camp David, the report researches on the varied vital factors that pushed the Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat, and the then Israeli premier Menachem Begin to renew their diplomatic relations. Besides, the treatise looks at the key individuals who took part in the formulation of the agreement. Some of the prominent people are Gamal Abdel Nasser, Jimmy Carter, the United Nations, Henry Kissinger, and the then Israeli premier Menachem Begin. The research paper will approach the topic by discussing and analyzing the roles of Sadat in the entire process like his approach to alter Nasser's economic policies. In answering the question, the paper will also research on the role of the UN in influencing Egypt's political and economic alignment with the West and the Arab Nations. Besides, the report explores the events and issues that led to the treaty. Similarly, the paper analyses the roles of major players such as in the formulation and realization this treaty. The topic is important for international relations courses as it gives scholars and learners alike the historical approaches vital in formulating long-lasting peace, as well as the possible repercussions of such situations. In the conclusion, the report summarizes the entire

aspects of the paper, and opting for the popular reasons and benefits for signing the treaty. Even though analysts from the Arab Nations held that it was a setback as well as a mistake on Egypt's side, the conclusion will view the broad prospects of the treaty, such as the long-lasting peace between the two nations. The agreement had numerous positive impacts on the socio-economic and political aspects of the two nations.

Egypt's Limited Advantage

The ouster of Egypt from the League of Arab Nations created ripples within the political class. With Israel consolidating an iron-fist rule in the newly captured peninsula and other areas, Egypt's chances of military truce with Israel remained bleak. Combination of these factors and Egypt's insufficient support from the Arab nations further confined Egypt's prospects. Developing a new strategy for cohesive existence between the two nations remained the only viable option. With Israel enjoying military superiority over Egypt, Anwar Sadat harbored limited options. Negotiation and peaceful resolution offered the least expensive route to peace with Israel. It is for this reason that Anwar Sadat took the opportunity when the US and her allied forces instigated peaceful talks between the two countries.

The 1973 War between Egypt and Israel

After the 1967 battle of the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt's army looked weak and less superior. When Anwar Sadat visited Israel in an official tour, the league of Arab Nation expelled Egypt from the organization. Considering Anwar Sadat's visit as a betrayal to the Palestine and Arabs, Egypt received several sanctions. The oil rich Arab nation stopped funding her military while the United Soviet Socialist Republic remained

focused on countering US military structures.¹ Egypt literally lost all her allies. With all these difficulties, Egypt organized a surprise military invasion into Israel in 1973. Even though this invasion found Israel unawares, the retaliatory force organized to counter Egypt was fantastic. Israel won the battle further weakening the Egyptian forces. Egypt seemed out of ideas for a peaceful resolution and co-existence with Israel. Despite most Egyptians and Arabs growing with the conviction that Israel, deserve expulsion from the Middle East, the reality of Israel's durability and military superiority donned on Anwar Sadat.² Military options without the support of Arab Nations would mean another war lost. It is for this reason that Anwar Sadat developed soft spot for the US intervention.

UN Resolution 242 and 338

After the 1967 battle of Sinai Peninsula, the UN Security Council's obligation, to protect individual territories and develop a long lasting peace to the Middle East crisis increased. In the 1967 battle Israel took control of Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, and the West Bank from Jordan. Similarly, Syria's close ties with Egypt during this time cost her Golan Heights that became an Israel's area of jurisdiction after the war. With Israel's attitude of war and conquering of the Arab nations' areas of jurisdiction, the world powerful Security Council needed a head start for non-violence route to peaceful resolution. This resolution came up with several recommendations that aimed at developing amicable solutions to the Israel-Egypt crisis. These recommendations came amid serious threats from the Arab world. Egypt and her allies

¹. H Blum, *The Eve of Destruction: The Untold Story of the Yom Kippur War*, HarperCollins, New York, 2003, p. 49.

². J Connell & V Loeb, *King's Counsel: A Memoir of War, Espionage, and Diplomacy in the Middle East*, W.W. Norton, New York, 2011, p. 127.

openly declared total war and destruction of Israel. Even though the 242 resolutions recognized sovereignty and vilified absolute aggression into internationally recognized boundaries, they considered Israel's capture of the three areas as a form of self-defense against Egypt's invasion.³

Yom Kippur war compromised Egypt and Syria's commitment towards the UN Resolution 242 of 1967 that required peaceful negotiation of boundary differences among warring states as Gold denotes.⁴ The 1967 resolution developed a conditional statement of warring parties to avoid and halt military hostilities. Egypt and Syria failed to comply. With inadequate implementation of the Resolution 242, Israel in a reaction to Arab attacks, engaged her military details. With the international community divided on what steps to take against the Arab Nations, Israel's military capability continued to dwindle even though it had the ability to eliminate the leading neighbors. Compelled by the fatalities in the war, America Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger led a delegation to the USSR to compel the Arab Nations and Israel to reach a compromise. Even though this resolution and peace talks created cohesive relationship between Israel, Egypt, and Jordan, Lebanon remained relatively adamant. With Egypt's president showing the will to develop a ceasefire between his country and Egypt, a prerequisite for peaceful negotiation arose.⁵

³. CD Smith, , *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 8th edn, Bedford/St. Martins, Boston, MA, 2013, p. 89.

⁴. D Gold, *Israel's Right to Secure Boundaries: Four Decade since UN Security Council Resolution 242: The Proceedings of a Conference Held in Jerusalem, June 4, 2007*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Jerusalem, 2009, p. 22.

⁵. B Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999*, Knopf, New York, 1999, p. 72.

International Community Pressure

Understanding the drivers of the peace pact between Egypt and Israel requires the in depth analysis of the role of international community. During this period, the US's close ties with Israel based on Israel's insurgency against the Arab world continued to rise. These ties however, compromised the US's relationship with her Arab oil suppliers. US complete support of the Israel's war against the Arabs presented a situation that would compromise Egypt's economic ties with the Arab oil producers. In order to protect her interests, the US organized peace talks with the Arab nations to reach a compromise. These talks held in Geneva to develop round table settlement of the boundary wars in the Middle East presented an opportunity for the warring countries to table their grievances. Telhami, in his analysis of the scenario presented in these talks argues that the talks presented the Arab nations with a great advantage to develop an amiable solution to the conflict.⁶ This, Telhami claims, remained possible given the number of Arab nations involved in the talks. It is for this reason that Israel pulled out of the Geneva talks to initiate bilateral talks with individual countries. The role of international community remains evident in developing an amicable ground for Israel's bargain in the talks. The bilateral talk came during a period of relaxed boundary stance from both Israel and Egypt.

Henry Alfred Kissinger's Role in Camp David Accords

As the secretary of state for the Carter administration, Henry Kissinger played an integral in the negotiation and signing of the Camp David Accords. The peace pact signing began with Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy that acted as an intermediary and

⁶. S Telhami, *The Camp David Accords a Case of International Bargaining*, Columbia UP, New York, 2001, p. 10.

peace broker between Egypt and Israel. Driven by the desire to dissociate Egyptian policy from the crisis, Kissinger aimed at developing a sustainable political relationship between Egypt and Israel. For the Syrian case, Kissinger remained relatively in support of Israel's hostile stance on the Syrian activities on her land. Kissinger, with his relatively neutral stance on the Egypt-Israel crisis provided a starting for the negotiating parties. The shuttle diplomacy took place in a series of small confidence building sessions within the warring parties before the eventual invitation to the Camp David negotiation table. In this confidence building Kissinger reaffirmed the support of Israel' insurgency against the Egyptian raid but maintained that the Sinai Peninsula existed in Egypt's' territory thus Israel had the obligation of returning the peninsula to Egyptian authority. Even though the shuttle diplomacy offered little help to the crisis, it provided a starting point for President Carter led negotiations in 1978.

Sadat's Personal Initiative

After the Second World War, Britain handed India independence but failed to hand over the Suez Canal to the Egyptian authorities. With Egypt's government failure to marshal the force and develop a comprehensive governance structures created animosity between the ruling class, the landowners, and the populations. The resultant situation further created instability with King Faruq rule. All these factors followed by the loss of the Israel-Arab war between 1947 and 1949, further exposed Egypt into a state of continuous crisis. It was during this time that, Gamal Abdel Nasser and thirteen other junior officers, often known as the "Fourteen Free Officers" set up a coup de tat that seemed to revamped the older regime into a stable economy. In order to execute this act, Nasser with this group of reformist and relatively moderate Muslims developed a

series of equality measures within the land ownership structures to reduce the disparities stemmed in place by the previous regimes⁷.

Nasser and the thirteen counterparts hailed from the local villages composed of alienated and politically marginalized peasant proprietors, minor government employees, and petty merchants. Even though some of the supported of this course hailed from the relatively able middle class, the fourteen free officers staged and equalization goal that aimed at wealth distribution, equal representation, and improvement of the democratic space⁸. To the Muslims extremists, he represented a show of support and diversion to the western culture, thus an insult to the Muslim doctrines. Free officers based their military coup on six points aimed at destruction of the British rule in the country, elimination of the political leaders in Egypt who showed support for the British rule, and pushing out the culture of feudalism. Similarly, the group aimed at establishment of a social justice system devoid of influence from the political class, devolution of resources from centralized control, creation of a strong cohesive army with patriotic outlook, and improvement of democratic and civil rights of the marginalized Egyptian populations. From all these undertaking, Nasser as the head of the group that later formed the Revolutionary Command Council showed a series of moderation and readiness for compromising blood shade for the sake of peace and development. Despites this group lacking an original political or military ideology, its basic goal aimed and creating equality, improving the lives of the marginalized communities, and creating a society with uttermost respect to human rights and

⁷7. WL Clevend & M Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Westview Press, Central Avenue, Boulder, 2009, p. 303.

⁸8. WL Clevend & M Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Westview Press, Central Avenue, Boulder, 2009, p. 308.

democratic space. This background on the rise of Nasser shows an innate driver for creation of peace and development in Egypt thus stands high chances of playing a great role in Nasser's engagement in the talks with Israel over their conflicts⁹.

According to Bickerton and Klausner, several factors compelled Anwar Sadat to develop a moderate stand with Israel's durability and occupation of the Middle East.¹⁰ After his army failed to capture and regain Sinai Peninsula in two military invasions, it became clear to Sadat that a military option remained bleak and impossible. This coupled with pan-Arabic interests from allied states created difficulty for Anwar Sadat led Egypt to reach a compromise with Israel. With a failed Geneva framework, it remained evident to Sadat the Israel' threat needed a peaceful bilateral negotiation. Similarly, Anwar Sadat felt Egypt's religious and historical de facto control of the Arab world remained under threat thus the US presented the a better ally for economic and political stability. Even though the US-Egypt relationship remained relatively unofficial, the USSR showed clear indication of disengagement in the Egypt and Israel crisis.¹¹ This presented a working field for both parties who looked uncomfortable with dealing with the Soviets hence diversion towards the US.

Nasser, brought up from a relatively humble background developed an attitude bias to socialism in the management and development of the Egyptian economy. With the help from the thirteen other Free Officers' unit, Nasser established a system that

⁹9. WL Clevend & M Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Westview Press, Central Avenue, Boulder, 2009, p. 314.

¹⁰10. IJ Bickerton & CL Klausner, *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 5th edn, Pearson Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, N.J., 2007, p. 77.

¹¹11. W Laqueur, *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, 6th edn, Penguin, New York, 2001, p. 54.

created a state of equality and equity in distribution of national and state resources. The Charter and the National Constitution approved in 1962, created an Egypt with a rejuvenated population aiming at achieving freedom, socialism, and unity. Through the Arab Socialist Union, Nasser and his allies ensured strong bondage between Egypt and the Arab states¹². Therefore, when the league of Arab Nations expelled Egypt from the union due to Nasser's relatively moderate attitude towards the US, the Camp David accords provided Nasser with the opportunity to reaffirm his commitment to securing Egypt at all cost. Developing a working relationship with Israel, an enemy of the League of Arab Nations, helped Nasser take back the Sinai Peninsula Israel conquered in 1967.

The Camp David Negotiations

Even though the talks took place at a relatively luxurious setting in Maryland, several authors of the proceedings of this historical activity, like Geddes argue that the process took place in a concentrated, secluded, and domineering set up.¹³ According to Hinton, the talks that began with one-on-one talks between the mediator and individual warring parties came into series of standstills given the inadequate trust and individual mistakes.¹⁴ Tension arose when Jimmy Carter, the mediator, leaked to Israel the talking points presented by the Egypt's government.¹⁵ Egypt felt betrayed and disrespected further derailing the talks. However, with consistent persuasion from the mediator and

¹²12. WL Clevend & M Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Westview Press, Central Avenue, Boulder, 2009, p. 320.

¹³. L Geddes, *A Documentary History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Praeger, Bloomington, Ind., 1991, p. 31.

¹⁴. CA Hinton, *Camp David Accords*, Eagle Eds., Bowie, Md., 2004, p. 69.

¹⁵. D Kurtzer & S Lasensky, *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: American Leadership in the Middle East*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., 2008, p. 70.

revelation to Egypt, the factors that Israel looked forward to compromising, the talks managed to get back to its feet.

Hans Morgenthau's Five Prerequisites of Compromise appeared during this talks especially from Israel's side for example the will to give Sinai Peninsula to Egypt.¹⁶ This move falls in the principle of giving up the shadow of worthless rights for issues of greater benefits. Israel's conquest of Sinai offered the country insufficient benefits apart from the show of military prowess. However, for Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula represented an historical and cultural asset that needed saving. From Hans' perspective, Israel's willingness to compromise her occupation aimed at neutralizing Egypt, thus earning a relatively better advantage. Similarly, the concessions to hand over Sinai Peninsula to Egypt help Israel divert international attention from her war with Palestine.¹⁷

Conclusion

In retrospect, the Camp David's agreement had many players; it had numerous consequences on the relation between Egypt and the US, as well as Egypt and the Arab Nations. Players like Henry Kissinger, Anwar Sadat, Jimmy Carter, and Menachem Begin played key roles in ensuring political stability between Israel and Egypt. Notably, the Nobel Peace Prize committee strengthened their appreciation of the peaceful treaty when they awarded Begin and Anwar Sadat a joint peace price. Despite all these positive advances, the Arab world remained adamant in appreciating Israel's occupation of the Middle East. Even though Islamic extremists viewed the agreement as

¹⁶. LZ Eisenberg & N Caplan, *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace Patterns, Problems, Possibilities*, Indiana UP, Bloomington, Ind., 1998, p. 63.

¹⁷. WB Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*, Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1986, p. 21.

a betrayal to the doctrines of the Arabian culture, and went on to assassinate Sadat, the Camp David accord offered a relatively effective solution to the war between Israel and Egypt.

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