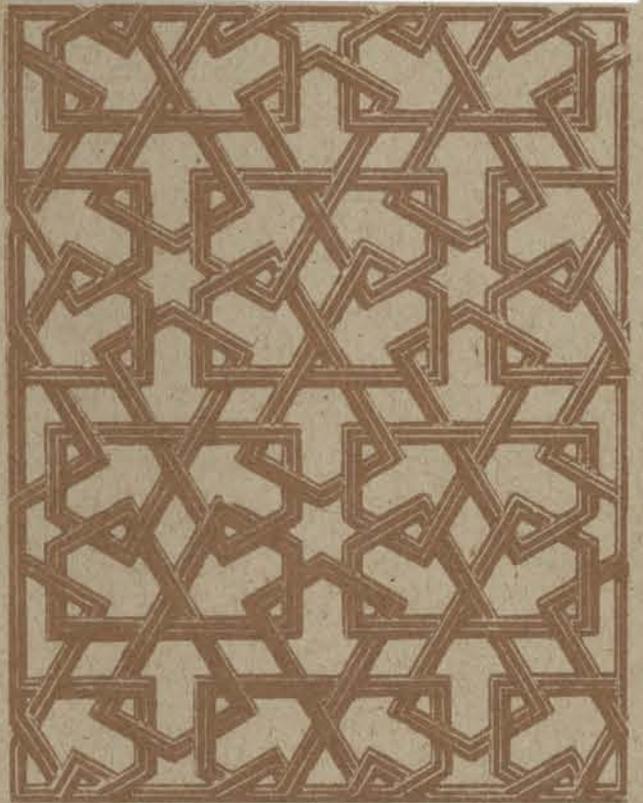




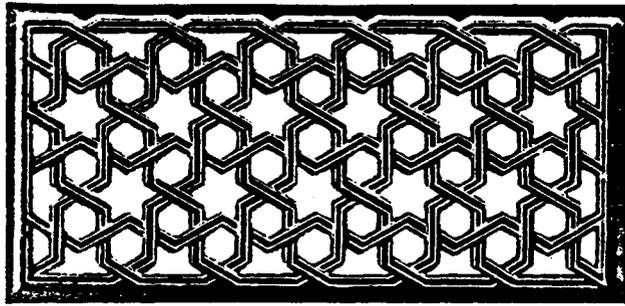
POLICY FOCUS

**THE VINDICATION OF SADAT
IN THE ARAB WORLD**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The late President Anwar al-Sadat appeared to have lost much respect in the eyes of Egyptians and in the Arab world by the time of his assassination in 1981. Only in the past three years has the Arab world revised its negative image of Sadat and realized the foresight and enduring relevance of his policies.

As president from 1970 to 1981, Sadat took bold steps to consolidate his power, affect profound changes in Egypt's political structure and revamp the country's domestic and foreign policies. First, Sadat launched a liberalization of Egypt's economy that cost him much public support. Second, he took measured steps to democratize Egypt's political system. Third, Sadat seized opportunities to move away from Egypt's traditional alliances with the Eastern Bloc and radical Arab regimes and shift towards the West. Fourth, Sadat sought to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict through "historical compromise." This last effort, culminating in the Camp David Accords of 1978, led to an Arab boycott of Egypt, the suspension of Egypt's membership in the Arab League and Sadat's eventual assassination in 1981.

At least four phases can be identified in the ten-year process by which Egyptians and Arabs revised their image of Sadat. From 1981 to 1983 Egyptians and other Arabs continued to level harsh criticism and express outrage over his policies. In the mid-1980s anger toward Sadat began to dissipate as Jordan restored relations with Egypt. Following that restoration, an Arab summit held in Amman in mid-1987 passed a resolution that led the other Arab states to restore relations with Egypt over the following two years. Then, in 1988, Jordan, Yemen and Egypt formed the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), Egypt regained its membership in the Arab League, and the league's headquarters returned from Tunis to Cairo.

While the formal reinstatement of Egypt in the Arab fold occurred gradually between 1987 and 1990, the Gulf crisis provided the real rehabilitation of Sadat in the Arab world, as Arabs who participated in the coalition against Iraq developed a newfound appreciation for Sadat's policies of alignment with the West, reconciliation with Israel and realistic focus on the concrete interests of his country. This new awareness in the Arab world is currently unfolding in at least two areas—the quest for democracy and peace.

Syria's recent policy re-orientations bear some resemblance to Sadat's policy changes after 1973. Assad's economic policy following the Gulf crisis is similar to Sadat's bold economic steps taken after the October War. After the Iran-Iraq War, and more vividly in the aftermath of the Gulf War, Assad embarked on a course of improved relations with the West, also following in Sadat's footsteps. Although there are some tentative parallels between Assad's policy of controlled pluralism and Sadat's own democratization initiatives, it is not yet clear that Assad has decided on Sadat's course of "full peace" with Israel.

The recent mutual recognition agreement between Israel and the PLO, and the opportunities for future peacemaking it ushers in, can be said to be the ultimate vindication of Anwar al-Sadat.

THE VINDICATION OF SADAT IN THE ARAB WORLD

INTRODUCTION

As much as the late Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat was hailed in the West as a man of peace, he was condemned by many fellow Arabs as having betrayed their most sacred cause, "the liberation of Palestine." From the moment his plane touched down at Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport in November 1977 to the moment of his tragic death on October 6, 1981, Sadat was a pariah among fellow Arab heads of state. His country was ousted from official Arab gatherings, and the Arab League headquarters was moved from Cairo to Tunis.

By 1987, ten years after his historic trip to Jerusalem, Egypt was rehabilitated back into the Arab fold, but its late former president was not. Only during the past three years has the Arab world hesitantly revised its image of President Sadat. To be sure, the man still has many sharp critics. But even these would grudgingly concede that Sadat was a commendable Arab leader and a statesman; that in many ways he was ahead of his time. His few longstanding Arab supporters now feel vindicated. They would go as far as to claim that before any other Arab or non-Arab leader, Sadat had anticipated the genesis of a "new world order" in the making; and he had acted accordingly in all his major policies—domestically, regionally and globally.

The saga of Sadat's rehabilitation is more than that of a leader's legacy being vindicated. In one sense it is part of a process of national "growing up." Any fair observer following the current Middle East peace process, from Madrid to Washington, with a former "leftist Arab revolutionary" sitting at the negotiating table with ardent Israeli "right-wingers," must conclude that Arabs and Israelis have come a long way. The great risks that Sadat took some fifteen years ago when he made his historic journey to Israel, and even the ultimate price he paid—his own life some four years later—seem in retrospect to have been worth it. Sadat has indeed expedited the process of national maturation of both Arabs and Israelis alike.

This author was among the sharpest critics of the late Egyptian president in his lifetime. My criticism of Sadat's policies, however, was not of the name-calling variety that was so common among his other Arab detractors. It may have been the quality of that criticism which prompted the late president to invite me to a three hour audience on August 31, 1981 at his summer resort of Muntazah in Alexandria. The meeting was attended by Mrs. Jihan Sadat. It was a stormy audience. Mrs. Sadat told me at a private lunch immediately following the audience, not to be hurt by the president's spells of anger, and that his comments were not personal but were his plea for understanding by Arab intellectuals who had been unfair to him. I left the presidential compound that day unconvinced by Sadat's arguments but more sympathetic toward his motives. Five weeks later he was assassinated. Several people in Egypt and the Arab world learned about my audience with the slain president but not of its content. It was only on the tenth anniversary of his assassination that I released

much of the content, as I had recorded it a few hours after the audience on August 31, 1981 back at my house in Cairo. It was published in a series of articles in *al-Ahali*, a leftist opposition newspaper which had crusaded against Sadat for many years during his lifetime and after his death. The eagerness of *al-Ahali* to publish and syndicate the articles to other Arab leftist papers outside Egypt was in itself a vivid testimony of the change afoot. A few weeks later a right wing publishing house with Muslim Brotherhood leanings—also sharp critics of Sadat—asked permission to reprint the same articles with an introduction in book form, which I granted. The enthusiasm of both the leftist newspaper and the rightist publishing house were part of the about-face in which former detractors of Sadat are now engaged.

As social scientists, we have been trained to de-emphasize the role of single individuals in the making of history. Primacy is always given to “structural forces.” As true a rule as that may be, Anwar Sadat must be counted as an exception. Sadat definitely changed the historical course of the peoples of the Middle East; and may have contributed to the historical change of the world at large.

THE RISE AND FALL OF SADAT

No other Arab leader in contemporary history has generated as much controversy as President Sadat. One day in the month of October 1973 marked the high point of his political career in the eyes of all Arabs. The same day eight years later, October 6, 1981, marked his literal and metaphorical downfall in the same Arab eyes. During the eight years separating the two October days, President Sadat had alienated one constituency after another inside Egypt and throughout the Arab world. Despite early warning signs of his steady sliding from the apex of Arab glory, Sadat continued on his course, building his own grand vision.

At the time, Sadat's vision was hailed by the West, but hardly shared or even understood by his own people. When he was assassinated, most Egyptians felt not so much grief but deep sorrow for a leader who had gone astray. Other Arabs felt the assassination was an act of “divine justice” retributed for betraying the “sacred cause of Palestine.”

Ten years after the assassination, the pendulum has moved back to the center. There are more Egyptians and Arabs now who see Sadat as a great and prescient leader. In this paper, we concentrate only on the full cycle of public discourse over President Sadat—not so much on his performance in office, but on the perception and evaluation of that performance by the spokesmen of salient socio-political forces in Egypt and the Arab world. Such spokesmen broadly constitute the Arab “intelligentsia” and occupy the arena that interprets the march of events and shapes public opinion. They comprise political activists, writers, academics, journalists and other professionals. Being the most outspoken in society does not necessarily mean that they do so on behalf of the majority of their own people or even their own immediate constituency. And, in fact, we will discover in the case of Sadat that he was more in tune with more of his people than we were led to believe by the Arab intelligentsia who crowded the arena of public discourse.

THE RISE OF SADAT

Most Egyptians and Arabs received Sadat's succession into the presidency

in a lukewarm manner. The sudden death of the charismatic Gamal Abdel Nasser on September 28, 1970 was bound to make any successor pale by comparison. However, the fact that Sadat was a fellow Free Officer in the 1952 revolution, and handpicked for the vice-presidency by Nasser himself in December 1969 made his nomination for the presidential succession acceptable to most Egyptians. But because he had not occupied any office of great significance between 1952 and 1969, most Arabs knew very little about him, and most Egyptians thought of him as a harmless caretaker. Other significant contenders for power among Nasser's inner circle thought of Sadat as a figurehead who they could manipulate while continuing to run the country themselves.¹

Obviously Sadat sensed these impressions and designs, and may have reinforced them during his early months in office. As it turned out, Sadat embarked on a subtle course of consolidating his power. Feeling reasonably sure of himself by May 1971, he had his first showdown with top Nasserite figures who were still occupying strategically sensitive offices—ministries of defense, information, the head of intelligence, speakership of the parliament and the leadership of Egypt's single political party, the Arab Socialist Union (ASU). With all having been arrested on May 15th, and subsequently brought to trial on charges of conspiracy to overthrow him, Sadat had managed in one strike to outfox and remove all his potential rivals.²

A year later, in July 1972, Sadat took a second daring step in consolidating his power, this time on the foreign policy front, *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union, Egypt's long-standing strategic ally. After the Arab defeat by Israel in 1967, more Soviet advisors, military and civilians, poured into Egypt to beef up the country's military capabilities in the hope of liberating the Sinai and other occupied territories. Since his showdown with top Nasserites, some reputed to be strongly pro-Soviet, Sadat was suspicious of the USSR and its heavy presence in Egypt. Arming to guard his back and maximize his margin of geopolitical freedom, Sadat ordered some 15,000 Soviet experts to leave the country within a week.³

These two daring steps amazed Egyptians and other Arabs alike, and transformed Sadat's image into that of a daring man of action. However, the chief concern of Egyptians and Arabs was still not addressed—washing off the humiliation of the 1967 defeat and liberating Egyptian and Arab land. Sadat's earlier promises of making 1971 (and then 1972) the "year of decision" in the battle of liberation came and went with the promises unfulfilled. His public standing was steadily eroding on that score. Nasserites and other leftists began to stir public unrest, especially on university campuses. Sadat's short-term responses to this adverse street politics was to release thousands of Muslim Brothers, incarcerated during Nasser's regime, and to leave them free to organize and combat the Nasserites and leftists. This tactic was effective in the short term and yielded Sadat enough breathing room for his third major strike.

The October War of 1973 was Sadat's moment of glory. The crossing of the Suez Canal by Egyptian forces was a surprise to Israel and the world, but most of all to Egyptians themselves. The overall Arab performance, well coordinated, both militarily and diplomatically, was unprecedented in the history of the

¹ Mohammad Anwar al-Sadat, *In Search of Identity* (New York: Harper Row, 1978) p. 205.

² Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-224.

³ Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 1295.

Arab-Israeli conflict. Sadat took much of the credit, and emerged from the war as a true champion in the eyes of Egyptians and other Arabs alike. Despite a notable reversal in the course of the fighting, namely the Israeli counter-crossing of the Suez Canal, the war was hailed as an Arab victory. It was a redemption of Sadat's leadership in Egypt, and no less a redemption of Egypt's leadership role in the Arab world.

DE-NASSERIZATION OF EGYPT

The "October victory," as it came to be called in the Arab-Egyptian media, not only consolidated Sadat's position inside the country, but also gave him a new legitimacy of his own. In his first three years in office (1970-73), Sadat still derived his legitimacy from that of Nasser. He presented himself as an extension, a continuation and a guardian of Nasser's heritage and that of the 1952 revolution in general.

After the October victory, Sadat began to recast the recent past and shape the present in all his own ways. Thus the coup against his rivals in May 1971 was to be named the "Corrective May Revolution." An "October generation" was to replace the "July generation" in key positions of the state, with the major exception of Sadat himself, naturally. A newly drafted "October Paper," replaced the 1961 Socialist Charter, and a "constitutional" legitimacy was to replace the "revolutionary" legitimacy which prevailed from 1952 to 1973.

As it turned out, this was more than a mere change of political vocabulary, but the first of the dramatic changes in the following four years, from 1974 to 1978, which added up to a nearly complete "de-Nasserization" of Egypt and the substitution of a new and different Sadatist vision, encompassing Egypt's socio-economic system, and its regional and international policies. The changes brought about by Sadat have proven to be as profound as those earlier changes effected by Nasser's 1952 revolution. But while most of Nasser's changes had dissipated by the late 1970s, only ten years after his departure from power, those of Sadat have, to date, proven to be more resilient and tenacious. They are all still in effect, nearly two decades after their initiation.

The dramatic shifts from Nasser's to Sadat's vision fall under four major policy areas: the Open-Door Economic Policy; controlled democratization; alignment with the West; and peace with Israel. While each policy shift was initiated separately and gradually until 1978, they have added up to a cohesive four-pillared vision and a strategy that has dismantled Nasser's vision.

The Open-Door Economic Policy: *Infitah*

Carefully crafted, the Open-Door Economic Policy (ODEP) was officially proclaimed in February 1974, only four months after the 1973 October War, not to "...undo Egypt's socialism, but to invigorate the public sector through competition; to attract Arab and foreign capital, and modern technology and management systems." The key instrument was Law 43 of 1974, which provided for setting up joint-venture companies with Egyptian partnership of no less than 51 percent. Shortly after, a series of presidential and ministerial decrees complemented Law 43 by easing banking controls and easing travel restrictions, permitting Egyptians to work abroad and remit money home, issuing a five-year tax exemption and allowing the transfer of profits of joint-venture companies. Many of the privileges accorded to foreign capital in Law 43 of 1974 were extended to Egyptian private capital in 1977. The latter was

further permitted to operate widely in previously restricted areas such as health, education and land reclamation.

Meanwhile, the government began to gradually reduce its subsidies of "non-basic" goods and services in the hope of streamlining Egypt's national accounts. But despite the ODEP, remittances by Egyptians working abroad, massive Arab and U.S. aid, substantial revenues from restored Sinai oil fields, tourism and a re-opened Suez Canal, by 1977 Egyptian foreign debt continued to rise and government finance fell heavily into deficit.⁴

As it turned out, much of the early impact of the ODEP reflected itself in untamable imports of consumer goods, geared to the more well-to-do Egyptians and a growing expatriate community. Glaring income and life-style differentials became too conspicuous for a majority of Egyptians, especially in urban areas which had been used to Nasser's austerity and equity policies. Thus when Sadat's regime tried to slash the budget in January 1977 by further reducing public subsidies on some basic food items, riots broke out in all major urban areas. Sadat was forced to call in the army to restore law and order; and to cancel the subsidy cuts.⁵

Rather than retract his ODEP, however, Sadat opted for continuation through a more gradual phasing out of subsidies and by external borrowing. When he took office in 1971, Egypt's debt was less than \$1.5 billion. When he was assassinated in 1981, Egypt's external debt was around \$29 billion.

ODEP endeared Sadat to one constituency and lost him another. He gained the support of the old Egyptian landed bourgeoisie, the *nouveau riche*, Egyptians living abroad (some two million by the late 1970s), and actual or potential Arab investors. Also, would-be Western allies were heartened by the intentions of the policy if not by its manner of implementation. The same policy cost Sadat a bigger but less organized constituency of public sector, government employees and others on fixed incomes.

What happened with ODEP would happen with Sadat's other three major policy shifts. Each would initially be couched in careful non-provocative terms, would be well-received in the early stages, and would then cause a societal sifting and sorting of protagonists and antagonists. Yet to his credit, though he may have softened some measures of each policy in the face of mounting opposition, he never reversed his course.

Controlled Democratization

The second pillar in Sadat's vision was the gradual democratization of Egypt's political system. Whether truly intended or not, he made it one of the outstanding issues of the purge of his Nasserite pro-Soviet rivals in May 1971. Accusing them of "authoritarian-totalitarian" tendencies and practices, Sadat blamed his Nasserite pro-Soviet rivals for having blocked the 1952 revolution from fulfilling the sixth objective of its declared agenda.⁶ Sadat claimed that those rivals had prevented Nasser himself from carrying out the March 28, 1968 declaration, intended in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat, to make the

⁴ Galal Amin, "Transformation to Infitah: External Factors," in *The Infitah: The Roots, the Results, and the Future* (Cairo: El-Markez al-Arabi Lil Dirassat wa el-Nahr, 1982) [Arabic].

⁵ "The Masses of January between the Government and the Left," *al-Tali'a*, February 1977.

⁶ Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp. 206, 209.

regime more accountable to the Egyptian people.⁷

Thus, by riding the democratization issue and rooting it in the original 1952 revolutionary platform, Sadat managed to isolate his adversaries and to position himself on a moral high-ground. This enabled him to win a sizable constituency of the new middle class and the old upper class liberals. After the May 1971 purge, however, Sadat pleaded for a short postponement of this promised political pluralism until after the war of liberation against Israel.

Soon after the October War, Sadat began a gradual easing of political controls. In a dramatic and symbolic act, with television on the scene, he literally took the first ax of one of Egypt's notorious political prisons, Torra, and released thousands of political detainees, mostly Muslim Brothers. He invited tens of political exiles back to Egypt, and removed the legal ban on many old politicians, enabling them to resume the exercise of their political rights. Similar measures were decreed to end property sequestrations for political reasons, to bring to trial those accused of gross violations of human rights during the Nasser era and to remove press censorship.

Political pluralism in the form of a multi-party system, however, was to wait until 1976. When finally enacted, the multi-party system was limited to three political parties—left, right and center. Sadat chose to lead the centrist Egypt party, and two of his fellow former Free Officers led the other two.⁸ Contrived political engineering though it was, most Egyptians welcomed the experiment after nearly a quarter century of a single party system that had been at best a mere “mobilizer” and at worst a rubber stamp.

Later in the same year, competitive parliamentary elections were held, which were judged by most Egyptians as fair; several opposition figures won seats in the People's Assembly. In the following year, 1977, two additional parties were given legal permits, the Labor Socialist Party (LSP), and the New Wafd Party (NWP). All five parties were entitled by law to have their own newspapers, and a healthy seed of democratic life began to grow; indeed open dissent was commendably tolerated by the Sadat regime. While the Muslim Brothers, the Nasserites and the Communists were denied permits to form their own parties, many of them were welcomed to the ranks of the already legalized parties. The Muslim Brothers were able to re-issue their weekly *Al-Dawa'*.

However, after his historic trip to Israel in November 1977, President Sadat began to show signs of impatience with the opposition parties which deplored his peace initiative. This impatience was to grow steadily during the next four years. He eventually dissolved the People's Assembly, and held a plebiscite amending the constitution so as to make opposition to the new peace arrangement with Israel—the Camp David Accords, and later the treaty—illegal. In the subsequent parliamentary elections, none of the known public figures who had opposed the peace initiative were to win a single seat in the People's Assembly. By September 1981, the margin of open legal dissent had greatly diminished. But Sadat continued to uphold his policy of political pluralism, at least in principle—no newly established political party was dissolved even when he arrested several party leaders on September 3-5, 1981.

⁷ Sadat, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁸ *Al-Musawwar*, March 19, 1976.

Alignment with the West

Sadat's biographers have noted his early admiration of the West—from fascist Europe to dazzling America. Beginning in his adolescence, he was an avid reader of Western history and literature. The modern Egyptian ruler whom he most admired was Khedive Ismael, who had intended to make Egypt a "part of Europe." But like many in his generation, Sadat was ambivalent toward the West, whose other face was imperialist, exploitative and humiliating to Egypt and the Arab world.

The young would-be Free Officers had joined many radical political movements, including secret Communist organizations. But Sadat's early choices never showed any Marxist or even Socialist inclinations. It was anomalous for Sadat to be part of a regime that felt compelled to ally itself so closely with the Soviet Union and to espouse socialism. Hence it was not surprising that he was predisposed to move away from both whenever he could. When he ascended to the Egyptian presidency, many of his early decisions were underlined by this impulse. Henry Kissinger was puzzled, and confessed that he never understood such moves by Sadat at the time—the purge of pro-Soviets in the ruling elite and the expulsion of 15,000 Soviet experts at a time when Egypt still seemed to badly need Soviet support.⁹

Sadat's shifting of Egypt's strategic alignment was gradual and multifaceted. First, he weakened and almost eliminated the pro-Soviet elements in the Egyptian establishment. Second, he discreetly strengthened his ties with pro-Western Arab and Middle Eastern regimes—namely Saudi Arabia and Iran. Third, he established direct, private channels with top decision-makers in key Western capitals, especially in the United States.¹⁰ Meanwhile, he kept his formal links with Egypt's traditional allies—the Soviets, the Chinese and radical Arab regimes. He had hoped that this elaborate diplomatic footwork would break the stalemate in the Middle East without war. Several of his overtures for dignified compromise, however, fell on deaf Western and Israeli ears between February 1971 and October 1973.¹¹ When he concluded that he was not taken seriously, Sadat went to war on October 6, 1973.

It is clear from the accounts of all sides during and immediately after the October War that Sadat was eager to move further away from Egypt's traditional alliances with the Eastern Bloc and radical Arab regimes.¹² As such opportunities were offered, Sadat quickly grabbed them.

Shifting Egypt's global alignment was not an easy matter. Twenty years of strategic linkages with the Soviets and pervasive radicalism had created an Egyptian political culture which was antithetical to what Sadat envisioned for Egypt and possibly the rest of the Arab world. An analysis of his public speeches indicates his elaborate, gradual, but steady, attempt to alter the political culture which had grown so anti-Western in the Nasser years.

Sadat's political discourse introduced new concepts such as "social peace," "legitimate richness," "prosperity," "the need to catch up with the advanced world," and to "acquire modern science and technology" and the legitimate dream for "every Egyptian to have his own villa and car." After the October

⁹ Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 1295-96.

¹⁰ Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 1292-95; 1299-1300.

¹¹ Sadat, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

¹² Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-92.

War, he began to explicitly poke fun at the "socialism of poverty," "class conflict" and "exploiting the suffering of the masses."¹³ In other words, as he discretely pursued his geopolitical shift, Sadat was also preparing the Egyptian public for accepting an alternative domestic vision to coincide with it. For the vision he was perpetuating could only materialize in an atmosphere of internal social peace, regional peace and normal relations with the West, especially the United States. The latter, as Egyptians were repeatedly told after 1973, "...holds 99 percent of the cards for a Middle East peace."¹⁴

It was only in 1973-74 that the United States finally began to appreciate Sadat's moves for what they were, shifts in strategy and not merely in tactics. To the extent that he felt such reciprocity, Sadat spared no time or effort in moving Egypt into the Western camp. He was still to pay lip service to the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), of which Egypt was a founder, as well as to Egypt's traditional allies. But with every year of Sadat's rule, the pro-Western shift was becoming more irreversible. Even though there was a tremendous component of personal conviction in his pro-Western leanings, Sadat also recognized the pragmatic dimensions of this strategic shift towards the West. In private conversations he intimated his belief that the Soviet Union was doomed to collapse.

Reconciliation with Israel

The fourth pillar of Sadat's vision was to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict through what he called "a historical compromise." He believed that the conflict would never be settled by war, no matter how many times either side won or lost.¹⁵ Meanwhile, he saw the continuation of the armed conflict as blocking the development of the entire region, but especially that of Egypt, on whose shoulders rested the leadership of the Arab side. Furthermore, Sadat saw the continuation of the conflict as a stumbling block in his quest for aligning Egypt with the West.

Rightly or wrongly, such articles of faith underlined much of Sadat's effort and approach in search of a Middle East peace. The problem with this part of Sadat's vision is that for the first three years of his rule, he could not find serious takers on the other side. It took the October War in 1973 to impress the West of his seriousness. It took another dramatic journey to Jerusalem in 1977 to have the same effect on the Israelis, and an additional two years before a peace treaty was finally concluded between Egypt and Israel in 1979.

For the West and then Israel, to appreciate Sadat's intentions was only half of the monumental task he undertook. The other, more difficult part was to persuade the Egyptian people and the other Arabs. Since the 1940s, Egypt had led the Arab world in the struggle with the Zionists and bore the brunt of the protracted conflict. Its powerful media as well as the tens of thousands of its teachers throughout the Arab world had conditioned the masses to believe that the struggle for the liberation of Palestine was sacred; that the fight was not only against Israel and Zionism but against the Western imperialists who wanted to keep the Arab nation weak, divided, backward and exploited.

Sadat saw it the other way around: as long as the conflict festered, the Arabs

¹³ *Al-Musawwar*, March 15, 1974.

¹⁴ Sadat, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

¹⁵ Sadat, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

would remain weak, divided and backward. Hence he was keen on reversing the process. Sadat recognized that at a minimum he had to win over or at least neutralize Egyptian public opinion. Taking advantage of the tremendous stress and strain felt by Egyptians since 1967, and relatively free of the psychic stigma of defeat after the October victory, Sadat's media powerfully invoked their deep yearning for peace and stability. At times the same media did not hesitate to stir up Egyptian chauvinism *vis-à-vis* other Arabs. Slogans such as "Egypt First" and "Civilized Egypt" were flaunted in Sadat's media campaign.¹⁶

It was hard in the beginning to assess the impact of Sadat's media blitz for peace on Egypt's public opinion. But some six months after Sadat's visit to Israel and before the signing of the Camp David Accords, a public opinion survey was conducted by the Beirut-based Center for Arab Unity Studies in ten Arab countries including Egypt. While those who clearly opted for a peaceful settlement of the conflict with Israel in the entire Arab sample did not exceed 33 percent, the Egyptian figure was nearly 54 percent.¹⁷ (Whether it was Sadat's persuasiveness or the fact that those Egyptians were already disposed to feel this way, is hard to tell in the absence of any previous attitudinal studies of this kind.) It is safe to say that when Sadat went to Camp David in September 1978, his initiative enjoyed the support of most Egyptians. The organized opposition parties, however, were no less articulate or voiced *vis-à-vis* Sadat's campaign. In fact, it was so much the case that this opposition may have given the outside world the impression that most Egyptians were against Sadat's peace initiative.¹⁸

The story in the rest of the Arab world was markedly different. All Arab regimes formally repudiated Sadat's initiative and voted for a boycott and suspension of Egypt's membership in the Arab League.¹⁹ And as mentioned above, some 67 percent of other Arabs surveyed at the time were not yet ready for or disposed to a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The slow pace of progress in achieving an "honorable, equitable and comprehensive" settlement cost Sadat some of the earlier support he had from two Egyptian political parties—the Labor Socialist Party (LSP) and the Liberal Party (LP). Israel's raid on the Iraqi nuclear reactor in June 1981 also led to a sharp erosion of his support.²⁰

Like the other pillars of his vision, Sadat's campaign for a comprehensive Middle East peace fell far short of his original quest. But despite the repeated frustrations and disappointments caused as much by fellow Arab leaders as by the Israelis, and despite the costly price he personally as well as Egypt were paying in the Arab political arena, he remained unwavering in his quest until the end of his life.

¹⁶ Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-13.

¹⁷ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *Trends of Public Opinion Towards Arab Unity* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1985).

¹⁸ Lotfi Abdel Azim, "The Long Way after Camp David," *Al-Ahram al-Iqtisadi*, October 1, 1978.

¹⁹ *Al-Musawwar*, November, 1978.

²⁰ *Al-Sha'b*, June 22, 1981.

SADAT'S EGYPT AND THE ARAB WORLD

A significant dimension of the de-Nasserization of Egypt was its changing relationship with the rest of the Arab world. Despite the fact that Sadat had made an issue of his rivals' opposition to a proposed unification agreement with Libya early in 1971, he never seriously entertained any grand pan-Arab vision.²¹ Nasser's vision rested on the idea that the Arabs were one nation, divided by colonialism and subjected to the rule of reactionary regimes, imposed or supported by Western imperialism. In this vision Israel was an outpost of imperialism. Hence Nasser's declared agenda was to fight off Western imperialism, its clients and allies in the Arab world, and to struggle for the unification of the Arab homeland.

Sadat's approach to the rest of the Arab world was markedly different. While paying lip service to the "common Arab identity, destiny and interests," he took only the "interests" part of the slogan seriously. In this respect, Sadat was utterly pragmatic, not ideological or romantic as Nasser had been. He would cooperate with all Arab countries and regimes to the extent that they were willing, so long as there were benefits for Egypt. He shunned the Nasserite distinctions or classification of regimes as "progressive" and "reactionary." He abstained from meddling in their internal affairs, and was outraged if they tried to interfere in his.²²

With this pragmatic outlook, Sadat was able to fully cooperate with "radical" Syria, Libya and Algeria, as well as with "reactionary" Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states and Morocco, between 1970 and 1973. These across-the-board dealings enabled him to reap maximum benefits for Egypt at the time. He obtained substantial financial aid from the "reactionary" and enlisted their backing in his overtures toward the West. His close cooperation with the militant Arab regimes was meant to provide Egypt with additional potential military capabilities should he have found it necessary to go to war, and to soften any possible adverse Soviet reaction to his unfriendly measures. Thus the stage of maximum cooperation, which lasted from 1970 to 1973, coincided with his own need to consolidate his position domestically, his drive to enhance his options regionally, *vis-à-vis* Israel, and internationally—his quest to befriend the West.

As soon as that stage accomplished its limited objectives, Sadat restructured Egypt's Arab policy to suit the full-fledged vision of the four pillars discussed earlier. Thus his need for more Arab capital to enhance the Open-Door Economic Policy (ODEP), alignment with the West, and reconciliation with Israel made him clearly tilt in favor of pro-Western Arab regimes—no longer called "reactionary" or "conservative," but merely "brothers." While maintaining reasonable links with Syria in the second stage (1974-1977), his relations with other radical regimes were cooled off or even strained as in the cases of Libya and Iraq. Again, it is fair to say that this second phase of Sadat's Arab policy did accomplish its objectives.

The third stage (1977-1981) was one of total strain with virtually the entire Arab world. It coincided with Sadat's quest for the fourth pillar of his vision—reconciliation with Israel. Things did not go the way Sadat had hoped. His calculation was that at worst the Arab world would be politically divided over his peace initiative. He was keen on keeping good relations at least with Syria

²¹ Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-18.

²² *Al-Majallah*, June 19, 1981.

and Saudi Arabia—the only two Arab countries he visited on the eve of his historic journey to Israel to plead understanding or neutrality, if not outright support. Though Sadat could understand Syria's militant stand, which was a result of inter-Arab rivalry, to the end of his life Sadat never understood Saudi Arabia's hard line; hence his outrage at the Saudis.²³

The total Arab boycott of Sadat after Camp David would have hurt even more had it included a ban on Egyptians working in Arab countries—by then about 1.5 million Egyptians were working abroad and sending back \$2 billion in remittances annually—and had Egypt not been compensated by increased foreign aid from the West to make up for the termination of official Arab aid (about \$1 billion annually).²⁴ Partial vindication of Sadat toward the end of his life was provided by the peace plan proposed by Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia, which bore a striking resemblance to Sadat's original initiative, and by the fact that his radical foes (Syria, Libya, Iraq and the PLO) were in total disarray. Sadat's fuller vindication would have to wait some ten more years, long after his passing from the scene.

THE FALL OF SADAT

By 1980-81, President Sadat's popularity in Egypt and the Arab world was at an all time low. On the divisive issue of his peace initiative, even those Arabs who had given him the benefit of the doubt were utterly disappointed for at least two reasons. First, the deadline for the implementation of the second Camp David Accord regarding autonomy for the Palestinians in the occupied territories had come and gone without any progress.²⁵ It looked as if that accord would be shelved indefinitely, leaving the Palestinians in limbo; and thus lending credence to the charge that Sadat was in fact aiming for a separate, not a comprehensive, peace with Israel.

Second, a series of Israeli actions in 1981 seemed to the Arab world as grossly provocative and unjustifiably aggressive. The most dramatic of these were the stunning Israeli air raid on the Iraqi nuclear reactor near Baghdad in June, and another air raid on the Fakahani civilian district of Beirut.²⁶ These sorts of actions cast grave doubt on Israel's disposition for peaceful coexistence with its Arab neighbors. Moreover, coming shortly after a meeting in Sharm El-Sheikh between Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, these Israeli actions reflected most negatively on Sadat himself. At best, the Israeli actions made Sadat look like a fool, who had been easily deceived by his Israeli counterpart. At worst, it made him look like an accomplice with Israel against fellow Arabs. By mid-1981, Sadat became more isolated and discredited in the Arab world than ever.

On other Egypt-centered issues, Sadat's performance looked sluggish, confused or heavy-handed. The prosperity he had promised Egyptians by 1980 was nowhere in sight. Most of his fellow countrymen continued to suffer from the same hardships they had known in previous years. Their feeling of despair was deepened by glaring income differentials, the ebullient lifestyle of the few

²³ *Al-Siyasi*, August 24, 1980.

²⁴ *Al-Sha'b*, June 30, 1981.

²⁵ *Al-Musawwar*, April 13, 1979.

²⁶ *Al-Sha'b*, June 22, 1981.

at the top and rumors of massive corruption in high circles.²⁷ Discontent became widespread. Opposition parties echoed much of it loudly, but still peacefully and within legal bounds. Islamic activists, however, appropriated the social discontent, especially that of restless Egyptian youth, and escalated their expression of it in violent behavior.²⁸ In the spring and summer of 1981, the latter was equally directed against the government and Egypt's Coptic Christian minority.²⁹ By early September 1981, Sadat had become more isolated and discredited in Egypt than ever before.

True to his favored style of "shock-treatment" and his flair for the dramatic, Sadat reacted to his growing isolation and diminishing capability by striking back at all secular and religious opposition. Some 1,600 public opponents were arrested and jailed within a twenty-four hour period starting on the night of September 3, 1981. This mass arrest included key figures along the entire political spectrum—from the extreme right to the extreme left; Muslims and Copts; men and women; all age groups from twenty to eighty years old; students, professors, journalists, writers and other professionals. In a sense, and in one sensational strike, Sadat put Egypt's "political class" under arrest. He went on television on September 5th to announce that he had done it to spare Egypt a political and religious "sedition," and that soon all those placed under arrest would be charged and tried.³⁰

Contrary to his calculations, this time Sadat's isolation and discrediting took a quantum leap. While physically arresting the country's political class, Sadat was being morally arrested. Many observers contended that on September 5, 1981, Sadat had in fact issued his own political "death certificate." His final fall, physical death, would occur a month later, on October 6, 1981.

THE REHABILITATION

It took ten years before Sadat was to be rehabilitated in the eyes of most Egyptians and Arabs. The process entailed at least four identifiable phases: The first, lasting through 1983, was one of deepening rage and continuous incrimination—posthumous "character assassination." The second, in the mid-1980s, was one of dissipating anger. The third phase, in the late 1980s, was one of "forgetting and forgiving." The last phase, during the early 1990s, is one of redemption and appreciation.

Character Assassination

The first three years following the murder of Sadat witnessed not only a continuous criticism of his policies, but also a character assassination of Sadat, members of his immediate family and his friends. All kinds of accusations were leveled at them—ranging from personal decadence to nepotism and outright corruption. Compounding such accusations was the notorious silence of many of Sadat's former aides, spokesmen and propagandists. Worse still, was that some of them became instant "turncoats" even before the man's blood had

²⁷ *Al-Sha'b*, May 5, 1981.

²⁸ *Al-Ahram Iktisadi*, November 22, 1982.

²⁹ Nadia Farah, *Religious Strife in Egypt: Crisis and Ideological Conflict in the Seventies* (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1986).

³⁰ Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-24.

dried.

Despite bold attempts by his successor, Hosni Mubarak, to cool the political scene, expressions of outrage against Sadat continued. The fact that most of those arrested by Sadat were released and invited to the presidential palace by Mubarak shortly after the assassination was meant to be a gesture of good will and national reconciliation. The opposition, however, used the occasion to dramatize Sadat's "arbitrariness" and "despotism." Mubarak's attempt to level with the Egyptian people about the country's economic difficulties in the hope of lowering the expectations fanned by his predecessor, was another occasion for the opposition to demand retroactive accountability from Sadat's regime. Critics wondered how with nearly \$20 billion in Arab and foreign aid and an assumed state of peace during Sadat's tenure Egypt could have been so economically troubled. The insinuation was clear—these public funds must have been pillaged by people at the top.

So much did the charges of corruption crowd the Egyptian public discourse in late 1981 and all of 1982 that President Mubarak ordered an official investigation. Several cases, did in fact, warrant trials. The most dramatic of these involved the family of the late president's brother, Ismat Sadat, whose wealth had reached several millions from unknown or illegitimate sources, as the court discovered; most of it was confiscated by the court or put under sequestration.³¹ Despite similar charges against immediate members of the late president's family, none warranted legal action.

Spearheading the attacks on Sadat, his family and close associates were the leftists, Nasserites, Islamists and Wafdists. Aside from editorials and lengthy reports in the opposition newspapers, several books appeared during this phase lambasting the late president. Most notable among these was Mohamed H. Heikal's *Autumn of Fury*, whose Arabic edition was reprinted five times and sold millions of copies. Having been a close and influential figure under Nasser for all his years in power as well as under Sadat until 1974, Heikal's critique was taken by most Arabs to be authoritative. Aside from his controversial psycho-analyzing of Sadat, one of Heikal's most damning conclusions is that the late president had engaged in a sale of Egyptian independence and of the Arab cause in general.

The charge of "selling-out" to the West would resonate time and again in the early 1980s, especially with every new Arab setback. Thus with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, and the subsequent siege of Beirut and the expulsion of the PLO forces from the Lebanese capital, Egyptian and Arab critics would remind their respective publics that such "calamities" could not have happened had Sadat not signed a peace agreement with the "treacherous Zionist enemy." For many Arabs in those years, Camp David became a code word for capitulation, if not outright treason. Mubarak himself would avoid invoking Camp David or the peace treaty in his public speeches. If he wanted to refer to them at all, it was simply as "Egypt's regional and international obligations." Two of Egypt's prominent writers, Tawfik El-Hakim and Anis Mansour, who had supported Sadat's peace drive, declared that they were wrong in their belief of a possible peaceful co-existence with Israel after its invasion of Lebanon. Many voices rose, at the time, to demand that the Mubarak regime revoke the peace treaty.

While denouncing Israeli actions at the time, to its credit, the Mubarak regime and the state-controlled media never hinted at even entertaining such

³¹ *Al-Sha'b*, May 13, 1980.

ideas. The most that the government did in response to the opposition demands and popular anger *vis-à-vis* Israel was to withdraw the Egyptian ambassador in Tel Aviv. But diplomatic relations were not severed; nor was the Israeli ambassador in Cairo asked to leave. The height of anti-Israel expression was a series of clandestine violent attacks against Israeli diplomats in Cairo (1985-1986). The clandestine elements involved, as it turned out, were self-proclaimed Nasserites, who also attempted similar attacks on American diplomats. Significantly enough such attempts occurred at a time when the anger against Sadat was cooling off, at least on the popular level. It is possible to entertain the proposition that the more politicized underground opposition had sensed the change in the popular mood. Carrying out those attacks against Israeli and American targets in Cairo may have been a deliberate tactic to reheat up the anti-Sadat passions.

The Cooling-Off Phase

The mid-1980s represent a cooling-off phase *vis-à-vis* the legacy of President Sadat. While sheer passage of time was a factor, a combination of President Mubarak's own postures and other regional developments also played an important part in this cooling off.

President Mubarak did not retreat from any of his predecessors' major policies. Instead, he simply redressed some of their excesses or negative fall-outs. In his public discourse, Mubarak followed an even keel approach *vis-à-vis* both late Presidents Nasser and Sadat. He would equally honor their memories, visit their graves and only mention their good deeds for Egypt and the Arab world. Mubarak always made a point of emphasizing that both predecessors had strived to do their best for their country and nation, in a changing regional and global environment. He avoided taking sides between proponents and exponents of either Nasser or Sadat.

The state-controlled media followed Mubarak's suit. Many former anti-Nasserites had been restored in the media; and many Nasserites had been dismissed. Mubarak restored the latter without dismissing the former; hence we see a more pluralistic state media. One would encounter in the same newspaper editorials or columns tilting in favor of Nasser or Sadat, but with rare excesses either way. When such excesses occurred, Mubarak would personally alert or criticize their perpetuators.³² Equally, the march of domestic regional and international events competed with the debate over Sadat. Attention was increasingly going elsewhere.

Ironically, the moment of the height of anti-Sadat and anti-Israeli feeling during the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 also contained the seeds of the discrediting of some of his major detractors in the Arab world. The leaderships of the so-called "rejection and steadfastness front"—namely Syria, Iraq and Libya—did little or nothing to rescue Lebanon or the besieged PLO. Their belligerent verbal proclamations during the Baghdad Summit of 1979, in which Egypt had been boycotted, were shown to be empty rhetoric. Many of those who had taken such proclamations seriously were utterly disillusioned. A year after the invasions, the PLO attempted to set up a new headquarters in the Lebanese northern port of Tripoli, only to be faced this time by pro-Syrian military opposition, forcing Yasser Arafat to take refuge elsewhere. Arafat chose to make his first stop this time in Egypt, and to meet with none other than

³² *Al-Gumhuriya*, October 7, 1982.

Mubarak, thus breaking the Arab boycott. This was the first time the PLO leader was on Egyptian territory since 1977, but now with an Israeli embassy and flag in Cairo. The entire episode bespoke a quiet symbolism.

Arafat was received warmly on the popular and official levels. The Egyptian public recognized that there was no contradiction between their country's commitment to the Palestinian cause and the peace with Israel. The organized opposition parties felt a great deal of dissonance. In many ways they seemed to lag politically behind both the government and Egyptian public opinion. Furthermore, the organized opposition to Sadat and "his Camp David" had been vocal supporters of the "Arab steadfastness front," and with Arafat being forced out of Tripoli by a principal member of the front, another source of dissonance was created, as they had to take sides.

We observe in this second phase a number of subtle changes in the discourse of the anti-Sadat forces. They stopped hailing the "steadfastness front;" the term would nearly disappear from their political vocabulary by the mid-1980s. They lowered the tone of their criticism of Camp David, but not of Israel. They limited their support to the PLO, the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and the creation of a Palestinian state. Such proclamations were not different from those made by the Mubarak regime, or for that matter by President Sadat himself. Whatever leftover criticism of Sadat that remained, was not of his peace initiative but of his "unilateral peace" or the terms of that peace.

Other regional developments contributed to the dissipation of anger *vis-à-vis* Sadat during this phase. Significant among these was the continuation of the Lebanese civil war, even after the Western and Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in late 1984-85. Equally significant was the continued war between Iraq and Iran. The regimes in both countries had been vocal in their anti-Sadat and anti-Israel postures. Egyptian and Arab public opinion took note of the obvious contradictions between words and deeds. Neither regime had fired a shot against Israel, while launching massive destructive rockets at each other's civilian and military targets.

Some still argued, but not as convincingly, that Sadat was indirectly to blame, as his peace agreement caused Egyptian absence from the political arena of the Arab world and the Middle East, and hence had led to regional disorder. Some drew comparisons with the 1958 civil strife in Lebanon and the 1970 confrontation between Jordan and the Palestinian resistance, both of which were quickly contained by an activist Nasserite Egypt.³³ But with the PLO no longer publicly critical of Egypt's foreign or regional policies, and with Iraq's Saddam Hussein seeking and getting substantial military aid from Egypt in his war—by this time a defensive one—against Khomeini's Iran, most pan-Arabists inside and outside of Egypt were cooling their criticism of Sadat.

By 1985, two additional factors added to the muting of anti-Sadat voices. First, there was the adoption of the Saudi peace plan in an Arab summit at Fez. While falling short of an outright peace and recognition of Israel in return for occupied Arab territories, the Fez Plan was remarkably similar in spirit and content to the Camp David Accords. The similarities were not lost on many analysts in the Arab media. The second factor was Jordan's breaking with the 1979 Baghdad Summit's resolution of boycotting Egypt, by restoring diplomatic relations between the two countries. *De facto* relations with Egypt were never totally severed with any Arab country in the first place; and the formal ones

³³ *Al-Sha'b*, June 22, 1981.

were maintained, in defiance of the Baghdad Summit, by both Sudan and Oman. But what appeared to be a daring step by King Hussein in the mid-1980s was quite significant—given Jordan's substantial and volatile Palestinian population and its vulnerability to bigger Arab neighbors who were still officially on "non-speaking" terms with Egypt.

King Hussein predicated his decision to restore diplomatic relations with Egypt on the basis of "Arab brotherhood," and the need for the "bigger sister" back in the Arab fold to meet mounting challenges facing the Arab world. The Jordanian decision was neither hailed nor condemned by its powerful Arab neighbors. However, it appeared that this official silence was both a tacit approval and a prelude to similar decisions by other Arab countries shortly thereafter.

Forgetting and Forgiving

As King Hussein restored formal diplomatic relations with Egypt, no mention was made of President Sadat, whose peace initiative with Israel had been the reason for severing those relations in the first place. It was as if the reason and the person behind it were to be forgotten or intentionally "blacked out." In Arab political culture this is a standard practice that serves as a face-saving device for both sides of a dispute when one or both of them are eager to get the matter over with—no recounting before settling.

The Jordanian monarch is known for his shrewdness and foresight. He must have sensed the Arab public's changing mood before taking his daring decision. He recognized that *de facto* relations between Egypt, Iraq and the rest of the Gulf countries were not only continuing but also growing. The Iraq-Iran War had been raging for several years with no end in sight, and Iraq was not doing well. After its initial success in the first two years, 1980-82, the Iranians managed not only to drive the Iraqis back but also to maintain the pressure and to make some inroads into Iraqi territories. With four times the size of Iraq's population and greater strategic depth, Iran did not mind the disproportionate ratio of its human losses, and seemed determined to carry its fight against Saddam Hussein to the bitter end.

The smaller Arab Gulf states were, understandably, nervous, as they found themselves caught in cross-pressures by their two large, warring neighbors. Iraq made financial demands on them to continue its war effort, claiming that it was defending the "eastern gate" of the Arab homeland. Iran, for its part, had been using its Shi'a supporters in those countries for acts of sabotage, and its own citizens, during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, to incite riots and troubles for the Saudis. Between 1984 and 1987, confrontations between Iranian pilgrims and Saudi authorities were steadily escalating and claiming many lives. The situation took a turn for the worse when Iranian troops managed to capture a big chunk of Iraqi territory around the city of Fao in southern Iraq, which put them within a few hours march from the Kuwaiti border.

By mid-1987, the Saudis and the rest of the Gulf Arabs shared King Hussein's view of the dire need for a forceful show of Arab solidarity with Iraq. An emergency Arab summit was held in the Jordanian capital, with two main items on its agenda—material and moral support for Iraq and the restoration of Egypt to the Arab fold. The two items were seen as inter-related, since, without Egypt, Arab solidarity with Iraq would remain of little practical consequence. The Arab heads of state went about the second item through a half-way measure. Rather than fully restore Egypt's membership to the Arab League,

they simply passed a face-saving resolution permitting individual Arab states to restore diplomatic relations with Egypt as "each of them see fit." Most Arab states instantly acted on the resolution. The rest would do so shortly after the Amman Summit.³⁴

While slightly less than expected, the resolution was considered a significant political gain for Mubarak's Egypt. But it was as much a strident step in vindicating Sadat's Egypt. Immediately after the boycott resolutions of 1979 in the Baghdad Summit, Sadat had defiantly predicted that the "Arabs...would come back to Egypt."³⁵ The pro-Sadat voices in Egypt, after a long silence, were quick to re-emerge and remind public opinion of Sadat's prediction, noting that Egypt's full position in the Arab world would be restored without having to give up any of its commitment to peace with Israel.

It took two more years after the Amman Summit before Egypt's suspension from the Arab League was completely revoked. In the interim, several positive developments were under way on the Arab-Middle Eastern scene. One month after the Amman Summit, in November 1987, the Palestinian uprising, or *intifada*, broke out against Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. Arab solidarity with Iraq, including growing Egyptian assistance, contributed to or at least coincided with better performance on the battlefield. Iraq scored a series of Iraqi victories in the early months of 1988, culminating in the recapture of Fao and the liberation of other occupied areas, moving the fighting to Iranian territories. These successive and quick reverses for Iran forced the Khomeini regime to grudgingly accept a cease-fire and a truce. This accession to a long-standing Iraqi demand was hailed as an Iraqi victory. A few months later Iraq, Jordan and Yemen were to approach Egypt for the establishment of an economic regional cooperation scheme, which came to be called the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC). It was the second such Arab regional grouping to be formed, following the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981.

In the following Arab summit in Morocco, the other Arab partners in the ACC would push not only to reinstitute Egypt's membership in the Arab League, but also to approve the return of its headquarters from Tunis to Cairo. President Mubarak was invited to attend the summit in progress, and upon his arrival to the meeting hall received a standing ovation by his fellow Arab heads of state. The summit resolutions and the speeches welcoming Mubarak did not refer to Sadat, Camp David or the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. In his speech to the summit, however, Mubarak reiterated Egypt's commitment to the peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and invited fellow Arabs to join Egypt in its quest.

It was a glorious moment for Mubarak's Egypt, and a tacit signal of forgetting and forgiving of the actions of his predecessor.

The Appreciation Phase

The formal reinstatement of Egypt in the Arab fold was a gradual process that took place between 1987 and early 1990. During the same period an air of relative optimism and amicability prevailed in inter-Arab relations. There were objective reasons for such feelings. The Palestinian *intifada* was still going strong, bringing back this Arab cause to the focus of world attention. Another Arab regional cooperation council among the five North African countries

³⁴ *Al-Majallah*, April 26, 1988.

³⁵ *Al-Ahram Iktisadi*, February 21, 1983.

(Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya) was established shortly after the AAC, giving shape to a more realistic regional Arab grouping. The two Yemens engaged in serious negotiations, which culminated in their long sought unification in 1990. During the same period, four Arab summits were held—an unprecedented record since the establishment of the Arab League in 1945.

All this coincided with similar optimism on the global level—with the quickening pace of liberalization in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries, triggered by Gorbachev's *perestroika*, and culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War and the stirrings of a "new world order." In this climate of growing regional and international optimism, little did the Arabs or the world expect one of the gravest crises of recent decades. Only two months after the last Arab summit in Baghdad in May 1990, the world was stunned by Iraq's *blitzkrieg* invasion of its small Arab neighbor, Kuwait, on August 2, 1990. The region and the world would be embroiled in what came to be called the Gulf crisis, which would culminate in the second Gulf war in less than a decade.

The significance of the Gulf crisis for the rehabilitation of Sadat in the Arab world is tremendous. Having been just fully restored to the Arab fold, Egypt would play a crucial role in the crisis. But equally significant is that several of the late President Sadat's assertions about fellow Arab leaders, their regimes, the changing nature of inter-Arab relations, and indeed his vision of the Middle East would find a new resonance in the region.

To start with, Egypt stood fast against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Calling for an emergency Arab summit meeting in Cairo, it demanded, and was supported by a majority, for an Iraqi withdrawal.³⁶ As the crisis unfolded, the Arab world would become deeply divided, the Iraqi regime would refuse to leave Kuwait and an international coalition led by the United States would be formed, with Egypt in it. Armed with a series of UN Security Council resolutions that coalition would wage war—Operation Desert Storm—against Iraq starting January 16, 1991. Iraq was defeated, and within six weeks not only was Kuwait liberated but much of Iraq's infrastructure and military capabilities were destroyed.

Egypt played a major role in the Western-led coalition against an Arab country, Iraq. Thus, some fifteen years after Sadat effected the shift in his country's global alignment, we witnessed its concrete application—not against another superpower rival of the United States, but against a "sister Arab state." That would have been unthinkable in Nasser's Egypt.

Kuwait and the five other Arab Gulf countries which comprise the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) were direct beneficiaries of the fifteen-year-old shift in Egypt's global alignment. Hence, one of the immediate fall-outs of the Gulf crisis was a new appreciation of Sadat's policies, at least in those six Arab GCC countries. Even anti-Western radicals in these countries, leftists and Islamists alike, shared this appreciation, though grudgingly. For them, the question during the crisis was not an ideological one, but an existential one.

As often happens, one attitudinal change beget others. Thus, the new appreciation of Egypt's alignment with the West gradually extended to its peace with Israel. Even in the middle of the crisis, we read in the Arab printed media for the first time, articles by Saudis and other Gulf writers calling for peace with

³⁶ *Al-Ahram*, August 10, 1990.

Israel.³⁷ Their argument was fairly simple and direct: their countries were never threatened or attacked by Israel, they had stood against Israel all those years for the sake of the other Arabs, mainly the Palestinians, some of whom were now occupying one of their countries and victimizing its people.³⁸ Beyond what appeared in print, there was widespread soul-searching among Gulf Arabs to find the meaning of their "Arabness." They were aggressed upon by a fellow Arab neighbor. They were rescued by a coalition of mostly non-Arab foreigners. The very issue of identity, taken for granted before the crisis, had now begun to be questioned.

The same soul-searching would spill over to many in the Arab world outside the Gulf, especially during and after Operation Desert Storm, and would turn into open and heated debates among Arab intellectuals.³⁹ The axioms of modern Arab culture, politics and history which had previously been taken for granted have been subjected to deep reconsideration. Likewise, the meanings and images of the enemy were first subconsciously, and later consciously, revised. The existential and empirical reality of Saudi Arabs and Israeli Jews simultaneously being at the receiving end of Iraqi Scud missiles during the war was mind-boggling to many in the Arab world. The ultimate destruction, by the end of the war, of two Arab countries, one the aggressor and the other the victim, was equally shocking and confusing.

In the aftermath, the Arabs have had more questions about themselves and the world around them than answers. One sure thing, however, was that several of their articles of faith have collapsed or have been seriously undermined. The era of romantic nationalist pan-Arabism is gone. Arabs of various nations are now openly and unapologetically willing to talk about differences of temperaments and of interests. While these differences were always present, it was almost a "taboo" for an Arab nationalist to discuss them overtly, and if mentioned at all by others, such differences were attributed to residues of various colonial legacies.

Many Arabs remembered that President Sadat had dared to break such a taboo, both in words and deeds. While recognizing Egypt's Arabness, he also asserted its uniqueness and own interests. Gulf Arabs were no longer afraid to follow Sadat's course. Even the deep division in the rest of the Arab world over the Gulf crisis was a dramatic testimony to such differences. Arabs in poor and peripheral countries lined up behind Saddam Hussein, and Arabs in the well-to-do and central countries lined up against him. Countries with older and more established state traditions, such as Egypt and Morocco, came out against Iraq's aggression, while newer, less established polities, such as Sudan and Yemen, were willing to look the other way.

More Arabs have now come to appreciate President Sadat's realism, with country and regime interests at its core. If there is to be a revival of pan-Arabism at all, it will certainly be unabashedly based as much on interest as on culture and sentiments. It may be that this growing sense of one's interest, as a specific people in a specific country within the Arab world explains much of the current Arab political behavior. Syria and several of the Gulf states are closer to non-Arab Iran than to several other Arab countries. In fact, each Arab country is now closer and better connected to at least one non-Arab country than it is to

³⁷ *Al-Siyassa al-Dawliya*, January 1991.

³⁸ *Al-Siyassa al-Dawliya*, January 1991.

³⁹ "The Arabs in a Changing World," *al-Musawwar*, August 1992.

any other Arab counterpart.

The growing sense of socio-political realism in the Arab world is unfolding in at least two areas—the quest for democracy and peace, two pillars which were heralded by Sadat's vision some twenty years earlier.

The quest for democracy is not all that new in the Arab world. There have been Arab liberals since at least the turn of the century, and there were limited liberal experiments in a score of Arab countries between the 1920s and 1950s. But the last four decades have been dominated by one form or another of authoritarianism. This was initially welcomed by many Arabs in the hope of fulfilling popular aspirations for true independence, social justice, development, Arab unity and the liberation of Palestine. In order to achieve these goals, most Arabs were willing to forgo, at least temporarily, democracy or participatory politics. The trade-off did seem promising for a decade or two. But as early as the 1967 defeat, a growing number of Arabs began to question the trade-off formula; subsequent setbacks further sowed doubt as to its wisdom. But it is probably the Gulf crisis, more than any other event, that led to the quantum leap in the numbers and intensity of those demanding participation and accountability in their countries' political systems today. Arab opinion-makers are in consensus that the calamity in the Gulf was triggered and perpetuated by Arab despots. Thus, for its practical uses, if not for its intrinsic value, democratization has become a major battle cry in the Arab world. Since Operation Desert Storm, several Arab countries (Tunisia, Mauritania, Algeria, Yemen and Saudi Arabia) have already initiated processes of democratization, and several have resumed or expedited them (Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Lebanon). Despite some reversals, such as in Algeria, and a slow-down in Tunisia after some initial progress, the process of democratization is well under way.

The quest for peace is even more dramatic. The Arab countries directly involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948, as well as those which have been far removed (at least geographically) responded enthusiastically to the call for the Middle East peace conference which opened in Madrid in November 1991. It was a response delayed by exactly fourteen years to a similar invitation by Sadat to meet in Cairo's Mena House in November 1977. The agenda and terms of reference are almost the same, and the outcome of the present effort is likely to be similar to that concluded at Camp David. In fact, the man who was shunned and condemned by fellow Arabs for initiating the process fifteen years ago is now warmly praised by his former detractors for his vision and strategy for a Middle East peace. Camp David and its words are no longer taboo words in the Arab world. Rather, they have become the standard by which progress in the current peace efforts is measured.

The two current Arab quests for democracy and peace are as interlocked today as Sadat saw them some twenty years ago. Even though some of his own practices, especially toward the end of his life, betrayed his commitment to democracy, Sadat intuitively discerned the linkage.⁴⁰ Social scientists have empirically asserted the validity of Sadat's intuition that democratic countries do not go to war against each other and that their pacific nature is intrinsically related to their political openness and accountability.

With the new wave of democratization and peace-making in the Middle East, Sadat is more than being vindicated by his fellow Arabs. He is appreciated.

⁴⁰ *Al-Musawwar*, May 21, 1982.

SYRIA'S ASSAD: ON A SADAT COURSE?

On October 16, 1973, in the midst of the fourth Arab-Israeli war, President Sadat addressed Egypt's parliament, the People's Assembly. While declaring victory, he pleaded for an historical reconciliation that would put an end to the tragic cycles of war in the Middle East. In his historic speech that day, Sadat used the phrase "peace of the brave," invoking the phrase used by the legendary Islamic hero Saladin. While triumphant, Saladin called for an honorable peace with Richard the Lion-Hearted, the leader of the crusading armies of his time, some eight centuries ago.

On September 9, 1992, in a speech to a delegation from the occupied Golan Heights, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad used the same phrase as did Sadat and Saladin before him. Assad declared, "We will never concede an inch of the Golan, abdicate any of our country's or national rights or compromise the dignity of the nation, we want peace of the brave, peace of the chivalrous."⁴¹

The resonance of the phrase "peace of the brave" would not by itself have amounted to much had it not been echoed widely by the state-controlled Syrian media in subsequent days. The message suggested by that phrase was as clearly directed to the Israelis and Americans as it was to Syrian and Arab public opinion. But the credibility of the message is substantiated by other supporting evidence from Syria's policy re-orientations in at least three other relevant spheres, all of which are reminiscent of Sadat's four policy changes after 1973.

Syria's Open-Door Policy

It bears remembering that Sadat's major departure from Nasser's Arab socialism to an open-door economic policy came in February 1974, four months after the October War. With Assad, however, the shift in economic policy began in the late 1980s and was officially crowned by a new investment law (Number 10) in May 1991. This development was equally tied to regional wars and global shifts of power.

In 1988, the Iran-Iraq War came to an end. During that eight-year conflict, Syria had sided with non-Arab Iran against neighboring Arab Iraq. While Assad may have paid politically for such a stand in various Arab circles at the time, he had been getting substantial material compensation from Iran in the form of one million tons per year of free oil and five million tons per year at a rate 20 percent below market price. This equivalent of \$300 million annual Iranian aid came to an end in 1988, as did the ten-year Arab financial aid package agreed to at the Baghdad Arab Summit following Sadat's peace initiative. Amounting to one billion dollars annually, that Arab aid was earmarked for Syria, to help shore up its "steadfastness" *vis-à-vis* Israel.

Despite this huge infusion of aid, the Syrian command economy had run into serious difficulties in the 1980s. An estimated 22 percent decline in Syrian per capita GNP during the decade was recorded by the *Joint Arab Economic Report* of 1990. Compounding these economic difficulties were Syria's high annual rate of population growth of 3.5 percent, continued military involvement in Lebanon, declining Soviet economic support and Syria's isolation in the Arab world.

These accumulated difficulties prompted Assad to undertake an

⁴¹ Quoted in *Sawt al-Kuwait*, September 10, 1992.

unannounced open-door economic policy in late 1988. Some positive signs showed in the 1989 national accounts of Syria, but those were not enough to offset the net losses of the decade. The Gulf crisis of 1990-91 came as a life-saver to the Syrian economy. Some \$2 billion in Gulf financial aid was awarded to Syria for its stand against Saddam Hussein and its participation in the international coalition that liberated Kuwait. Four months after Operation Desert Storm, Assad felt confident enough to restate his new open-door economic policy, this time publicly, again reminiscent of Sadat's bold economic step following the October War.

The new investment law, Number 10 of May 1991, gave sweeping incentives to Syrian, Arab and foreign investors. With Syria's rehabilitation in Arab and foreign circles since the Gulf crisis, these measures had an almost instant result in boosting the country's economic indicators. In three years (1990-92), the average annual rate of economic growth topped the 10 percent mark. The exchange rate of the Syrian lira stabilized and improved steadily, from sixty per U.S. dollar in 1989 to forty per U.S. dollar in 1992. The Syrian private sector has restored its front seat in the economy, as oil, tourism and agriculture have been the leading sectors in Syria's economic recovery. Equally, Gulf aid and investments have been steady since 1990, totaling about \$2 billion annually.

Like that of Sadat, Assad's open-door economic policy would not have shown marked signs of success had it not been an integral part of a more comprehensive review of the country's domestic and external orientation. The other clear element of substantive change in Syria's orientation is its stance toward the West, especially the United States, which we take up next.

A New Orientation Toward the West

Immediately after the end of the Iran-Iraq War, Assad sought a forthright improvement in relations with the West. To be sure, such an improvement became a possibility as early as September 1987 when Damascus and Washington officially restored full diplomatic relations after twenty years of severance—since the Arab-Israeli War of 1967. This possibility materialized in part in 1988 over Lebanon, as the two countries began coordinating their policies with the end of Amin Gemayel's presidential term in office. The subsequent developments over the future of Lebanon, culminating in the Ta'if Agreement of 1989, expanded the horizon of potential U.S.-Syrian cooperation. While the state-controlled Syrian media continued its revolutionary rhetoric, there were always assertions of Syria's eagerness for "peaceful dignified coexistence" in the international community.

Notably during this period, 1988-89, we hear for the first time Assad's strategic shift from "parity" to "deterrence" in the arms race with Israel. Underlining this shift were the clear signals of a rapidly changing Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev combined with Syrian economic difficulties. By 1988, the country's external debt had reached \$15 billion in U.S. dollars. Equally the Soviet Union was opening up to Israel as an integral part of its own new *perestroika*.

But it was the Gulf crisis in the summer of 1990 which gave President Assad a golden opportunity to re-orient Syria westward—not only with dignity, but also on nearly his own terms. His help *vis-à-vis* Saddam Hussein's aggressive policy was equally sought by the Arab Gulf states and the West. Eventually, Syria joined Egypt and Morocco as major Arab parties in the

international coalition to expel the Iraqi invaders from Kuwait.

As usual, Assad was masterful in hitting several birds with one stone. His stand during the Gulf crisis could end his regional isolation, get him substantial and badly needed financial aid, and enable him to weaken his Ba'athist arch-rival in Baghdad. But more to the point of this study, it would enable Syria to draw closer to the West, making up for the steady erosion of its traditional superpower ally, the Soviet Union.

By October 1990, Syria would get its way in Lebanon by expelling General Michel Aoun with tacit U.S. support. In November, Margaret Thatcher, a steadfast critic of Syria's policy on alleged terrorism, would restore full diplomatic relations with Damascus. Through his own initiative and the help of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Assad gained an attentive ear in all Western capitals that was unprecedented since the end of 1990. He was to be accommodated as a reliable, shrewd and necessary ally in the post-Gulf War Middle East arrangements.⁴²

Controlled Pluralism

With evident economic liberalization and improvement of relations with the West, Assad was already following in two large footsteps of Sadat, albeit some fifteen years later. A third step was the beginning of an apparent transition to political pluralism, a step undertaken by Sadat in 1976.

Unlike the situation addressed by Sadat, several Syrian political parties pre-dating Assad's ascendance to power have remained in existence. However, they had been reduced to the role of minor, silent partners in what was called the National Progressive Front (NPF), which was established by Assad himself after his palace coup in 1970. In what Assad referred to at the time as democratic reform, the NPF was composed of seven political parties, including two Marxist parties as well as several professional associations and trade unions. The NPF was under the leadership of Assad's own Ba'ath party. At least two-thirds of all cabinet positions, including all the key ones, were appropriated by the Ba'ath party. Other parties, members of the NPF, were not to extend their activities to the Syrian armed forces or the universities, nor were they allowed to circulate their newspapers to the general public. Violation of these restrictions was punishable by death. By 1990, these parties had been reduced to no more than several hundred members each, with an aging leadership and membership. Thus, for all practical purposes, Syria was in fact led by a one-party regime.

Early in 1992, Assad was re-elected for a fifth presidential term. In his inaugural speech to the Syrian People's Assembly in February 1992, Assad paid tribute to his partners in the NPF and promised an "orderly expansion of democracy" in Syria by legalizing new political parties. The use of the phrase "orderly expansion of democratic life" was a clear reference to Algeria's disorderly, headlong rush into democracy that would have brought the *Front Islamique de Salvation* (FIS) to power had it not been for the Algerian army's takeover in January 1992.

Assad has continued to believe that the NPF arrangement is the best formula for Syria, with the promise of adding new parties, and giving them more responsibilities in the governance of Syria, still under the "leading

⁴² This was clearly noted by former National Security Council official William Quandt in an essay published in the Arabic weekly *al-Wasat*, September 28, 1992.

guidance of the Ba'ath party."⁴³ Thus, while making noise about greater political pluralism, Syria's democratization remains highly controlled. In this respect, Assad is still far out of step with Sadat's moves in the interim years between war and peace with Israel (1974-77). However, there has been a marked increase of freedom of expression and travel abroad, again reminiscent of Sadat. An expert on Syrian politics has described it as more of a process of liberalizing "decompression" than of genuine democratization.⁴⁴

The slower pace of democratization in Syria may be attributable to several factors not present in Sadat's Egypt of the 1970s. Among these are the entrenchment of a powerful ideological Ba'ath party and an equally-entrenched Alawite minority ruling elite, of which Assad is a member. The ailing health of the Syrian president no doubt acts as a brake in the taking of too many chances with rapid democratization. Should a battle for succession take place in the midst of a fluid political situation, the repercussions for Syrian and regional stability could be quite ominous.

But were a Sadat-like scenario to unfold in Syria, Assad would probably give his regime a more credible democratic face shortly before signing a peace agreement with Israel. The rationale for that would be the need to legitimize such a major step through the broadest possible consensus.

Compromising for Peace

Any careful monitoring of Syrian public statements as well as subtle gestures must conclude that Assad had decided to embark on a serious quest for peace several months before the Madrid Peace Conference. The first signs of such a quest came toward the end of, and immediately after, Operation Desert Storm when Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak asserted that Syria was genuinely interested in a "just, comprehensive peace" with Israel.⁴⁵ This statement was reiterated by several of the Egyptian president's aides, who were at the time traveling frequently to the Syrian capital in preparation for the "Damascus declaration" on the future security of the Gulf.

An official Syrian statement welcomed President George Bush's speech following the Gulf War in early February 1991—especially those parts dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Syrian media echoed what was by now a standard phrase on "international legitimacy" as the basis for a Middle East settlement. Syrian Minister of Information Muhammed Salman was the first ranking official to explicate the regime's position on the matter:

We encourage every international effort for just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East under the UN auspices. An international peace conference, not bilateral negotiations, means respect for the UN resolutions. It entails the participation of all permanent members of the UN Security Council. Bilateral negotiations, on the other hand, would mean talks on the basis of a *fait accompli*, in violation of international legitimacy.⁴⁶

⁴³ "Interview with President Hafez al-Assad," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, June 2, 1992.

⁴⁴ Raymond Hinnebusch, "State and Civil Society in Syria," *Middle East Journal*, 47(2) Spring 1993, pp. 243-257.

⁴⁵ *Al-Ahram*, March 1, 1991.

⁴⁶ Quoted in *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 27, 1991.

While verbally sticking to this statement of principles, the Syrian attitude softened gradually over the next six months—until the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference. The latter, indeed, observed enough of the formalities which the Syrians insisted on, such as co-sponsorship by the two superpowers. However, the foot-dragging of the Israeli Likud government in the negotiations during the subsequent ten months produced a toughening public stand by Syria. *Inter alia*, Syria refused to participate in the parallel multilateral talks so long as there was no clear progress in the bilateral talks.

When the Labor government of Yitzhak Rabin came to power in July 1992, hopes were again revived. Although Rabin's priority in the peace talks was to conclude an agreement with the Palestinians, observers were pleasantly surprised with the faster progress that occurred on the Syrian-Israeli track. By late summer, mutual statements by Rabin and Syrian officials converged on several points of agreement: a Syrian appreciation of Israeli security needs and an Israeli willingness to withdraw in principle from the Golan Heights in return for a peace agreement. The "land-for-peace" formula has become the *modus operandi* in Syrian-Israeli discourse. Both sides began to talk about the terms and timing for the implementation of this equation. Total withdrawal was to be reciprocated with "total peace," though it was unclear whether the Syrian understanding was withdrawal from all territories occupied by Israel in 1967 or just the Syrian Golan Heights.

Again Egypt was used as an interpreter of Syrian intentions. Its foreign minister, Amr Moussa, indicated in an interview with the *Jerusalem Post* that Syria only sought the Golan Heights.⁴⁷ A top Egyptian aide, Osama al-Baz, Mubarak's advisor for political affairs and first undersecretary at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, told another Israeli newspaper, *Yediot Aharonot*, that Syria's willingness to sign a peace treaty similar to that which Israel signed with Egypt is contingent upon "total withdrawal from the Golan and an overall settlement with other Arab countries and the Palestinians."⁴⁸

The euphoria of progress in the Syrian-Israeli negotiations in late summer and early fall was cooled by the mounting American presidential campaign. This became more pronounced when the negotiations' activist mediator, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, left the State Department to manage President Bush's faltering campaign. After Bush's defeat, apprehensions over the fate of the peace process grew markedly in Damascus and other Arab capitals. The situation was made worse by the rising violence in the occupied territories and by the subsequent Israeli deportation of some 400 Palestinians alleged to be members of the militant Islamic group Hamas.

However, assertions by the new American administration of its commitment to a Middle East peace agreement served to revive hopes in Syria and other Arab countries. By the spring of 1993, it seemed clear to all concerned that a slowdown in the peace talks would spell trouble in the region. Islamic activism was equally escalating in Egypt and the occupied territories. The volume of violence in both, during the six month hiatus in the peace talks from October 1992 to April 1993, was nearly three times that of the previous six months. While there may not be a direct linear correlation between the stagnation of the peace talks and violence in Egypt, it is hard not to assume that such a link exists in the case of the occupied territories.

At any rate, what seems increasingly clear is that Assad is likely to settle

⁴⁷ Re-published in *al-Akhhbar*, March 7, 1992.

⁴⁸ Published in *Akher-Sa'a*, September 2, 1992.

for a peace agreement with better or similar terms than that obtained by Sadat. To settle for anything less would expose himself and his regime to indefensible criticism from all of his detractors and some of his allies, such as Iran. Such a minimal outcome for Assad requires maximum statesmanship from Prime Minister Rabin and optimum craftsmanship from the United States *vis-à-vis* both Syria and Israel. Assad himself confirmed in May 1993 what Egyptian officials have said on his behalf since the end of the Gulf War: "We are now proposing a full concept of peace in return for a full Israeli withdrawal. The ball is now in the Israeli court... While their government is yet to respond, we note a growing desire for peace among the Israeli people, which we hope will impact Israeli leaders."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Patrick Seale interview with Assad, *al-Wasat*, May 10, 1993.

EPILOGUE

THE ULTIMATE VINDICATION

The day was September 13, 1993. The time was late morning. The site was the White House lawn. The occasion was the signing of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. With President Bill Clinton presiding in front of some 3,000 dignitaries and world television viewers, the PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin addressed mankind about their people's past sufferings from war and future aspirations for peace. But above all they addressed each other's people.

This moment has been described with many superlatives. But one superlative phrase is apt for the occasion and for this essay—the ultimate vindication of Anwar al-Sadat. It was exactly fifteen years earlier at this same site, in front of a similar audience, that President Jimmy Carter witnessed Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin signing a similar agreement. The words of the two men at the time bore stunning resemblance to those of Arafat and Rabin. So much has happened to the Palestinians, the Israelis, the Middle East and the world in the fifteen years separating the two occasions.

Mrs. Jihan Sadat witnessed the two historical moments. Now a widow, when she was asked about her thoughts and feelings, Mrs. Sadat had only these words to say: "The faith, vision, determination, patience and life of Anwar were all vindicated."

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