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**PEACE BY PIECE: A DECADE
OF EGYPTIAN POLICY
TOWARD ISRAEL**

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In memory of

Bayard Rustin

1912 - 1987

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PREFACE

Anwar Sadat was a great leader, a man who by courage, statesmanship and the force of his personality, changed the course of Middle Eastern history. His daring, lonely decision to journey to Jerusalem – ten years ago this month – tore down the psychological barriers to Arab-Israeli peace and, for the first time, offered a hopeful alternative to war.

While the tenth anniversary of Sadat's Jerusalem initiative is worthy of celebration, it is also a suitable occasion for a reassessment. The Egyptian-Israeli peace, the cornerstone of American interests in the Middle East, has not lived up to its promise, even though it has survived important tests.

After 10 years, peace between Egypt and Israel is largely taken for granted. It has been overshadowed, both by conflicts elsewhere in the region and by diplomatic efforts to find a formula for engaging Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians in negotiations. During this period, however, Egypt's relations with Israel have been confined to a "cold peace," which is helping to resurrect those very psychological barriers Sadat broke down a decade ago.

In his study, Ehud Yaari offers a thoughtful and penetrating analysis of Egypt's relations toward Israel in the post-Sadat period. The "cold peace," he argues, is not the product of chance events or mutually unfulfilled expectations, but rather the result of a calculated Egyptian foreign policy. Mr. Yaari contends that Egypt's leaders have consciously prevented the transformation of relations with Israel from bellicosity to friendship, preferring to retain a level of distance – indeed animosity – in their bilateral dealings with Israel. He warns that unless an effort is made to arrest this drift, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty may degenerate over time into little more than a non-aggression pact.

Mr. Yaari's analysis is all the more compelling since it comes from a man with such long, personal involvement in – and commitment to – the Egyptian-Israeli relationship. As Middle East correspondent for Israel Television, Mr. Yaari has been a first-hand observer of every step in the bilateral relationship over the past decade. He was, in fact, the first Israeli journalist to report from Cairo after Sadat visited Israel. His book, *Year of the Dove* (written with Ze'ev Schiff and Eitan Haber), chronicles the course of the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations. Throughout the decade of peace, Mr. Yaari has visited Egypt more than 60 times, and interviewed all of its key decision-makers, including both Presidents Sadat and Mubarak. The disturbing analysis presented in this policy paper is the product of that experience.

This Policy Paper is dedicated to the memory of Bayard Rustin, a member of The Washington Institute's Board of Advisors, whose courage and leadership mirrored those of Anwar Sadat.

Barbi Weinberg
President
November 1987

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For a decade, the Egypt-Israel peace has proved to be remarkably stable. Yet apart from their common desire to avoid the risk of war, no other major spheres of mutual interest have emerged. Instead the peace has grown cold and its present structure is generating dangers to its long term durability.

This is, in part, the result of unfulfilled expectations on both sides but Egypt has now developed an elaborate system of restrictions to contain relations with Israel. *Moreover, these restrictions appear to be aimed at creating an Egyptian option to revert to a relationship of non-aggression should circumstances permit or require it.* This system of containment includes:

- *A set of ideological constraints, promoted by the Mubarak regime, which stresses that peace merely reflects a shift of strategy in an ongoing confrontation aimed at Israel's submission to Arab supremacy.*
- *A policy of restrictive normalization, backed by media indoctrination, which actively discourages Egyptians from dealing with Israel.*
- *Regime acquiescence in a boycott of Israel and an intensive disinformation campaign promoted by the Egyptian opposition parties.*

At the same time, Egypt is rebuilding its armed forces with the objective of establishing a "balance of deterrence" vis-a-vis Israel. It will then have the option of mounting a defensive deployment in the Western Sinai that would force new military arrangements in the peninsula and convert the relationship from a "cold peace" to a "cold war."

Pursuing a comprehensive settlement for the Palestinian problem can no longer provide the antidote because Egypt has disengaged from direct responsibility for the Palestinians and this has actually facilitated its reintegration in the Arab arena. *Paradoxically, lack of progress on the Palestinian issue no longer endangers the peace treaty, whereas actual progress could generate new strains in the bilateral relationship.*

Certain measures need to be taken to enhance the durability of the peace:

1. Egypt's direct involvement in the solution of the Palestinian problem should be limited (although it should share credit for whatever progress is made).
2. Projects which create incentives for cooperation and promote a common infrastructure should be encouraged, especially in the fields of agriculture, energy, transport and tourism. Establishing a multilateral framework and earmarking some U.S. aid could facilitate this process.
3. Egypt should be discouraged from seeking a review of the demilitarization arrangements in Sinai. Δ

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I. CAMP DAVID DIES IN PEACE

A decade after President Sadat's historic journey to Jerusalem, the Israeli-Egyptian peace has settled into a pattern of stability and durability that has given the lie to both the rosy visions of the Pollyannas and the dark monitions of the Cassandras. This pattern evolved in the face of a series of crises, personnel changes in the senior ranks of government on both sides, and sharp differences of opinion over the spirit that should prevail in the relations between the countries. The mutual interest in halting any backslide to brinkmanship, as well as dependence on American aid, have been the mainstays of the settlement's durability. These factors are likely to remain constant for the foreseeable future. Even if the peace bears no further fruits, it is unlikely that it will be allowed to wither completely; the dialectic between peace as a non-aggression treaty and peace as the setting for active cooperation will continue.

The most telling definition of the state of affairs has come from one of President Mubarak's close associates who observed that "Camp David has been buried in a cold peace."¹ The emphasis is upon preserving the kernel of peace after it has been stripped of the husk protecting it against the charge of a "separate deal" and the cool wind of bilateral relations. Mubarak – without strong resistance from Israel or the United States – has already pronounced the Camp David framework "long dead," though characterizing the abrogation of the peace treaty itself as "suicide."² The same is true, to a large degree, of the linkage between the Israel-Egypt peace treaty and parallel efforts to attain progress in negotiations on the Palestinian question. In the short run, at least, the maintenance of peace is no longer dependent upon the involvement of additional Arab partners; its existence remains, while only its quality suffers by their absence. Hopes that the Israeli-Egyptian peace would serve as a bridge to a comprehensive settlement have been superseded by the recognition that, at best, it has become a guard rail to prevent the two countries from tumbling into the abyss.

While keeping faith with this kind of separate peace, and upholding the most symbolic aspects of normalization with Israel, Egypt has managed to avoid a backlash of domestic unrest and has even broken through the wall of Arab ostracism. Indeed, the renunciation of Sadat's original strategy, which

¹ Private conversations with one of Mubarak's aides, who prefers not to be quoted by name, Cairo, April 22, 1987.

² *al-Tadamun*, June 13, 1987.

called for Egypt to play a leadership role in the solution of the Palestinian problem, made these developments possible. Israel, for its part, was not at all displeased by the easing of Egyptian opposition to its model of autonomy for the occupied territories. The result is that although the problem of the occupied territories has hovered like a dark cloud over the relationship, it no longer threatens to disrupt the peace treaty. From the moment Egypt excused itself of direct responsibility for solving the Palestinian problem, the pressure on the fabric of its peace with Israel eased.

However, this assessment should not be used to paper over another set of problems that has emerged in the course of the peace process which, in the long run, must necessarily affect the stability of the peace. These difficulties relate less to the regional context than to the nature of the bilateral construct. Treated like a cripple, the bilateral relationship has hobbled along on its own but progress is slow, difficult and easily disrupted. In fact, the present state of dormant "cold peace" may eventually develop into an active "cold war" if it continues.

In particular, peaceful relations have not resulted in a common Egyptian-Israeli approach to regional developments or even a similar outlook on future prospects and perils. Instead, attention has been focused on competing interests in a number of fields and on the readiness to engage in limited clashes by proxy.

For example, Egypt did its best to break up the alliance between the Lebanese Phalange and Israel,³ while for its part Israel invaded Lebanon in complete disregard of Cairo's warnings and subsequent protests. At a later stage, Cairo accorded the PLO political support at a time when it faced heavy pressure from the Israeli army. The Egyptians even provided Arafat and his men with an armed escort and a hero's welcome when they were driven out of Tripoli in 1983 by the Syrians. Egypt also provided encouragement and comfort to the guerrillas fighting in South Lebanon until Israel withdrew its troops to the "security zone." In another arena, Israel worked behind Cairo's back to insinuate itself into Egypt's backyard – Sudan and Chad⁴ – while Egypt did its best to sabotage the resumption of diplomatic relations between Israel and the states of Black Africa. In the Gulf War, while Israel has tended to view the renewal of friendly relations with Iran as a long-term possibility and was thus prepared to supply the Iranians with arms, Egypt has extended large-

³ Interview with the late Bashir Gemayel, Beirut, June 16, 1982.

⁴ Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon held at least one meeting with President Numeiri in 1982 and was also considering assistance to Hissein Habre's forces.

scale military aid to Iraq, and is even collaborating with Baghdad in the development of surface-to-surface missiles.⁵

These examples serve to demonstrate the isolation of the bilateral peace from the broader strategies of each of its partners. While the treaty remains intact, these points of conflict have left their mark on the public mood and have understandably introduced an element of suspicion into the political dealings between the two states.

Moreover, since the abandonment of the Camp David autonomy framework, the peace process has lacked a mutually acceptable course, and to date the two governments have been unable to reach a new understanding on reviving the negotiations – progress in talks between Peres and Mubarak notwithstanding. Once the limitations of the framework became sorely evident, Egypt began searching for a way back into the Arab fold and stopped emphasizing the role of the United States as a “full partner.” It has even called for the inclusion of the Soviet Union in future settlements and on other occasions has solicited the involvement of Western European countries, particularly France.

Egypt’s reintegration into the Arab world has also reinforced its military development in ways that have disturbing implications for its relations with Israel. Military cooperation with other Arab states (in the fields of arms manufacture, intelligence sharing, training and provision of personnel) has increased apace.⁶ The budget for the armed forces has grown and training continues for a worst-case scenario in Sinai. Egypt consistently rejects the military option, yet establishing a “balance of deterrence” *vis-a-vis* Israel has become a declared goal at the same time as its commitment to support other Arab states in case of attack has been reemphasized.

These developments, combined with domestic problems in both countries, have spawned a situation whereby an increasingly greater effort is required just to maintain the basic framework of relations, or at least to suppress manifestations of hostility. Friction has turned patently marginal issues – Taba being a good example – into bones of contention leading to long, acrimonious negotiations and a partial freeze of the ties that signify normalization. High-level American intervention has occasionally been

⁵ A successful test firing was announced by the Iraqis in August 1987.

⁶ Egypt holds joint military exercises and maintains intelligence exchange arrangements with Jordan, provides personnel and training to Iraq, and is being urged to play a larger military role in the Gulf.

needed to solve garden-variety problems relating to trade, tourism and propaganda. The result has been an erratic, backward-and-forward zigzag rather than steady, uphill progress. Since the war in Lebanon, for instance, normalization has not returned to the level it reached before the final withdrawal from Sinai. Like Alice in Wonderland, the two sides have had to run as fast as they can just to stay in place, while the threat remains that the peace will shrink down to non-belligerency and the treaty to little more than a non-aggression pact.

In short, other than the mutual desire to avoid the risk of war, no other major spheres of mutual interest have emerged over the past decade of peaceful relations. Egypt's bid for reintegration in the Arab camp has been of less import here than its conclusion that the meaningful fruits of peace — the return of Sinai and the increase in American aid — have already been reaped. Israel, on the other hand, expected the peace to yield additional benefits, such as a convenient solution to the Palestinian problem, cultural relations and ramified economic ties with Egypt. While peace breached the wall of isolation for Israel, it brought a partial blockade down on Egypt. Whereas peace meant the realization of a dream for Israel, it signified the end of a "revolutionary" fantasy for Egypt. And whereas peace represented a boost in strength for Israel, it implied a recognition of weakness for Egypt. And so a decade of peaceful relations have produced a lopsided equation in which two kinds of peace have had to contend with each other within a single treaty.

II. FROM BELLICOSITY TO ANIMOSITY

The lines along which peaceful relations between Israel and Egypt have developed can be attributed more to the set of basic premises held by the Egyptians than to the series of crises that have occurred since the treaty's signature. These basic premises allow for a certain degree of flexibility in Egypt's responses to Israeli measures, but they have demarcated clear limits to the positive change implied by the very act of peacemaking. Such limits ensure that the potential impact of the settlement will be confined to proportions that are consonant with Egypt's doctrine on the Jewish state, thus forging the content of peace for the future. This ideological framework was sketched out in fairly broad strokes by President Sadat and tightened up through clarifications provided by his successor.⁷ From the outset, it stood in sharp contrast to the Israeli conception of the peace and generated tension in the relationship.

The Egyptian ground rules can be summed up as follows:

- Peace does not mean recognition of Israel's moral legitimacy; Zionism should still be considered a reprehensible movement that must be opposed. Thus, for Egypt, peace does not mean reconciliation but rather acceptance of an unjust *fait accompli*.
- Peace is an expression of a change in strategy from belligerency to the termination of the state of war. But rather than meaning an end to the conflict, it implies redirecting the confrontation into different channels while maintaining the traditional objectives concerning the ultimate outcome of the conflict.
- The change in *modus operandi* need not imply renunciation of the antagonism toward Israel and certainly should not be understood as a move toward close relations, cooperation, or an alliance.
- The peace process is ultimately meant to affect a transformation in Israel – a “de-Zionization” – that will satisfy the Arabs' historical demands, particularly regarding the rights of the Palestinians. The threat to Israel's

⁷ See Rivka Yadlin, “Egyptian Perceptions of the Camp David Process,” *Middle East Review*, Fall 1985, vol. 18, no. 1.

neighbors will be lifted, and optimally Israel will become a tolerable entity that does not provoke its adversaries into striving to destroy it.⁸

Even though, in the course of the negotiations, Egypt accepted a broader interpretation of peace as implying the development of friendly ties, the Egyptian leadership remained faithful to these preconceptions. Thus, while peace in the sense of a safeguard against war is described as a vital Egyptian interest, the constituent parts of normalization have been portrayed as capitulation to an Israeli interest – the price to be paid to achieve the desired results. Admittedly there were times when Sadat tended to view actively peaceful relations as a magic wand to speed up the evolution of a “different Israel,” but even he preferred to maintain a high level of animosity.

Mubarak, in any event, has closely adhered to guidelines that communicate to the Egyptian public, and above all to the bureaucracy and the middle class, a clear code of behavior that includes the following rules: support the peace but do not participate in it; hostility to Israel remains a patriotic duty; normalization is the cost not the benefit of peace – it should be kept as limited as possible; and peace is a matter of *haute politique* rather than a setting for individual or popular initiatives. In short, he has made clear that while peace is welcome, its by-products are less so.

Without question, Israel has helped to reinforce this approach by pursuing a policy that flaunts the differences in the two countries' conceptions of peace. The destruction of Yamit, intimations of delaying the final withdrawal from Sinai, the narrow interpretation of the autonomy plan and the invasion of Lebanon were all viewed by Cairo as reasons to hold to the distinction between peace and peaceful relations. Indeed, Egypt's standard argument is that “cold peace” is just a reaction to Israeli intransigence, that if it were not for Israel's conduct toward the rest of the Arab world, mutual relations would have been much more meaningful and friendly.

However, this argument neglects the very essence of Egypt's approach to the nature of peace with Israel. The tension between Egypt and Israel attributed to the Lebanon War can be traced – at least in part – to the completion of withdrawal from Sinai six weeks before the start of the war. For it was after Israel's withdrawal that the restrictive interpretation of peace began to be implemented. And Egypt has, in fact, reacted to problems on the

⁸ Butrus Ghali, Egypt's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, expounded on this theory in his writings prior to Sadat's peace initiative. See Eitan Haber, Zeev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, *The Year of the Dove*, New York: Bantam Books, 1979, pp. 56-58.

bilateral level – such as Taba – with much greater vehemence than to the raids on the Iraqi nuclear reactor or the PLO headquarters in Tunis.

Mubarak has also gone beyond the concepts he inherited from Sadat by adopting an apologetic tone in defending the peace. Since 1982, the conclusion of peace has been portrayed not as a matter of Egypt's free choice but rather as a surrender to necessity. Instead of highlighting the prospects it affords, as Sadat did in his day, Mubarak has tended to stress his inability to renounce the peace for fear of provoking a war. He has subtly suggested that peace is an unavoidable result of present circumstances but does not necessarily preclude alternative options in the future, when, as he puts it, "we will have other things to say."⁹ Such statements seem to imply that peace is only a temporary phenomenon, and the semi-official press has already begun to speak explicitly of a "life span" of 15-20 years for treaties of this kind.¹⁰ In the government-controlled mosques it is common to compare the peace treaty to the "Khudaibiyeh Treaty" between the Prophet Muhammad and the tribe that he subsequently subdued by force of arms. Pro-government columnists are now consistently arguing that the peace treaty has become "worthless" and "meaningless." Messages of this sort have been picked up and echoed by the Egyptian public, in the form of a call to steer away from an unconditional commitment to the peace process toward a more skeptical posture. All of this nurtures the tendency to turn Israel from an enemy into an adversary, from a foe into a rival,¹¹ making reversion to overt hostility no less likely than advancement toward friendship.

In this context, Israel's insistence on maximizing normalization is interpreted as an effort to skip directly to the establishment of full peaceful relations without first undergoing the transformation demanded of it. Israel hopes to revolutionize the Arab attitude toward it, but in the process, by expressing dissatisfaction with the format of the peace, has inadvertently highlighted the sense of incompleteness and transience emitted by the Egyptian leadership.

In approaching the practice of peace, then, the Egyptian leadership has opted to try its hand at a very delicate balancing act that requires meticulously observing the letter of the treaty while skimping on the spirit of peace;

⁹ *al-Tadamun*, June 16, 1987.

¹⁰ See, for example, Jallal al-Sayyed's article in *al-Jumhuriyyah*, Cairo, June 11, 1987. Also, ex-Premier Mustafa Khalil defended Sadat's trip to Jerusalem by recalling Saladin's meeting with Richard the Lion Hearted.

¹¹ In Arabic, Egyptians now prefer the term "*hussum*."

enlisting broad support for peace while restricting the involvement therein; keeping the confrontation on the back burner while being careful to avoid a clash; and maintaining a measured level of normalization without allowing the door to swing wide open or, alternatively, to slam shut.

The attempts of some intellectual circles to use the peace process as a springboard for their philosophy, which advocates a revision in Egypt's national self-image, have met with official discouragement. Ideas such as "neutralism," a "Mediterranean orientation," and dissociation from the "Arab nation"¹² are clearly out of step with official thinking, which has tended to ascribe increasing weight to Egypt's Arab and Muslim identity. The peace was therefore destined to be conducted in the shadow of an ideological and emotional commitment to the Arab cause, not as an escape from it. Though hardly surprising, this fact has dampened the hopes placed on peace by a number of marginal groups that, during the initial stage of the process, were its leading supporters.¹³

Meanwhile, on the other side of the border, the comprehension of Egypt's concept of peace and its translation into practice has weakened the Israeli forces pressing for a reconsideration of the conventional beliefs about coexistence with the Arab world. In many ways the nature of the peace with Egypt has armed its veteran critics in Israel with powerful arguments in their fight against further concessions. And thus, ironically, the claims made for peace by its most ardent proponents have been steadily ground down by the abrasion between the diametrically opposite conceptions of it. In Egypt, the champions of active normalization have been shunted aside, while in Israel, the supporters of a dynamic peace have found themselves steadily losing ground.

In these circumstances, the images and prejudices of the pre-peace era have largely remained intact. This is especially evident in Egypt, where the perpetuation of these notions is a matter of policy. Here are a few illustrations:

- The Egyptian authorities have systematically refrained from publishing anything with positive connotations about Israel. On the contrary, the tendency to dwell on Israel's faults is characteristic not only

¹² The public debate was edited in a book by Saad-al-Din Ibrahim, *Egypt's Arabism – Debate of the Seventies*, Cairo, 1987. Also see the pamphlet "An Argument with Hakim over the Arabs and Zionism," published by the Committee for Defence of the National Culture, 1978.

¹³ The Egyptian-Israeli Friendship Associations, which were formed in 1980 both in Cairo (headed by Fuad Iskandarani) and Alexandria (headed by Husni al-Kadi), were disbanded under government pressure.

of the opposition press but of the government-controlled media as well. Deviations from this approach have been short-lived and usually confined to gestures of appeasement or signals of an improvement in the atmosphere at politically judicious moments. The general message of these publications is that Israel, by nature, is constantly scheming and hatching malicious plots or, alternatively, falling apart from within.

- The resort to classic anti-Semitic motifs has become widespread, to the point where Cairo has turned into a center for the dissemination of anti-Semitic writings in Arabic – both original works and translations.¹⁴ Even the semi-official newspapers have opened their columns to quotations from the Protocols of the Elders of Zion,¹⁵ as have popular television series,¹⁶ religious broadcasts,¹⁷ and the like. The message in each case is that sooner or later the Jews are bound to commit treachery.
- The regime has made no attempt to halt – indeed, has not even reacted to – the vigorous campaign of misinformation in the opposition press about Israeli misdoings in Egypt, such as exporting radiation-contaminated food products to Egyptian markets,¹⁸ smuggling in field mice to damage Egyptian crops,¹⁹ introducing the hoof and mouth disease virus,²⁰ unleashing pests in the cotton fields,²¹ and similar acts of deliberate

¹⁴ In the past three years alone more than 20 anti-Semitic books were issued in Cairo, including new translations of classical anti-Semitic pieces such as Henry Ford's *The International Jew*. Among the many examples of original Egyptian anti-Semitic literature are: Abu Islam Ahmad Abdallah, *The Free Masons in the Area 425*, Cairo, 1986; Muhammad Arab, *The Zionist Personality and its Roots in the Torah*, Cairo, 1987; and Wajih Abu Zikra, *The First Terrorists Are Our New Neighbors*, Cairo, 1987.

¹⁵ Usually they rely on quotations from The Protocols based on Ajjaj Nuweihed's translation, the second edition of which is widely distributed in Egypt.

¹⁶ Examples include the docudrama series "al-Ansar," the play "The Star of Mice," and feature films such as "Escape into Prison" and "The Gang."

¹⁷ The most prominent of the anti-Semitic broadcasts are made by Egypt's leading television preacher, Shaykh Metawalli al-Shaarawi (on March 12, 1987 and many other occasions). Also see official publications of *al-Azhar's* religious authorities, for example, the ruling that "International Mothers Day" is a "Jewish-Bahai Conspiracy." (January 19, 1987.)

¹⁸ *al-Ahram*, April 21, 1987 and May 3, 1987.

¹⁹ *al-Sha'b*, May 26, 1987.

²⁰ *al-Ahram*, June 8, 1987.

²¹ *Sawt al-Arab*, March 15, 1987.

sabotage. Particularly galling to Israel was the Egyptian government's silence in the face of the energetic campaign to misrepresent the circumstances in which six Israeli tourists were killed by an Egyptian Central Security soldier at Ras Burka, in the Sinai, in October 1985, and the elevation of the murderer to a national hero driven by purely patriotic motives.²²

- As a corollary of the trend toward a rise in popular commitment to Islam, there has been a spate of propaganda, replete with quotations from the Qur'an, depicting enmity toward Israel as a religious duty and retaliation against the Jews as the inevitable result of long-standing grievances.²³ Unlike Sadat, Mubarak has chosen not to pit himself against religious indoctrination of this kind.

Undoubtedly, over the past decade, both sides have failed to adjust to a posture of lowered expectations that would more closely reflect the true disposition of the peace. But the ideological constraints implied by the Egyptian government's conception of the peace, like the negative messages that permeate the Egyptian media, are not related to Israel's behavior – though they do draw power from Israel's mistakes. As things stand today, they are a negative trend that is likely to continue regardless of other developments, including progress on the Palestinian question.

²² The main arguments are summed up by Adil Hammuda, *Suleiman Khater*, Cairo, 1986.

²³ For example, Muhammad Moro Karkar, *The Zionist Imperialist Challenge, An Islamic Point of View*, Cairo, 1986; Muhammad Abd al Aziz Mansur, *The Jews are Coming*, Cairo, 1978 and Muhammad Qutb, *Current Ideological Trends*, Cairo, 1987.

III. RESTRICTIVE NORMALIZATION

The construct of normalization, based upon the nine main protocols concluded by February 1982,²⁴ was designed to guide the movement of peaceful relations beyond the strict confines of an end to war to the development of common interests and fields of cooperation. From the outset, however, it was understood that economic ties could not, in and of themselves, serve as a reliable guarantee of the peace, for even in the best of circumstances the two economies would have less than a marginal influence on each other. Based on their experience with other nations, both sides were also aware that even a broad range of civilian exchanges would not necessarily bring a political-ideological reconciliation in their wake. It was clear that the encounter between the two societies would have to be closely supervised and would require careful thought in the choosing of the points of contact, lest friction and tension arise out of failures in high-risk spheres. Thus, normalization was conceived more as an educational and demonstrative venture than an instrument for achieving material results.

Nevertheless, the implementation of normalization was perceived by Israel as a gauge for measuring the sincerity of the other side's intentions, while Egypt regarded it as an unavoidable requirement of the peace treaty. What has emerged in practice is a tendency on Mubarak's part to minimize the scope of normalization – compared to what was envisaged, and even committed to paper, in Sadat's day – while Israel has attempted to arouse interest in projects that would entail cooperation on a relatively large scale. The result, at the end of the first decade, is a noticeable decline in the scope and quality of the ties between the two countries, compared with the situation in 1981/82. To a certain degree, this decline is a reflection of Egypt's deceleration of normalization in response to Israel's invasion of Lebanon. But for the most part, it can be traced to a deliberately restrictive line on normalization promoted by the Mubarak regime.

Only in two spheres have the ties between Egypt and Israel reached substantial proportions, and in each of them the decisive factor has been the immediate financial benefit to Egypt:

²⁴ These agreements include civil aviation (February 14, 1980), tourism (March 11, 1980), agricultural cooperation (March 24, 1980), trade (April 20, 1980), cultural exchanges (May 8, 1980), transportation (November 6, 1980), exchange of youth delegations (February 25, 1981), telecommunications (September 13, 1981) and television and radio cooperation (February 6, 1982).

- In 1986/87 Israel purchased about 60 percent of its oil from Egypt. This included approximately 2 million tons, in accordance with the American-endorsed agreement signed in tandem with the peace treaty, plus a similar amount on the spot market. As a result, this made Israel the leading customer for Egyptian oil and created a mutual dependence that has worked quite smoothly. Israel exported \$12.6 million worth of refined products to Egypt in 1986, compared with the direct import of \$179.2 million worth of crude in the same year. During the years 1980-1985, when oil was at a premium, the sum of Egypt's oil revenues from sales to Israel ranged from \$375 – \$473 million per annum.²⁵ The present level of Egypt's oil reserves, however, raises doubts as to Egypt's ability to export significant quantities of oil to Israel beyond the year 2000.

- Outgoing tourism from Israel to Egypt, including non-Israeli visitors, accounted for about 10 percent of Egypt's tourist trade. In 1986, this figure translated into 120,000 people, close to 85 percent of whom travelled by land. In addition, visitors travelling from Israel to the sites in southern Sinai – 37,000 people in 1986 – constitute the main source of income for this region. (Following a drop in Israeli tourism during the first half of 1986, in response to terrorist incidents, the Egyptians actually made special efforts to encourage it.)²⁶ The overriding consideration in this respect is economic and it clearly takes precedence over all political considerations.

Because of Egypt's interest in nurturing these ties, in light of its chronic financial distress, the government has been careful to avoid any disruption in its air and sea links with Israel or in the operation of the border terminal at Rafah; it has even instituted direct dialing between the two countries. Moreover, official pressure has effectively silenced all public debate on the questions of oil sales to or tourism from Israel, and the opposition usually shies away.²⁷ When it comes to these two issues, Mubarak has demonstrated a resolve that does not extend to any other aspect of normalization; in essence, he has exempted them from the restrictions that apply in all other spheres.

²⁵ Exports of refined products from Israel were cut back from a record high of \$63 million in 1985, because of dumping by Kuwait on the Egyptian market.

²⁶ Agreement reached by the Egyptian and Israeli Ministers of Tourism in Jerusalem in August 1986 on marketing joint packages in the West and in the Third World has not been implemented. The same is true for the program to share a budget for encouraging tourism from the United States.

²⁷ During a debate in the Egyptian People's Assembly (March 27, 1983), an opposition member argued that Egypt should not supply fuel to Israeli tanks in Lebanon. Energy Minister Abd-al-Hadi Qandil retorted: "We need the hard currency..."

But while oil and tourism have been handled with an open approach, the full weight of the minimalist doctrine has been exercised in all other fields:

- Administrative measures – such as the special requirement that Egyptian citizens traveling to Israel carry a “yellow card” not demanded of travelers to anywhere else in the world – are used to deter Egyptians from visiting Israel. Moreover, those who apply to the Israeli consulate often receive visits from representatives of the security services. The result is that to date only a few dozen Egyptians have traveled to Israel on private visits.²⁸
- A “special route” has been instituted for obtaining licenses to import goods from Israel and letters of credit. Even after this procedure was streamlined in 1987, in response to Israeli pressure, each license still requires the personal approval of the minister of the economy – previously, it required the Prime Minister’s approval. Potential importers are “advised” to reconsider their plans, and the use of the label “Made in Israel” is strictly forbidden. The result of all this bureaucratic intervention is that neither side’s trade figures for 1986 exceeded \$3-4 million excluding the oil trade, and most of the commercial transactions between the two states, extending to double that amount or more, are still conducted through third parties (Cyprus, Switzerland, etc.).²⁹ Other administrative obstacles include blocking the supply of fresh food and surplus milk from Israel in refrigerated trucks which would replace more expensive imports flown in from Europe.³⁰
- The public sector – accounting for 80 percent of Egypt’s economy – refrains from entering into transactions with Israel as a matter of policy. It was not until 1987, and then as a one-time gesture, that an Israeli company was awarded a \$0.3 million tender to supply fertilizers.

²⁸ A poll taken among educated Egyptians in April 1984 showed that 39 percent of those interviewed were willing to visit Israel, although the majority (75.5 percent) felt that coexistence between Israel and the Arabs is not feasible in the long run. (The poll was conducted by Dr. Salwa al-Omari of the National Center for Social Studies.)

²⁹ Israeli sales to the MFO have been excluded. MFO-destined exports in 1986 reached approximately \$8 million.

³⁰ Egypt has also rejected Israeli offers to arrange for trucks to cross the border instead of back-to-back loading at the border.

- Despite the expressed desire of Egypt's Ministry of Agriculture to acquire technology and knowhow from Israel, cooperation in this field has been confined to very modest proportions – usually to joint studies financed by American institutions. Initiatives taken by the owners of private farms have consistently met with bureaucratic obstructions.³¹
- The efforts of the Israeli Ministry of Energy have met with a similar fate, with most of its ideas about cooperation in the field of solar energy being scotched.³²
- Cultural exchange programs and cooperation between the two countries' national broadcasting authorities have come almost to a total halt.³³

In short, the Egyptian regime has been pursuing a coordinated policy to obstruct any advancement in normalization. There is no doubt, for example, that the private sector has expressed more of a readiness to do business with Israel than the government is willing to allow. The same is true regarding travel to Israel. And while resistance to any contact with Israel is characteristic of certain quarters of Egyptian society, the authorities have consistently quashed all overtures emanating from others. This line has also been toed by the regime's leading officials on a symbolic level: through the social ostracism of Israeli diplomats serving in Cairo; the president's refusal to meet with the Israeli ambassador or defend Egypt's ambassador to Tel Aviv on his return to Cairo; and a general avoidance of visiting Israelis that even extends to the junior ranks of the hierarchy. The unwritten rule seems to be that only those whose positions leave them no choice should have truck with Israelis – and then only in their official capacity. And Israel, in turn, has had little choice but to cultivate the despised group of "fat cats," as they are known in the local jargon, whose chief concern is the making of easy profits. The upshot is that the peace with Israel has become identified with the interests of

³¹ Two Israeli experts take part in experimental projects at the Gumeiza and Nubariya farms. Joint research projects are conducted through TATEC (Transfer of Technology Cooperation) and Calar (with the University of San Diego). Introduction of Israeli seeds and Israeli equipment is under consideration. Two Israeli firms have contracts with a few private sector agricultural farms.

³² Proposals for the establishment of experimental solar energy projects did not reach a conclusive stage. One such proposal for a megawatt solar station has not yet won AID's blessing, citing financial restraints.

³³ Opposition groups in Egypt point to the freeze as a major concession by Mubarak. See Hazen Hashem, *The Israeli Conspiracy Against the Egyptian Mind, Secrets and Documents*, Cairo, 1986.

the entrepreneurs who got rich on Sadat's "*infitah*" policies – some of whom were later discredited in a series of corruption trials.³⁴

The guidelines adopted by the Egyptians – except when it comes to oil and tourism from Israel – appear to be as follows:

- *Shunning long-term or large-scale arrangements that may entail de facto cooperation.* Thus, Egypt has shelved the idea (which so enchanted Sadat) of pumping Nile water to Israel or at least to the occupied territories.³⁵ The same is true for plans to lay a gas pipeline through Sinai,³⁶ join the two states to the same electricity grid,³⁷ lay a telephone cable through Sinai,³⁸ pave a road to Jordan through the southern Negev,³⁹ and join the two countries' railway lines.⁴⁰
- *Showing a preference for multilateral instead of bilateral frameworks especially with American participation – as demonstrated in agricultural research.*

³⁴ See Muhsin Awad, *Egypt and Israel – Five Years of Normalization*, Cairo, 1985 pp. 150-157.

³⁵ Sadat adopted the plan in December 1979 but later backed down under pressure from his advisers and the opposition. According to the proposal of an Israeli engineer, Elisha Kali, Egypt could pump into Israel 0.8 billion cubic meters a year paid for in hard currency. Gaza Strip notables have also approached the Egyptian Government with requests for water. By 1986 Egypt started to carry water into the Sinai through pipelines under the Suez Canal. See Kamal Zahin, *The Nile in Danger*, Cairo, 1980.

³⁶ The Israeli proposal calls for a 300 km gas pipeline from the Western Delta, or the Gulf of Suez, over the Sinai to the Ashqelon terminal, Arad or the Zohar oilfield. Israel would purchase annually the equivalent of 2 million tons of oil. Total investment is calculated at \$40 million with completion of the pipeline within 18 months after commencement. Egypt shelved the plan claiming that the export of gas could be contemplated only after reserves are proven above 12 trillion cubic meters. Israel is willing to buy Egyptian gas in addition to the current level of its oil purchases in Egypt.

³⁷ Technically, connecting the electricity networks does not pose special problems, since both countries rely on the same frequency – 50 cycles per second.

³⁸ Communications rely on a cable to Rome.

³⁹ At Egypt's request, a clause was included in the Camp David Accords allowing for "construction of a highway between Sinai and Jordan near Eilat with guaranteed free and peaceful passage by Egypt and Jordan." No attempt was made to reach a detailed agreement on such a highway. Egypt and Jordan inaugurated in 1986 an alternative route based on ferries between the ports of Aqaba and Nuweiba.

⁴⁰ This was one of Sadat's early proposals.

- *Reducing the Israeli presence on Egyptian soil to an absolute minimum.* This is the reason for Egypt's consistent refusal to grant Israelis resident visas or work permits or to involve Israeli agricultural experts in state-run projects.

Of course, President Mubarak may believe he has important domestic reasons for choosing this policy of containment of relations with Israel. Presumably, he is afraid of sparking off a wave of domestic unrest and negative reactions in the Arab world. Yet, in the process, he has decided to forgo the use of normalization in the way it was envisioned at the start of the peace process, namely, as an instrument for fostering mutual trust and strengthening the forces in Israel that wish to see the process move quickly forward. Despite some minor achievements, normalization has become – in its present form – more of a delaying and deterrent factor than an animating and encouraging one. It is entirely possible that Israel's expectations of the normalization venture are still greatly exaggerated. Even so, in the final analysis, the system of restricted normalization, used as an instrument to retard the development of peaceful relations, has worked like a boomerang and thus misses its mark. Since the 1986 "Basket Agreement," rather than continue the struggle for a redress of its grievances by putting normalization into practice, the Israeli government has tended to make do with what Mubarak is prepared to offer while rejecting the Egyptian pattern of peaceful relations as a model to be emulated on other fronts. In a way that could not have been foreseen, normalization has gone from being an underpinning of peace to a source of suspicion and doubts.

IV. BOYCOTT

The Egyptian government's policy of containment is augmented by a boycott promoted by opposition circles on the left and right which has achieved a considerable degree of success. The government has made no effort to halt these activities. Instead it directs them into acceptable channels, while influential sectors of the establishment have joined as *de facto* partners to the boycott measures. Hence, a system has evolved whereby Egypt's commitments to the Arab boycott of Israel, which were rendered null and void by the peace treaty, have been replaced by a partial and unofficial boycott of its own. While the regime consistently foils independent efforts to pursue contacts with Israel, it permits "spontaneous" actions aimed in the opposite direction.

Whereas Sadat encouraged a measure of opposition to the "unofficial" boycott and sought to punish some of its leading proponents,⁴¹ Mubarak confines himself to ensuring that it remains within manageable limits, lest it infringe on areas that may imperil the peace itself. Though not spawned by orders from above, the boycott has been incorporated into the array of instruments now used to conduct Egypt's policy toward Israel. This has been possible because the advocates of the boycott are careful to stop short of demanding the abrogation of the peace treaty itself. Although they opposed the Camp David Accords at the time, most of these opposition figures have long been resigned to the need to honor the peace in the short run, if only because it would be a mistake to provoke another war over Sinai. Mubarak has not come under any real pressure to renounce the treaty, and support for adhering to it has come even from Ali Sabri, who was Nasser's deputy and is now advocating pan-Arab commitments to Egypt – both financial and military – before an attempt is made to abrogate the treaty. The Communists and Muslim Brotherhood also refrain from urging an immediate renunciation of the peace treaty, while stressing the need to make preparations for such a move. It should be recalled that laws approved by Parliament in 1979/80 bar critics of the peace treaty from participating in Egypt's political life, and this legacy of the Sadat era is still in force – at least theoretically.

Without question, the boycott movement is one by-product of the general current toward democratization, which has extended the opposition's freedom of action regarding the Israeli issue as well. Yet even when Mubarak has cracked down on its efforts to stretch the limits of the permissible, he has not

⁴¹ *al-Wafd*, October 24, 1985.

criticized the boycott campaign. In essence, the boycott has been accorded legitimacy, even respectability, so that organizations closely associated with the establishment are allowed to take an active role in it. Indeed, officials who have been sent to Israel and subsequently found themselves under sharp attack from the opposition have been left in the lurch without backing from the government.⁴² The opposition's boycott has also become something of a scourge against those who flout the dictates of containment and a particularly effective means of deterrence. Thus the civil service has not only avoided contacts with Israel but in many instances has been allowed to thwart cabinet orders requiring dealings with Israelis. In addition, the members of Egypt's military command, trade unions, government-controlled religious establishments, academic and cultural institutions, and even the ruling National Democratic Party have been stricken from the official rolls of people who may come into contact with Israel.

The Coptic Church has declared its own ban on visits to Israel, with the overt encouragement of the government, supposedly as a way of pressuring Jerusalem to settle the long-standing problem of the Deir al-Sultan monastery but actually as a means of obscuring the broad support for peace among the Copts.⁴³

Ad hoc groups that sprouted up within both wings of the opposition have formed a coalition to direct the boycott campaign.⁴⁴ This effort, which originated in the left-wing National Progressive Unionist Grouping and the nationalist-Islamic Socialist Labor Party, has recently been joined by the Wafd Party, which at the start of the 1980s still held to a passive stance. Even the small Liberal Party, which originally greeted the Camp David Accords and the prospect of normalization with unabashed enthusiasm, has joined the boycott ranks. These parties are augmented by the various branches of the Muslim Brotherhood. Thus, the popular support for Sadat's peace initiative is steadily shrinking and has already narrowed substantially the number of politicians, newsmen and businessmen who are prepared to identify themselves with the call for preservation of peaceful relations.

⁴² They include, for example, the attacks on Narim Taqla for allowing his books to be published in Israel.

⁴³ Church officials have explained to the author on several occasions that Pope Shenuda's decision to ban pilgrimage to Jerusalem was taken "after consultations" with top government officials.

⁴⁴ The coalition includes such groups as "The Committee for Support of the Peoples of Lebanon and Palestine," "The Committee for Protection of the National Economy," etc.

In addition to the relentless anti-Israel campaign in the opposition press, the boycott is expressed in a number of ways:

- The publication, from time to time, of blacklists containing the names of individuals and companies that maintain, or are suspected of maintaining, ties with Israel and the demand to boycott them and all their commercial activities in Egypt and other Arab states.⁴⁵
- The publication of declarations of contrition by intellectuals and businessmen who wish to have their names removed from these blacklists. As a rule, these confessions include accusations against Israel and fictitious accounts of nefarious Israeli activities within Egypt.⁴⁶
- Demonstrations are held almost continuously outside the Israeli booths at the Cairo Trade Fair and Book Fair, and although they include the throwing of stones and shouting of hostile slogans, the police have never once acted to forestall such incidents.
- Ceremonies held on significant dates are marked by speeches denouncing Israel and the burning of the Israeli flag.⁴⁷
- All the unions and associations of the free professions have passed resolutions requiring their members to observe the boycott.⁴⁸

Naturally, the entry of two clandestine terrorist groups into the sphere of operations against Israelis in Egypt⁴⁹ has only heightened sensitivities and exacerbated the fear of participating in normalization. Increasing the security around the Israelis, though designed to protect them, has effectively served to isolate them even further. The opposition, meanwhile, tends to display “understanding” for, and certainly has refrained from denouncing, these armed attacks, sometimes insinuating that Israeli intelligence was actually responsible.

⁴⁵ Blacklists were published in the *al-Ahali* newspaper as well as in special publications on the boycott such as *Haqaiq*.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Ariel Shukri’s “Confessions on My Affair with the Israelis” in *al-Sha’b* during May-July 1984.

⁴⁷ Notably, they include ceremonies by the lawyers union.

⁴⁸ Such decisions were adopted by the unions of journalists, lawyers, doctors, artists, etc.

⁴⁹ These are Egypt’s Revolution (of Nasserite Leanings) and an off-shoot of Islamic Jihad.

The fact that the opposition does not call for the abrogation of the peace treaty makes it easier for the regime to maintain the form of peaceful relations. But, at the same time, the relentless opposition boycott of Israel reinforces the regime's own predilections for containing the peace while helping to ensure that normalization remains devoid of substance.

V. RISKS OF DEFENSIVE REDEPLOYMENT

The record on the observance of the peace treaty's military clauses is clear of any serious incidents, and this is the main criterion by which the two sides have measured the stability of the peace until now. There has been no attempt whatsoever to create tension along the Sinai border or pose any immediate military threat. Moreover, throughout the period, a reasonable level of cooperation has been established in dealing with local problems, so that complaints of violations have never escalated to the point of an open crisis.

Thus, for example, the Egyptians halted the construction of fortified positions in Sector B following American intervention. Both countries clearly prefer to behave with discretion in the contacts they conduct through the Joint Military Commission and with the Multilateral Forces and Observers (MFO). They have also chosen to keep the military problems that have cropped up (such as incursions by Israeli planes) as far from the headlines as possible.⁵⁰ Cairo makes a point of preventing anti-Israeli terror actions, whether by Palestinians or Bedouin, from originating on Egyptian soil and, since June 1982, there have been only three incidents of mines planted on the Israeli side of the border. There is also a tendency to block the infiltration of people seeking work in Israel and of smugglers, who sometimes combine the traffic in drugs with gunrunning.⁵¹ The intelligence-gathering operations of the two sides have continued without rising to the level of provocation (which is why the Egyptian attempt to down an Israeli drone over the Red Sea was not publicized).⁵² No less important, Egypt's development program in Sinai and the rise in the area's population bespeak the expectation that the calm will last long enough to justify a heavy investment in the civilian infrastructure.

Yet even as the two states assess the likelihood of hostilities erupting in the near future as "negligible or scant," they continue to regard one another as potential enemies. This attitude has been evident in a number of declarations made by the Egyptian Minister of Defense, Abd al-Halim Abu-Ghazalah, who even intimated that the possibility of future Syrian-Egyptian military

⁵⁰ Both parties refrain from making public statements on such violations and the press in the two countries rarely reports them.

⁵¹ Attempts by PLO-affiliated groups to smuggle weapons and explosives into the Gaza Strip were apparently stopped after the Israelis presented the Egyptians with evidence.

⁵² *Davar*, September 12, 1987.

cooperation should not be ruled out.⁵³ He recently reiterated, in no uncertain terms, that Egypt's Arab commitments take priority over the Camp David Accords, a clear indication that Egypt may prefer to act upon the Arab League Collective Security Pact even if this conflicts with its obligations to the peace treaty with Israel.⁵⁴

Other Egyptian personalities feel free by now to discuss publicly the possibility of another war with Israel. Among them are two former ministers of defense, General Muhammad Fawzi and Amin Huweidi, who are on the record declaring that the defeat of Israel on the battlefield remains a long-term prospect.⁵⁵ One of Egypt's senior columnists, Sabri Abu al-Magd, even wrote bluntly that the grave problems of the Middle East can be solved only through the elimination of Israel.⁵⁶ Since 1982, mutual visits by officers at the General Staff level have been discontinued. Under pressure to explain his restrained response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Mubarak contended, erroneously, that the IDF had massed no fewer than eleven brigades on the Israeli-Egyptian border – a veiled message to the Egyptian public that the danger of a clash has not been neutralized completely. Since the signing of the peace treaty, however, this was the only instance in which Egypt's senior echelon alluded to a state of military alert.

Israeli planners must take Egypt's military strength into consideration in constructing the IDF's order of battle and other aspects of blueprints for the future. The possibility of the Egyptian army's participation in an Arab military coalition, if only in the form of a limited defensive deployment west of the Suez Canal, demands an appropriate IDF response. For even if there were no tangible danger of a military engagement in Sinai, before an Egyptian offensive disposition became evident, Israel would have to divert a large force to this sector, at the expense of its reserves on the eastern and northern fronts. This consideration becomes all the more important in light of the budget cuts the IDF has executed over the past few years on the assumption that peaceful relations would abide.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the barricade, the Egyptians are building their armed forces on the premise that their prime role will continue to be on the Israeli front and they must be capable of fulfilling it without creating any

⁵³ *Haaretz*, January 29, 1987

⁵⁴ *al-Shiraa*, Lebanon, October 27, 1987.

⁵⁵ *Usbu al-Arabi*, October 15, 1987; *Haaretz*, October 25, 1987; and *al-Sha'b*, November 8, 1986.

⁵⁶ *al-Musawwar*, October 24, 1987.

gaps in the deployment of the "Western Command" facing Libya. Like Israel, Egypt has based its strategy on the need to fight on two fronts simultaneously. Toward that end, despite the country's economic difficulties, its military budget has been returned to the level of 1977, after several years of cutbacks. It should be stressed that in the absence of a threat to Egypt from any other source, even the opposition, which is so critical of the peace, they have stridently complained about what it regards as the superfluous growth of the armed forces and their budget.⁵⁷

At present, the change engendered by the peace treaty is expressed as requiring a strong deterrent, rather than the development of an offensive disposition. Through their military maneuvers, each side is signaling the other that it is prepared to mount a holding action in the Sinai Desert. Thus, Israeli exercises reflect a deployment designed to meet an Egyptian attack on the other side of the border. The general drift of the Egyptian exercises is, first, to block an attack by the "Blue State" in the wastes of Sinai by crossing the Canal to prepared defensive positions, and then to shift over to a counterattack to take the Gidi and Mitla passes and continue eastward.

These general strategies reflect Israel's tendency to rule out a preemptive strike against Egypt, on political grounds, and the contrasting Egyptian assessment that the army may be called upon to assert its sovereignty over the entire peninsula from concentrations west of the Canal to make up for the collapse of the peace. The war scenario envisioned by both sides essentially comes down to a race to consolidate their armored divisions within Sinai.

The present Egyptian strategy is based upon the main defensive deployment along Line A in western Sinai. This approach stems, *inter alia*, from the perfectly logical desire to deploy in a way that will secure the Suez Canal and the cities along it from the front. In normal times, the Egyptians deploy on Line A only slightly more than half of the force permitted them by the peace treaty – about half a mechanized division. The Egyptian command has publicly expressed its satisfaction with the system of maintaining a relatively small force in Sinai while the remaining divisions of the Second and Third Armies are stationed west of the canal, where the new military towns are being established (in Geneifa, Ismailia, Kantara, etc.). According to the defense plan constantly being rehearsed by the Egyptian army, (most recently by the Second Army in early October 1987), when necessary five infantry and mechanized divisions will pour into the positions that have

⁵⁷ Criticism of the military budget was quoted by *al-Wafd* (June 12, 1987, July 10, 1987), *al-Sha'b* (June 10, 1987), *al-Ahali* (June 25, 1987), *al-Ahram* (July 5, 1987), and *al-Hawadith* (August 8, 1987).

already been prepared along Line A, while two armored divisions will deploy in their rear. These account for seven of the Egyptian army's 12 divisions. The army is relatively well prepared to execute this defense plan within a single day in tandem with another move – to be carried out in 12-14 hours – to deploy forces closer to the international boundary:

- The Egyptian army maintains fully stocked fuel and ammunition dumps along Line A to meet the needs of the five divisions that are to man the network of fortifications.
- Units frequently practice crossing the Canal to Line A and maintain regular patrols in their sectors.
- The present order of battle on Line A is constructed as a collection of point units and commands up to the company level and not as a single cohesive unit.

The danger implicit in these arrangements is that either in response to fears of an Israeli military initiative – real or imagined – or in a desire to stage a show of force for whatever political purpose, the Egyptian army may activate its defensive plan, in whole or in part, and thus spark off a crisis by violating the military agreements that constitute an integral part of the peace. Moreover, in the event of an Egyptian re-militarization of Western Sinai, Israel will be forced to declare a state of alert and take defensive measures of its own (under pressure from commanders in the field to move forces over the border around Nitzana, where the IDF suffers from a topographical handicap). In the two earlier instances when the Egyptians surprised Israel by sending forces into Sinai – in 1960 and in 1967 – the result was a state of high tension, the second of which spiralled into a war. In the light of the treaty between the two states, the Egyptian defensive plan, if carried through, will have a traumatic effect on the peace. The same is, of course, true of Israeli defensive measures taken in the Negev, which may set off an escalating dynamic of mutual reaction.

The dilemma inherent in this state of affairs is that each side runs certain risks by adopting such defensive doctrines; that is, even if Israel and Egypt do not translate offensive intentions into action, and even if they stick to their resolve to execute only a holding action, they may nonetheless be swept up in a downward spiral toward war. Therefore, to ensure that the peace is not beset by military crises requires both sides not only to abstain from any directly menacing moves, but equally to avoid falling into a conspicuously defensive posture.

The risks inherent in these defense plans are undoubtedly recognized by Syria and may well be taken into account in the planning of a war on Israel's eastern and northern fronts. Hence, the special circumstances on the Sinai front leave room for an option that ultimately cannot be ignored, namely, Egypt's participation in an Arab war coalition solely by assuming a defensive posture and thus effectively demolishing the security arrangements built into the peace, while formally adhering to a state of non-belligerency.

Although a development of this sort may seem no more than a theoretical exercise, it does have bearing on the reforms now being instituted in the Egyptian army and the way they may increase the temptation to fall into this kind of "defensive posture." Without entering into a detailed study of these reforms, we should note three factors that will reduce Israel's reaction time and freedom of maneuver in the event of such a move:

- The process of turning the Egyptian army into a highly mechanized and armored force is at its height, including the creation of four armored and six mechanized divisions, plans for refashioning the last two infantry divisions, and the replacement of outdated Soviet tanks in other divisions.
- The Egyptian air force has achieved the ability to mount deep-penetration strikes over a range that covers Sinai and the Negev, and an additional 120 F-16 and Mirage-2000 fighter planes are currently in the pipeline.
- The Egyptians are in the process of acquiring batteries of mobile surface-to-air missiles of Western manufacture and have already upgraded their older Soviet systems.

It remains an open question as to when the Egyptians will feel that what they now characterize as Israel's definitive military advantage⁵⁸ has been reduced to acceptable proportions and whether, at that time, the political leadership will believe it has acquired enough instruments to shift into a "defensive mode." A decision of this kind will, of course, be influenced by its assessment of the likely American reaction and of the odds that the resulting situation will snowball into a war. In any case, for the foreseeable future, at least, the military balance in Sinai will be an important factor in shaping Egypt's assessment of the prospect of devaluing the peace. Just as the Syrians are striving for "strategic parity" with Israel in order to obtain a military

⁵⁸ See *Arab Strategic Report*, al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, 1985.

option, the Egyptians are striving for a "deterrence parity," in part to obtain the option of retrenchment of the peace.

In private talks, the Egyptian leadership makes no bones about its resentment over the system of limitations that currently obtains in Sinai and the constant American supervision by means of the MFO. The Egyptian opposition has long made this "affront to Egyptian sovereignty" in the peninsula a focus of its criticism of the peace treaty.⁵⁹ And it is clear that at the first opportunity Egypt will request a review of the security arrangements with an eye to moving their "defense line" forward to the Jebel Yelek-Jebel Magharah line in the center of Sinai. An Israeli or American capitulation to such demands, or any further weakening of the MFO,⁶⁰ will only increase the danger that Egypt will opt for a "defensive scenario."

⁵⁹ See, for example, Abd-al-Hamid Muwafi, "Normalization and the Multinational Force in the Sinai," *One Year After Normalization*, Cairo: al-Mawqif al-Arabi, 1987, pp. 112-128.

⁶⁰ The total number of MFO personnel is to be cut soon for financial reasons.

VI. TAKING THE BACK SEAT

From a policy of intense involvement in, and acceptance of direct responsibility for negotiations on the Palestinian question, Egypt under Mubarak has shifted to a distinct line of disengagement from independent activity regarding the occupied territories. Put succinctly, Egypt has essentially moved from behind the wheel into the back seat.

This turnabout reflects an Egyptian calculation that continuing to invest so heavily in this venture runs too great a risk, especially since Israel's stand during the autonomy negotiations effectively ruled out any chance of scoring the kind of achievements that would boost Egypt's status in the inter-Arab arena or enhance the regime's image at home. In retrospect, it appears that already at a very early stage, perhaps as early as the summer of 1979, Sadat himself was tending toward the conclusion that Egypt's attempt to dictate a model for an interim settlement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the other Arab states only heightened their resistance to the Israeli-Egyptian peace. Gradually it dawned on the Egyptians that their unilateral effort on the Palestinians' behalf was making their peace with Israel vulnerable to Arab rejection. Bitter as it may have been, the resentment over Egypt's secession from the military equation was actually overshadowed by fears that Cairo intended to extend its patronage and hegemony to the issue that was at the very heart of the historic conflict.⁶¹

Paradoxically, it turned out that in the form of a separate deal – which both Sadat and Carter had been so concerned to avoid – the peace with Israel proved to be less offensive to Arab sensibilities. From the moment both Jordan and the PLO refused to participate in negotiations based on the Camp David agreements, Egypt no longer had any incentive to act as their self-appointed champion in advancing the autonomy scheme. Rather than serving as an asset that would bolster the peace, Egypt's role as the guardian of other Arab interests had become a liability. Thus, disappointment over Menachem Begin's narrow interpretation of the "self-governing authority" merely accelerated Sadat's decision to declare a suspension in the negotiations.⁶²

⁶¹ See the Egyptian position on the negotiations in the "Establishment of transitional arrangements for the West Bank and Gaza 1979-80," published by the Foreign Ministry in Cairo.

⁶² See Moshe Shemesh, "Egypt's Commitments to the Palestinian Cause," *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 34, Winter 1985.

Since the start of his presidency, Mubarak has made a point of completing this about-face by turning the suspension of the negotiations into the burial of the autonomy plan. He publicly and adamantly dissociated himself from the commitment to stay the course established at Camp David by renegeing on the pledge to take a leading role in the settlement of the Palestinian problem and by dramatically diminishing Egypt's involvement with the occupied territories. Naturally, the explanation for this move was designed to pass the blame onto Israel, which was hardly overwhelmed by grief at the conclusion of this chapter of the experiment. In essence, however, Mubarak's message to the Arab world was that Egypt's peace strategy stopped at the border of Sinai and short of anything that was not purely in the Egyptian national interest. Moreover, any discrepancy between that interest and the principles adopted by the majority of the Arab states has been deliberately obscured. In fact, Mubarak is able to preach the exclusivity of a political solution by invoking the resolutions of the pan-Arab summit conferences. Yet rather than play the lead role, he is quite content with retiring to an advisory capacity. Egypt is prepared to volunteer its "good offices" but is no longer interested in being a prime mover and certainly does not intend to dictate the character of any future settlement.

This policy switch, along with other developments in the region, has helped Egypt mend its relations with most of the other Arab states and, incidentally, to obtain tacit acceptance of the peace treaty itself. The removal of the autonomy "hurdle" opened the way for renewing diplomatic relations with Jordan and for an open, albeit mercurial, flirtation with Arafat's PLO; for the resumption of generous aid from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states; for broad-based cooperation with Iraq; and, in time, even for a marked improvement in relations with the Soviet Union.⁶³ Paradoxically, Egypt's isolation was not relieved until it forfeited the very card that was supposed to have precluded the kind of boycott approved at the Baghdad summit in 1978.

Stripped of the Palestinian dimension built into the Israeli-Egyptian peace, the treaty itself became an acceptable paradigm in the Arabs' estimation (even if Egypt has continued to be subjected to criticism for betraying the principle of collective action *vis-a-vis* Israel). From that point onward, the gap between Mubarak's diplomatic stance on what should ensue and the position of some of the Arab states – as reflected in part in the "Fez resolutions" – quickly closed.

⁶³ Improved Soviet-Egyptian relations have included the resumption of full-scale diplomatic contacts, agreements on re-scheduling of military debts and economic cooperation, and possible arrangements to allow Soviet naval units to refuel occasionally in Egyptian ports.

Seeing that no crisis resulted from its disavowal of the Camp David Accords, Egypt has dropped not only the negotiating procedures spelled out in those agreements but also the principles established as a framework for negotiating the fate of the territories – that is, not just the autonomy talks but also the autonomy plan. With the exception of one brief, abortive attempt in the autumn of 1986, prior to the Mubarak-Peres summit in Alexandria, the Egyptians have not applied themselves to formulating a joint “declaration of intentions” with Israel, since the fruitless effort made through American mediation in mid-1980. Mubarak has preferred to leave the initiative to King Hussein and to help negotiations in a completely new format, both by contributing to the conclusion of the ambiguous Hussein-Arafat agreement of February 11, 1985,⁶⁴ and by supporting the idea of an international conference. Mubarak has been involved more in hammering out formulas to prepare an Arab partner for talks with Israel than in narrowing the gap between the Israeli and Arab positions, though he has always been willing to serve as the initial address for any Israeli concession that would lead to an understanding on Palestinian self-determination. Egypt does not want, of course, to be excluded from future peace moves, but it does decline to take the lead.

In the occupied territories, conscious of its inability to spur Israel toward any significant change, Egypt has stopped proposing any practical course of action, though it continues to speak out on issues such as the Israeli settlements, the expropriation of land, and the curbing of political liberties. Since 1980, the Egyptians have also declined to propose specific measures regarding the cultivation of the local leadership in the occupied territories, shelving its former demand to resurrect the National Guidance Council (disbanded by Israel), or to create a council of mayors in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Today, Egypt maintains ties with a number of factions in the occupied territories without indicating a clear preference for any one of them.

In part, this shift is a corollary of Egypt’s decision to renew its support for the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people – a recognition that remained in effect even when Arafat rejected the Egyptian demand, phrased almost as an ultimatum, to accept Security Council Resolution 242. Mubarak has chosen the role of Arafat’s champion against both Jordan and Israel, after helping the Palestinian leader recover from his expulsion by the Syrians from the Bekaa Valley and Tripoli. Mubarak kept channels open to Arafat even at the nadir of their uneasy alliance, in line with the approach that prefers a future Jordanian-Palestinian confederation but

⁶⁴ The first draft of the Jordan-PLO accord was suggested by Mubarak’s chief foreign policy adviser, Dr. Osama al-Baz.

does not preclude other possibilities. Egypt has thus gone from running interference for Arafat to encouraging him to carry the ball on his own. As the Egyptians see it, Arafat may have erred in his choice of policy, but it is not up to them to drive him out of the arena.

Once again, this approach has proved to have distinct advantages, in terms of both Egyptian and wider Arab public opinion, by enabling Mubarak to purge the peace of any hint of defeatism or sell-out. The price, however, has been the suppression of any Egyptian initiative to prod Jordan, or any alternative Palestinian representatives, to the negotiating table. In any event, Mubarak doubts the efficacy of bypassing the PLO, and it is clear that he ascribes less importance to the urgency of instituting negotiations on the Palestinian question than to the durability of such talks. This lack of urgency illustrates the relative comfort the Egyptians have felt since their escape from the handcuffs of Camp David.

On a pragmatic, everyday level, Egypt's policy toward the Palestinians has been adapted in the following ways:

- *Relinquishing special responsibility for the Gaza Strip.* Even though Egypt claims that its former status in Gaza entitles it to be represented in any proposed international conference, in practice, Egypt has steadily dissociated itself from any special responsibility toward the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip and has even wittingly contributed to the demise of the pro-Egyptian lobby, which has played a pivotal role in Gaza since 1967. Not only has Mubarak failed to encourage the traditional pilgrimages to Cairo by Gazan personalities, he has made it known that Egypt is not interested in cultivating influence in Gaza by meting out favors. In order to leave no doubt, after halting the *Haj* pilgrimage to Mecca via Egypt, Cairo stopped accepting Gazan students in Egyptian universities. (In the past the annual number of such students was about 1,500.) Government institutions refuse to recognize diplomas granted by the Gaza branch of al-Azhar University, and they place obstacles in the path of Palestinians applying for *laissez passers*, resident visas, and work permits. There has also been a cutback in the number of Gazans included in the quota of teachers and laborers allowed to work in the Gulf states, and Egypt has turned down requests to allow the export of citrus fruits – the mainstay of Gaza's economy – via Port Said. Finally, Palestinians residing in Egypt are being forced to sell off their real estate within the next three years and can no longer purchase property of any kind.

This policy has prompted a spate of protests from the population of the Gaza Strip, but it clearly demonstrates that Egypt has no intention of

creating a sphere of influence on the other side of the border or intervening in the internal balance of forces. Israel welcomes this trend, as does Jordan – which is gingerly trying to fill the void left by the Egyptians – and so far pressure on Egypt from the PLO to increase its interest in the Gaza Strip has not borne any fruit.

- *Balancing between Jordan and the PLO in the West Bank.* Rather than commit themselves in either direction, the Egyptians are trying to maintain parallel relations with both rivals in this arena. On the one hand, at King Hussein's request, Cairo requires West Bank residents wishing to enter Egypt to travel via Amman. But it also permits those West Bank personalities who are barred from entering Jordan because of their association with the PLO to fly directly from Ben-Gurion Airport. Similarly, while highlighting support for such Jordanian initiatives in the occupied territories as the appointment of mayors, opening of branches of the Cairo-Amman Bank and plans for economic development, Egypt extends a measure of aid to the PLO and its local supporters, including the East Jerusalem press. Egypt supports the activities of the Cairo-based representatives of Fatah's "Western Sector" – the department dealing with the occupied territories – and of PLO organs extending financial assistance to the West Bank; maintains the base of the PLO's Ayn Jalut Brigade; and extends aid to the *al-Quds* and *al-Bayader* newspapers. As a rule, however, the staff of the Egyptian embassy in Tel Aviv spends more of its time in the territories enlisting expressions of support for Egyptian policy and fighting the boycott declared against it than intervening in Palestinian political struggles.

Consequently, Egypt has ingratiated itself with both Jordan and the PLO by its conduct as well as its policy. To a large degree this observation holds true for Israel, as well, and the impact of Egypt's approach on its bilateral relations with Israel is very interesting to see. On the plane of rhetoric, Cairo continues to link the quality and scope of normalization to progress on the Palestinian question. Yet in passing the reins to Jordan and the PLO, it has obviously changed the basic equilibrium of the situation, in that a lack of progress can no longer be deemed as exclusively Israel's fault. Rather than regard Israeli intransigence as a direct challenge to Egypt's strategy, the Egyptian leadership has also attributed the lack of progress to differences of opinion and lack of resolve within the Arab camp.

In the process, the principle of linkage has become less rigid. The strong current of isolationism, or at least domestic orientation, in Egypt – like the underlying resentment of the Palestinians – is congruent with the new approach depicting peace as an expression of Egypt's needs, not the result of an

overture made in the spirit of pan-Arabism. The solution of the Palestinian issue has been presented as an Egyptian national interest – though not of the highest priority – rather than an effort made to demonstrate Arab solidarity. Hence, on a day-to-day level, the tension with Israel over the lack of a comprehensive solution has lost some of its bite. Denouncing Israel's conduct has, to a large degree, replaced taking sanctions against it. Egypt's interest, along with the level of its involvement, in the Palestinian cause has abated, and the negative influence of this issue on ongoing relations has concomitantly diminished. Thus, while it may have been decelerated, normalization is no longer conditional upon progress toward a comprehensive solution. Its character has been forged by other considerations, even if the rhetoric surrounding it continues to invoke the original condition of linkage.

Lately, the conflict with Israel is often described as stemming from a bilateral rivalry for influence in the region, rather than from an Egyptian obligation to correct an injustice done to the Palestinians. Namely, Egypt has its own national reasons to oppose Israel, regardless of the Palestinian cause. As defined by al-Sayed Yassin, Director of al-Ahram's Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Israel is the "number one enemy" of "Arab national security," – in other words – a solution of "territorial problems" does not cancel the rivalry between Egypt and Israel.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ *al-Tadamun*, October 10, 1987.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Ten years of peaceful relations between Egypt and Israel have produced some unexpected results. Despite the assassination of Sadat, Israel's war in Lebanon, and a series of bilateral crises, the treaty itself remains essentially intact – a fact that should not be taken for granted given the grave doubts expressed about its viability from its very inception. Moreover, the conventional wisdom that the “separate peace” could only survive if it became part of a more comprehensive solution, has proved to be quite incorrect. On the contrary, part of the reason for the survival of the peace is precisely because it has been decoupled from the fate of the Palestinians and has been restricted instead to a bilateral affair.

The good news then is that the peace has survived. The bad news is that it remains very much a “cold peace.” And since this frigidity stems primarily from ideological constraints imposed by Egypt's approach to Israel, and from its doctrine of restrictive normalization, it is difficult to foresee any change for the better in the next decade. Indeed, even progress on a solution for the Palestinians cannot be expected to produce a reversal in the situation. For while it is true that lack of progress on this issue no longer endangers the peace treaty, it is equally likely that actual progress will generate new strains in the bilateral relationship. For example, if negotiations get under way between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians, they will inevitably be marred by setbacks and profound differences. In this context, Egypt will come under Arab pressure to take “punitive measures” against Israel as a way of exerting leverage.

Thus, it should be understood that while pursuing a comprehensive peace has its own logic, it cannot serve as a panacea for the problems that now exist in the Egyptian-Israeli relationship. Indeed, it is essential to avoid any policy that would require a reinstitution of the linkage between peaceful relations and progress on the Palestinian question. Any progress in this sphere should of course be exploited to improve the climate of relations between Egypt and Israel. But it is preferable to restrict Cairo's direct involvement in this stage of the peace process and imperative to prevent the Palestinian question from again becoming the prime issue in relations between the two states.

Future efforts to secure the bilateral peace should instead concentrate on chipping away at the obstacles to normalization by creating additional mutual interests, beyond the avoidance of war, that are themselves dependent upon continued peace. Although no dramatic achievements can be expected in this area, there are a few possibilities for progress which can be encouraged by

gentle reminders that the scope of American aid to Egypt depends on the quality of peaceful relations.

In terms of normalization, the following actions should be considered:

- *Promoting projects that foster long-range common interests and require a common infrastructure.* A number of ideas that have been raised over the past years are economically promising, such as laying gas and oil pipelines from Egypt to Israel via Sinai – with or without the addition of a refinery to serve Egypt's needs for refined oil products – and joining the two countries' electricity grids.
- *Resolving the problems that have blocked the development of commercial relations on a scale consonant with the area's economic potential.* Beyond revoking the administrative restrictions in Egypt, it will be necessary to settle the problem of insurance for foreign trade, to reach an agreement on the movement of trucks over the border, and so on. Even a conservative estimate suggests that such measures will quickly lead to a four-to-five-fold increase in the volume of each side's trade.
- *Pursuing the Egyptian interest in Israeli knowhow in various fields of agriculture.* The most promising of these areas are: systems of desert agriculture and salt-water irrigation; the exchange of seeds and strains; upgrading the quality of sheep and cattle; and perhaps even the development, on a modest scale, of experimental farms. Similarly there is room for advancement in the field of solar energy for home use.
- *Promoting the joint development of tourism to both countries.* This offers the prospect of immediate results and requires not only jointly marketing the packages but also opening additional flight routes – between Luxor and Eilat, for example – and offering new incentives.
- *Implementing the two countries' cultural exchange agreements.*

Moves of this kind are likely to encounter financial difficulties. Egypt's insistence that joint projects with Israel be financed by outside parties and its general preference for trilateral or multilateral frameworks may make it necessary to create a suitable apparatus for encouraging such projects. It might assume the form of a quatra-lateral body – comprising representatives of Egypt, Israel, the United States, and the Common Market (possibly with Japan, too) – with a certain percentage of the money allocated for economic assistance to the two states being earmarked for this purpose.

It is also important to encourage Egypt's development efforts in the Sinai peninsula, especially in the fields of agriculture and construction, as a way of strengthening its motive to avoid military tension along the border. In the service of this aim, the Egyptians should be discretely but firmly discouraged from calling for a review of the supervisory and limitation-of-forces arrangements in the peninsula.

In a larger sense, the mere discussion of these suggestions illustrates how low the expectations of the relationship have become. In the heady days prior to 1982, when agreements on bilateral cooperation were reached in a steady stream, support for (though not necessarily implementation of) these proposals would have been routine. Today, given the political climate in Cairo, even consideration of such ideas would be considered an extraordinary concession, bordering on "capitulation."

As "full partner" in the Camp David process, Washington should be concerned over such retrogression in the scope of the Egyptian-Israeli relationship. Brokering the peace treaty may have been America's greatest diplomatic achievement of the past decade, but it is an achievement that needs continual nurturing to retain its vibrance and relevance. Whereas the declaration of the 1982 Reagan Plan signalled U.S. assent to the death of one part of the peace treaty, namely the framework on autonomy, Washington must be vigilant lest the rest of the peace slip into the coma of non-belligerence. Not only would the strength of the treaty suffer, but the appeal of America as mediator for resolving Middle Eastern disputes would suffer as well. Preventing further backsliding and promoting the bilateral construct of the peace treaty deserve a prominent position in the list of America's regional priorities. After all, the ceaseless quest for the most invaluable of diplomatic commodities - credibility - depends at least as much on shoring up commitments once made as on undertaking new ones.

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