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**The U.S. and Egypt 1974-1978:
the Building of a Partnership**

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Abstract

Questo lavoro di tesi si occupa delle relazioni tra Stati Uniti ed Egitto negli anni '70 del 1900, in particolare dal 1974 al 1978, quando le due parti passarono ad essere da antagonisti a partners, sia per quanto riguarda il processo diplomatico che l'assistenza economica e militare. Si è voluto cercare di esaminare lungo quali linee direttrici tale controversa alleanza si sia venuta a costituire, quali interessi internazionali e regionali abbiano contribuito a far collaborare la potenza americana e la maggiore potenza araba negli anni della Guerra Fredda. A tal fine si è proceduto per gradi, dal contesto generale, al particolare.

La tesi si apre con un capitolo volto a tracciare una panoramica dei rapporti tra Stati Uniti e Medio Oriente durante la Guerra Fredda. Dopo la Seconda Guerra mondiale gli U.S.A. abbandonarono la dottrina non-interventista a favore di un intervento diretto nella regione. Essa era infatti particolarmente importante dal punto di vista strategico ed era fondamentale impedire che venisse travolta dall'influenza sovietica. I principali interessi che guidarono la politica degli U.S.A. in Medio Oriente durante la Guerra Fredda possono essere riassunti nella formula "petrolio, Israele e contenimento del Comunismo". Essi erano strettamente interconnessi e la loro importanza naturalmente cambiò nel tempo a seconda degli sviluppi internazionali e delle priorità geopolitiche degli U.S.A.. Oltre alla componente strategica è però anche importante capire con che mentalità gli U.S.A. si siano approcciati al Medio Oriente. Essi infatti si erano formati un bagaglio di preconcetti dai resoconti di mercanti e viaggiatori che erano destinati a permanere nell'immaginario americano fino all'età contemporanea. L'Oriente era visto come qualcosa di esotico, inferiore, barbaro e pericoloso, incapace di determinarsi da solo, e da civilizzare. Tale idea si rifletteva, e si riflette ancora, anche nel mondo arabo. Poi, la tesi prosegue concentrandosi sulla contrapposizione tra U.S.A. e U.R.S.S., su come i primi siano arrivati a percepire l'Unione Sovietica come una minaccia. Si era venuta a creare dagli anni '40 una visione dicotomica del mondo, secondo due sistemi ideologici in antitesi e in lotta tra loro per annoverare sempre più alleati in ciascun campo. Questo contrasto non sfociò mai in ostilità dirette e per questo venne denominato "Guerra Fredda", ma caratterizzò diversi conflitti regionali. Di particolare importanza fu la regione del Medio Oriente, dove negli anni '50 la contrapposizione tra ideologie strategiche venne associata al conflitto tra nazionalismo arabo e i residui del colonialismo britannico e francese. Per quanto un "non allineato", l'Egitto di Nasser scelse di stare dalla parte dell'U.R.S.S. e contro l'imperialismo britannico.

Nel secondo capitolo, quindi, si passano in rassegna i principali eventi che hanno costituito le tappe fondamentali per l'evolversi della relazione tra Stati Uniti ed Egitto. Prima di tutto si è posta l'attenzione ai fattori che hanno reso la repubblica una delle nazioni arabe più rilevanti, nella regione mediorientale e per gli U.S.A.. Esso è un paese di antica cultura, posizione strategica e notevoli risorse. Per questo l'accordo tra Unione Sovietica ed Egitto per la vendita di armi tramite intermediari cecchi segnò un punto di svolta nella relazione tra quest'ultimo e gli U.S.A., in quanto rappresentò la nascita di una nuova e sgradita partnership, anche se l'U.R.S.S. non risultava direttamente coinvolta nell'affare. Nonostante ciò, gli Stati Uniti non abbandonarono la loro strategia volta a portare l'Egitto nel loro campo. Washington cercò di offrire aiuti economici per la costruzione di una nuova diga ad Aswan, oltre che aiuto diplomatico per la risoluzione del conflitto arabo-israeliano, che si perpetrava fin dalla costituzione di Israele stesso nel 1948. Quest'offerta di aiuti fu una delle cause da cui scaturì poi la Crisi di Suez del 1956. Quando arrivò, infatti, fu chiaro che essa era connessa a uno stretto controllo sull'economia egiziana da parte della Banca Mondiale, e a progressi politici a favore di Israele. Davanti a tali condizioni, Nasser non accettò subito. Varie forze politiche fecero pressione sul presidente Eisenhower perché l'offerta fosse ritirata e così avvenne. Di conseguenza, Nasser nazionalizzò il Canale di Suez, dalle cui rendite si aspettava di ricavare finanziamenti per la diga. Gran Bretagna e Francia, contro il parere degli U.S.A. e in collaborazione con Israele, entrarono quindi in un conflitto vero e proprio con l'Egitto. Grazie alle pressioni statunitensi sugli alleati europei e su Israele, la crisi non si protrasse a lungo. Al suo termine, Francia e Gran Bretagna furono definitivamente estromesse dal ruolo di potenze influenti in Medio Oriente, e il loro posto venne occupato dagli U.S.A.. Tuttavia, le relazioni tra U.S.A. ed Egitto, dopo un breve miglioramento con Kennedy, peggiorarono con Johnson. Fu durante la sua presidenza appunto che scoppiò la Guerra dei Sei Giorni, nel 1967. Israele attaccò Egitto, Siria e Giordania e gli U.S.A. non intervennero come in precedenza per fermarlo, ma lasciarono semplicemente che le operazioni armate iniziassero. La contrapposizione tra U.S.A. e U.R.S.S. venne a sovrapporsi a quella tra israeliani e arabi, dato che le due potenze supportarono ciascuna i propri alleati. Rapidamente Israele sottrasse Gaza e il Sinai all'Egitto, la Cisgiordania e Gerusalemme est alla Giordania e le alture del Golan alla Siria. Una importante conseguenza di tale conflitto fu la risoluzione O.N.U. 242 con la quale fu stabilita la pace, che sanciva una formula di "pace in cambio di territorio" che gli arabi non accettarono. Inoltre Egitto e Stati Uniti ruppero le

relazioni diplomatiche in seguito a delle accuse mosse da Nasser circa un coinvolgimento americano in attacchi aerei. Gli scontri armati però non si arrestarono. Le schermaglie che c'erano state lungo il confine tra Egitto e Israele aumentarono sempre più di intensità fino a sfociare in una vera e propria guerra nel 1968, la cosiddetta Guerra di Attrito. Nel frattempo Nixon aveva sostituito Johnson a Washington, ed egli sembrava più rivolto a cercare una soluzione alla disputa arabo-israeliana. Il suo consigliere per la sicurezza nazionale Henry Kissinger, invece, aveva come obiettivo primario l'estromissione dei sovietici dal Medio Oriente e credeva che un'impasse diplomatica potesse servire agli U.S.A. per dimostrare l'inutilità di un'alleanza arabo-sovietica. Lo scontro si attenuò solo più di un anno dopo grazie a un "cessate il fuoco" proposto dagli U.S.A.. La morte di Nasser nel settembre 1970 segnò la fine di un'era. Il suo successore, Anwar Sadat, era considerato meno radicale ed era più predisposto a soluzioni diplomatiche per riprendersi il Sinai. Il cambio di direzione divenne presto evidente con l'espulsione di gran parte dei consiglieri sovietici presenti in Egitto nel luglio del 1972. Come dimostrato da vari studi tuttavia, la svolta di Sadat verso il campo degli Stati Uniti era iniziata già nel 1971, quando importanti contatti erano stati stabiliti. Questo però non impedì un altro conflitto tra Egitto ed Israele. Sadat non tollerava lo stallo diplomatico che si era venuto a creare ed aveva preso l'iniziativa per smuovere le acque in maniera non pacifica. Egitto e Siria nell'ottobre 1973 attaccarono Israele, il quale vinse sul campo, ma non in modo così schiacciante come ci si sarebbe aspettati. In realtà, la Guerra di Ottobre migliorò le relazioni tra Egitto e U.S.A. perché Sadat comprese che Kissinger era un valido partner per raggiungere il suo obiettivo di pace ed iniziare dei negoziati, e che solo Washington era veramente in grado di influenzare Israele nel futuro processo di pace. La guerra ebbe anche importanti ripercussioni su tutto lo scenario mondiale a causa della crisi petrolifera che ne era scaturita. Dal 1973 in poi, la politica americana si distanziò dal suo corso tradizionale che non prevedeva un coinvolgimento diretto nei dissidi arabo-israeliani, grazie alla nuova relazione che stava prendendo forma con l'Egitto. Una collaborazione era ora possibile, ed auspicata da entrambe le parti. Kissinger prese in mano le redini dei negoziati, e raggiunse un primo successo quando la Conferenza di pace di Ginevra venne convocata nel dicembre 1973. Anche se non ci furono risultati concreti, si era riusciti a radunare assieme arabi e israeliani ed entrambi avevano accettato l'approccio negoziale "passo a passo" proposto da Washington.

Il processo diplomatico successivo viene trattato diffusamente nel terzo capitolo, diviso in

due parti: nella prima si descrivono le fasi dei negoziati condotti da Kissinger durante le presidenze Nixon e Ford che portarono a un primo accordo per il ritiro delle truppe tra Egitto e Israele nel 1974 e a un secondo nel 1975, grazie ai quali al primo fu resa parte della penisola del Sinai in cambio di concessioni politiche e militari. Nella seconda parte si osserva invece la politica americana verso il conflitto dei primi due anni della presidenza Carter, sfociata negli accordi di Camp David nel 1978. Oltre che sulla letteratura di autorità consolidata sull'argomento, ci si è appoggiati anche su documenti americani dell'epoca per ripercorrere la cronologia ufficiale da una prospettiva critica e si è potuto così allargare lo scorcio su alcuni aspetti trattati talvolta solo di sfuggita dagli autori noti. Ci riferiamo in particolare al ruolo giocato dalla personalità di Sadat per la riuscita dei negoziati mediati dagli americani, alla strategia di Kissinger per escludere i sovietici da tali negoziati, all'emergere delle lobbies "pro-Israele" come attore significativo nella relazione U.S.A.–Egitto. Troviamo inoltre conferma della consapevolezza che esisteva nell'amministrazione Carter al suo inizio del fatto che un successo diplomatico fosse assolutamente necessario per scongiurare un ritorno dell'influenza sovietica in Egitto. Abbiamo insomma una visione più completa di come agirono gli attori principali e da quali considerazioni furono spinti.

Parallelamente al forgiarsi di una collaborazione diplomatica, la relazione tra Egitto e U.S.A. si evolvè anche nell'ambito economico e militare. Su questo è centrato l'ultimo capitolo, volto ad analizzare brevemente la situazione in questo campo dal 1974 al 1978. Dopo una parte iniziale in cui si spiegano le principali dinamiche e propositi degli aiuti esteri in termini generali, l'attenzione si sposta sulla politica interna degli Stati Uniti. Vediamo i programmi di assistenza principali, le loro finalità e l'influenza che su di essi hanno la struttura del sistema di governo americano e altri fattori ideologici e culturali. Dunque vi è una panoramica del programma di assistenza economica e militare, in particolare si vede come questi siano stati indirizzati da interessi essenzialmente politici. Oltre agli aspetti positivi è dato brevemente conto anche delle ripercussioni negative date sull'economia, sulla società egiziana e sui rapporti con gli altri stati arabi dagli aiuti americani.

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Introduction

Time and again, the United States and Egypt have been depicted as united in a firm partnership. Even before Barack Obama's election, in 2008, great hopes had been put in this candidate of Muslim origins who seemed to carry with him something revolutionary. He actually seemed capable to bring the American values closer to the Egyptian people.¹ Once elected, it became clear that advancement of human rights, with particular attention to the rights of women, would be an issue that would characterize the bilateral relation, along with the ever-present component of the conflict between Egyptian concerns and the U.S. national and international security interests.² And, notwithstanding the possible frictions, Egypt remained the second major aid receiver after Israel³ and an important commercial partner. It was still a key state for the U.S. policy in the Middle East, for the Arab-Israeli peace deriving from the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty and for the fight against Islamic terrorism.

But has it always been so? How did the two countries come to create such a partnership? In which historical and ideological context did this development insert itself? Through which stages did it happen? This work will attempt to make answers to these questions explicit. Understanding the dynamics which acted during the diplomatic process between Egypt and Israel, which resulted in the Camp David Accords, will be of particular importance, starting from the reasons why the Egyptian President Sadat chose this path. To what extent was the U.S. economic and military assistance to Egypt connected to the peace process with Israel? The main focus of this dissertation is the period between 1974 and 1978, because it was right in these years that the seeds of some patterns still present and relevant for American policy in the country were sown. And it was at this time that the two consolidated their relations, becoming from antagonists to partners.

The bibliographic core of this work is made up by the books of William B. Quandt, Anwar Sadat, and Henry Kissinger. Through his *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* and *Camp David. Peacemaking and Politics*, Quandt provides a

¹ T.L. Friedman, *Obama on the Nile*, June 11, 2008, at www.nytimes.com/2008/06/11/opinion/11friedman.html accessed May 15, 2012

² I. Black, *Barack Obama serves notice on Egypt: I meant what I said about human rights*, May 12, 2010, at www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/may/12/barack_obama_human_rights_egypt accessed May 15, 2012

³ It was so at least until Fiscal Year 2010, when Egypt was fifth, behind Afghanistan, Israel, Pakistan, and Haiti. See J.M. Sharp, "Egypt: the January 25 Revolution and Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy", CRS Report for Congress, February 11, 2011, at fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/157112.pdf accessed May 15, 2012

lucid vision of the Middle East policy of Nixon, Ford, and especially Carter. In fact, in those years he himself was involved in the U.S.' deliberations, as a member of the National Security Council staff, the main instrument through which the President consults his advisors in the decisional process for national security and foreign policy issues. His narrative was complemented by the version of Sadat, who, in his autobiography *In Search of Identity*, goes over the most noteworthy stages of his public life and gives his point of view about the Egyptian rapprochement to the U.S.. Even if it may be that such opinions were emphasized due to the President's eagerness to align himself with the U.S., they are anyway vital to understand the perspective from which he adopted the "shift of alliances", from the Soviet camp to the American one. In *Years of Upheaval*, Kissinger helps to draw a picture of Sadat. Indeed, he describes his meetings with foreign leaders in great detail, providing useful indications of how the diplomatic process took place. Undoubtedly, it is a version in which personal feelings are mixed up with an objective account, but this does not make it any less interesting. Other books which were fundamental for this dissertation were Kenneth Stein and Steven Spiegel's *Heroic Diplomacy*, by the former, gathers together a wide series of interviews and meetings' accounts with diplomats, politicians, ambassadors, and officers, both Egyptian, Israeli and American. They supply his work with details which can be derived only from personal memories, and clarify interpersonal dynamics which otherwise would not come out from official reports. In *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Steven Spiegel, on the other hand, looks more closely on trends in U.S. domestic politics from which one can infer that different forces influence relations between the U.S. and Egypt, in particular "pro-Israel" ones. Of these sources, whose authority is well-established, a critic has been made.

The novelty of this work lies in the comparison of the main sources between them in order to see which aspects were underlined in a book that maybe did not figure in another. We tried to investigate, moreover, whether the account delineated by those authors found confirmation in American official documents of the time, particularly as far as the critical moments in the U.S.-Egyptian relationship were concerned. Accordingly, declassified documents from the C.I.A., the National Security Archives, and the Jimmy Carter Library were taken into consideration. They allowed a broadening in the perspective on some points that have sometimes been dealt with only in passing by the literature we know.

The dissertation is structured into four chapters. The first one is aimed at tracing the general context of the U.S.-Egyptian relations in the 1970s, by giving a broad picture of the

United States and the Middle East during the Cold War. First of all, basic U.S. interests in the region, namely, oil, Israel, and containment of Communism are described. How these interests evolved during the various presidencies, from Truman to Carter is examined. Then we pass to illustrate the attitude with which, traditionally, America and the West in general have approached the Middle East and how the ideological division between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. came into being. Subsequently, the focus was moved on the Middle East in particular, on to what extent the Cold War affected this region. The chapter closes with a consideration about one particular country – Egypt – and one particular year – 1973 – being crucial to American policy there. The second chapter deals with the key events in the U.S.-Egyptian relationship during the years 1950s-1973, years of antagonism but which tell us how in time Egypt became one of the main centers of America's attention. After a brief explanation of the factors which contributed to the regional relevance of the country, the relation is observed in its progression, through the 1955 Czech-Egyptian arms agreement, the 1956 Suez Crisis, the 1967 Six Day War and the War of Attrition. The decision of Sadat which represented the shift in Cold War alliances from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S. – the expulsion of the Soviet advisers in 1972 – is a central moment on which there has been a certain debate among scholars. Great changes occurred after the 1973 October War, starting from the 1973 Geneva Peace Conference. Chapter three hinges on the diplomatic process that involved Egypt, Israel, and the U.S. from 1974 to 1978, at first in the two Sinai disengagement agreements, and then at Camp David. Through the existing literature and official documents we will try to understand which factors and which personalities brought Egypt and the U.S. to collaborate in the peace process. In chapter four, we shall observe that the political partnership went hand in hand with the economic and military assistance, and that some specific mechanisms and interests made of Egypt a strategic asset for American foreign policy. In sum, the formative years of a controversial alliance will be scrutinized, so as to understand along which guidelines it has developed.

1. Setting the Context: the United States and the Middle East during the Cold War

1.1. American Interests in the Region

American approach to the Middle East changed after the Second World War, when U.S. foreign policy shifted from non-intervention to direct involvement in the region. As it will be seen later, starting from the second half of the 1940s a series of political and military developments, together with diplomatic initiatives, made a new attitude of American policy come to light, which advocated the possibility for the United States to get involved in the affairs of a certain region even if uninvited, whenever it perceived the menace of a Communist influence. The Middle East was precisely one of such regions; indeed, it would prove one of topmost importance for American national and international interests. With regard to Cold War American policy in the Middle East, one could summarize basic U.S. interests by the formula “oil, Israel, and containment of Communism”.

In the *Paper Prepared by the Interdepartmental Group for Near East and South Asia* of 1969 the main issues which directed the U.S. moves in the region were clearly sketched:

Leaving aside subsidiary though significant considerations related to investment, trade and communications, we are perforce deeply involved in the Middle East for two fundamental purposes: (1) because we wish to assure the survival of Israel, and (2) because, in terms of our global strategic interests, we do not wish the land mass, population and resources of the eastern Arab world to fall under Soviet domination. [...] we see a continuing American interest in Israel's ability to defend itself against any combination of Arab states and in Western access to Arab oil as well as to transit and communications through the area.⁴

Such objectives did not represent three separate sets of interests; on the contrary, they were strictly interlocked. Furthermore, there was no fixed hierarchy regarding their order in the scale of priority. It changed and evolved in time, according to U.S. considerations of global and regional necessities. How the three key issues arose and developed during the Cold War should now be briefly discussed.

⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, (hereafter FRUS), 1969-1976, vol. XXIV, Washington DC, United States Government Printing Office, 2008, doc.2, NSCIG/NEA 69-1B (Revised), 30.1.69.

Oil

The presence of oil in the Middle East was a known fact ever since before the twentieth century. In particular, the richest territories, those where most of resources were rightly believed to be, were Persia (now Iran) and Mesopotamia (now Iraq).⁵ The strategic importance of oil, in any case, did not emerge until the beginning of the twentieth century, when a revolution in the transports system took place, especially after the invention of the internal combustion engine. Oil began to supplant coal as chief energy source, given that it was easier to move and to store, and it produced more energy.⁶ This transformation invested in particular the British Royal Navy, the fleet of the most powerful imperial nation at the time. In fact, “oil was discovered in Persia by William Knox D’Arcy in 1908 and the involvement of the U.K. imperial government was from the start clear”.⁷ The First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, decided that new warships should be built, supplied with oil and no longer with coal, thus making U.K. dependent on foreign oil. The British government, then, resolved to acquire the 51 percent of shares of the Anglo-Persian Company, established in London in 1909 to exploit the sixty-year concession newly obtained from the Iranian government.⁸

Another zone in which oil was largely present was Mosul, in the northern Iraq.⁹ Here, the concession was obtained by the Turkish Petroleum Company, a consortium formed by British, Dutch and German interests and sponsored by the Armenian Calouste Gulbenkian. After the First World War, the German share of the company went to the French, as a compensation for the loss of Mosul,¹⁰ following the San Remo accord of 1920 which “attributed to the U.K. the mandate of [...] Iraq”.¹¹ Faced with this situation, American major oil companies, that is to say, Jersey Standard and Standard Oil Company of New York (Socony), pressed Britain hard to “open the door to U.S. participation in the TPC consortium”.¹² In 1927, the TPC, hereafter named Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), changed

⁵ R.Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire. Western Footprints and America’s Perilous Path in the Middle East*, Boston, Beacon Press, 2004, p.101.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.102

⁷ G. Luciani, *Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East* in L. Fawcett (ed.), *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p.84

⁸ R. Khalidi, *op. cit.*, pp.103-105 and D.Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, The University of North Carolina Press, 2002, p.46

⁹ Iraq was then divided into the three separate Ottoman provinces or vilayets of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra

¹⁰ Mosul was initially allotted to the French consistent with the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916

¹¹ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.46 and R. Khalidi, *op. cit.*, p.118

¹² D.Little, *Ibidem*

its complexion, since Britain, though reluctantly, included American companies in its deal with Iraq:

Socony and Jersey Standard combined to control 23.75 percent of IPC's stock; Anglo-Persian, 23.75 percent; Royal Dutch Shell, 23.75; and the state owned Compagnie Française des Pétroles (CFP) 23.75 percent. The remaining 5 percent went to Calouste Gulbenkian [...].¹³

In 1928, the partners of IPC drafted the Red Line agreement, proposed by Gulbenkian, under whose provisions they agreed “not to enter in any other producing venture in the former Ottoman Empire except in the same combination as in IPC”.¹⁴ Doing so, they tried to avoid competition with each other; yet, other companies, not bound by the agreement, were allowed to seek concessions in the area. Consequently, Saudi Arabia's King Ibn Saud, in 1933, struck a deal with Standard Oil of California (Socal), which obtained a sixty-year concession. Not only did the company discover oil in Saudi Arabia, but, according to Giacomo Luciani, it “was taken aback by the magnitude of its discovery and started looking for partners”, that it found in Texaco.¹⁵ Later the joint venture took up the name of ARAMCO (Arabian American Oil Company), in 1944.

In Kuwait, another of the main Gulf oil-rich states, the American company Gulf Oil shared the concession fifty-fifty with Anglo-Persian.¹⁶ Hence,

By 1941 five U.S. multinationals –Jersey Standard, Socony, Socal, Texaco and Gulf– had moved through the open door to drill oil wells in the Middle East. With occasional assistance from the State Department, they had sunk nearly a billion dollars into petroleum concessions in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait.¹⁷

If until the years preceding the Second World War policymakers would rather leave decisions about the petroleum industry to private companies, during the War the situation changed. While the United States had based its consumption of oil mainly on domestic resources (in Texas, Oklahoma, and California), since 1945 a feeling arose that petroleum

¹³ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.47 see also R. Khalidi, *op. cit.*, p.119, and G. Luciani, *op. cit.*, in L. Fawcett (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.85

¹⁴ G. Luciani, *op. cit.*, in L. Fawcett (ed.), *Ibidem*

¹⁵ G. Luciani, *op. cit.*, in L. Fawcett (ed.), *Ibid.*, p.86 and R. Khalidi, *op. cit.*, p. 124

¹⁶ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.48; G. Luciani, *op. cit.*, in L. Fawcett (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 85

¹⁷ D. Little, *Ibidem*

reserves in the Middle East needed to be exploited more, and that access to oil had to be preserved.¹⁸ As great power rivalry began to surface between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Middle East too, it became more and more clear to President Truman and others in his administration that if America wanted to maintain its predominant role in the region and its internal stability, it needed to expand its influence in the Persian Gulf oil industry.¹⁹ In Daniel Yergin words

oil provided the point at which foreign policy, international economic considerations, national security, and corporate interests would all converge. The Middle East would be the focus. There the companies were already rapidly building up production and fashioning new arrangements to secure their positions.²⁰

One of such new arrangements took place in Saudi Arabia. Here, ARAMCO was facing a great challenge: the “magnitude of the Saudi oil fields” implied the “need for capital and for markets”.²¹ In order to enlarge its market, Socal and Texaco envisioned a pipeline (Trans-Arabian Pipeline, TAPLINE) “from Dhahran to the Mediterranean coast”,²² so that oil could be sold to Europe. Then again, Socal was a rather “vulnerable” company, since it was not really famous in the oil industry; so, enter a competition in the European theatre for “market share against well-established competitors” would be quite risky.²³ On the other hand, production levels had to be raised, in a way as to meet Ibn Saud’s expectations for increased income of money. A solution could be a “broader joint venture”. That is, “spread the risk”, “tie in other oil companies”.²⁴ And, given that Ibn Saud requested these companies to be American, the invitation went to Standard Oil of New Jersey and Socony-Vacuum (later Mobil). As stated by Yergin,

it was clear that enlarging the participation would further the fundamental goals of American strategy: to increase Middle Eastern production, thus conserving Western Hemisphere resources, and to enhance the revenues going to Ibn Saud, thus ensuring that the concession remained in

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.51

¹⁹ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.52; D. Yergin, *The Prize. The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1991, p.410

²⁰ D. Yergin, *Ibidem*

²¹ *Ibidem*

²² D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.53

²³ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.411

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 411-412

American hands.²⁵

The next step was for Jersey and Socony to free themselves from the Red Line agreement, which prevented them to join ARAMCO. Notwithstanding the French and Gulbenkian opposition, the companies managed to find a way out, and in 1947 entered the ARAMCO consortium.²⁶

The TAPLINE was welcomed with favour by President Truman too; actually, Secretary of State Marshall aimed at rebuilding European economy and industrial growth taking advantage of Saudi oil. Both ARAMCO and TAPLINE were, in sum, considered “as critically important to U.S. national security during the first years of the Cold War”.²⁷ In the meantime, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (as the Anglo-Persian was renamed in 1935) was facing trouble in Iran. At the beginning of the 1950s, following popular demonstrations against the British company which refused to split the profits fifty-fifty with Iran,²⁸ the nationalist politician Mohammed Mossadeq planned to nationalize the company. In 1951, the Iranian parliament approved Mossadeq’s proposal and appointed him as Prime Minister.²⁹ As a consequence, the British, backed by the Americans, decided to boycott Iranian oil, and other companies around the world followed suit, fearing that nationalization might spread in oil producing countries. In 1953, the Eisenhower administration and CIA organized a coup to overthrow Mossadeq. It proved successful, and the pro-Western Shah was in power again. After the coup, AIOC had its company back, but it was transformed from a “monopoly” to a “multinational consortium”: AIOC (then BP, British Petroleum) maintained a 40 percent interest; another 40 percent went to American companies and the rest went to Royal Dutch Shell and CFP.³⁰ So, “by the late 1954 Iran had joined the growing list of Middle Eastern nations whose oil fields were integrated into America’s national security empire”.³¹

From the second half of 1950s-1960s the situation of control of oil reserves began to change. A series of crisis brought the major oil producing countries to organize. First of all, during the Suez crisis of 1956³² Gamal Abdel Nasser, the revolutionary Egyptian president

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.412

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 413-416; D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp.52-53

²⁷ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.53

²⁸ As ARAMCO had done with Saudi Arabia in 1950

²⁹ R. Khalidi, *op. cit.*, p.109; D.Little, *op. cit.*, p.56

³⁰ D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58; R. Khalidi, *op. cit.*, p.110; G. Luciani, *op. cit.*, in L. Fawcett (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.86

³¹ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.58

³² The Suez crisis will be further explained in the next chapter

that took his country to the forefront of “pan-Arabism”, as we will see, nationalized the Suez canal, thus forcing Western leaders to find alternative waterways through which shipping Middle Eastern oil. The discovery of oil in Libya and Algeria then led to a surplus that allowed American and British companies to “cut their prices in August 1960”. As a reaction, the oil ministers from Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela reunited in Baghdad in September 1960 and founded the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).³³ It was a crucial step that shifted “the balance of power in the Persian Gulf [...] away from the multinationals and toward the host countries”.³⁴ Additionally, Iraq was moving steadily toward nationalization. After the revolution of 1958, the nationalist Abdel Karim Qassim took power in Iraq. One of his main objectives was to increase for his nation the profits coming from the IPC’s activities; when the company refused, Qassim menaced to “strip IPC of 99.5 percent of its concession”.³⁵ Once again, as in Iran ten years before, Washington intervened, and Qassim was overthrown and then killed.

The growing importance of oil producing countries in petroleum industry became evident during the Six Day War of 1967, which saw the U.S. and Egypt openly challenging into two opposing factions, thus badly straining relations, as the second chapter of this work will show. According to Yergin,

Among the Arabs, there had been talk for more than a decade about wielding the “oil weapon”. Now was their chance. On June 6 [...] Arab oil ministers formally called for an oil embargo against countries friendly to Israel. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Libya, and Algeria thereupon banned shipments to the United States, Britain and [...] West Germany.³⁶

Such Arab unity, however, did not last long. The embargo revealed itself more damaging to Arab exporters than it was for Westerners, who managed to find alternative sources of supply.³⁷ Even though the “oil weapon” had been easily neutralized, the situation with energy in America and in the West in general was facing a change. Economic growth, industrial development, and rising demand for motor vehicles tremendously increased oil

³³ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.60; D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.523. Later other countries joined the Organization: Qatar in 1961, Indonesia and Libya in 1962, United Arab Emirates in 1967, Algeria in 1969 and Nigeria in 1971.

³⁴ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.61

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.62

³⁶ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.556

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.556-557

consumption. As a matter of fact, “total world energy consumption more than tripled between 1948 and 1972”.³⁸ And the greatest part of this energy came from the Middle East. That was why in 1972-1973, as Washington’s relations with Israel were becoming closer, American multinationals and many in the State Department feared an energy crisis, another, more rigorous, oil embargo.³⁹ These fears became true during the Arab-Israeli October War of 1973, a very crucial moment for U.S.-Arab relations, when the “oil weapon” was used for a second time, and this time effectively:

The embargo and its consequences sent shock radiating through the social fabric of the industrial nations. [...] In the U.S. the shortfall struck at fundamental beliefs in the endless abundance of resources, [...]. The embargo and the shortage it caused were an abrupt break with America’s past, and the experience would severely undermine America’s confidence in the future.⁴⁰

Furthermore, between 1972 and the end of the decade all the major oil producing countries managed to take complete control of oil industry in their respective nations.⁴¹ Indeed, since 1973 and even more after the second oil shock of 1979,⁴² Western countries realized that access to Middle Eastern oil had come to be a security strategic issue, which carried decisive weight in deciding diplomatic moves in the region.⁴³

Israel

The relationship between Israel and the United States has often been referred to as a “special relationship”. In time, a “mixture” of historical, religious and social factors has combined with strategic considerations and “American national interest” to make the U.S.-Israeli relation special.⁴⁴

Another key component in this process were the “Israel lobbies”, a series of organizations working to guide American policy in a pro-Israel direction, ever since before the constitution of the state of Israel. They found their greater expression in AIPAC (American-Israel Public

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.541

³⁹ D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp.67-68; D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, pp.589-592

⁴⁰ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, pp. 615-617

⁴¹ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p. 72

⁴² Due to the Iranian Revolution of 1979-1980

⁴³ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.634

⁴⁴ R. J. Lieber, *U.S.-Israeli Relations Since 1948*, in *The Middle East Review of Foreign Affairs, MERIA Journal*, Vol.2, No.3 (September 1998), p.18, at meria.idc.ac.il/journal/1998/issue3/lieber.pdf, accessed December 5, 2011.

Affairs Committee), originated from the American Zionist Council. Every politician has greatly taken the Jewish vote into account, being it of vital importance in some key states such as New York, Illinois and California.⁴⁵ In the words of the historian Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov,

the U.S.-Israeli relationship [...] became a *special patron-client relationship*, characterized by [...] a *community of strategic interests*; [...] a *community of values*; an informal military alliance; and reciprocal relations, that is, routine exchanges of tangible and intangible goods and services and shared perceptions that the relationship was mutually beneficial.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, it was not always so. Before its inception, the idea of establishing a Jewish state was not fostered by the main imperial powers. Great Britain, in particular, adamantly opposed the partition of Palestine, as it would lose control on the mandate it ruled on account of post World War I accords. Moreover, in 1939 the British White Paper entered into force, “limiting Jewish immigration to a total of no more than 75,000 over the subsequent years, after which it was to be prohibited altogether unless agreed by the Arabs”.⁴⁷ For his part, President Truman did not consider the question of Palestine as a first class priority in American foreign policy.⁴⁸ Contrary to what some authors believe,⁴⁹ a general consensus seems to exist that “Truman was no advocate of a Jewish state in Palestine before Israel came into existence”.⁵⁰ His main concern with the Jewish situation had a humanitarian motivation; he was interested in the refugees’ issue, and believed that 100,000 of them who were “stateless” and “abandoned in Nazi facilities” should find a home in Palestine, though he did not necessarily envision a Jewish state.⁵¹ Both the State and the Defense Departments, and the intelligence agencies too, did not support such an idea, predicting that it would cause resentment in the Arab world, thus hampering relations with the Arab oil producing countries.⁵² On the other hand, pro-Zionist activism had a strong

⁴⁵ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.78

⁴⁶ Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *The United States and Israel since 1948: A “Special Relationship”?*, in *Diplomatic History*, Vol.22, No.2, Spring 1998, p.232

⁴⁷ R. J. Lieber, *op. cit.*, p.12

⁴⁸ S.L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America’s Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985, p.16

⁴⁹ See R. Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East*, Beacon Press, 2009, pp.24-25 and p.117

⁵⁰ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.20. See also Lieber, *op. cit.*, p.12 and E. Di Nolfo, *Storia delle Relazioni Internazionali. Dal 1918 ai giorni nostri*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2009, p.940

⁵¹ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.80. See also Di Nolfo, *op. cit.*, p.940 and Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.19 and p.24

⁵² S. L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.17-19 and p.26. See also D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.80 and Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *op. cit.*, p.233

influence on the president, who was torn between two solutions for Palestine: “a binational state composed of two provinces, one Jewish and one Arab, to be administered by Britain under the auspices of a United Nations trusteeship”; or partition of “the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River into two separate states”, which the pro-Zionist favored, besides being the initial United Nations proposal.⁵³ As elections grew nearer, Truman felt he needed American Jews electoral support, and decided for partition. United Nations partition resolution was finally approved on 29 November 1947.⁵⁴

Once the new state of Israel came into being, on May 14, 1948, both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. immediately recognized it, although for different reasons: for the Americans, along with electoral and strategic purposes, “Israel was first and foremost expiation for the Holocaust”; for the Soviets, the establishment of a Zionist state among “Arab reactionary feudal regimes, supported by Western imperialism”, might “enhance the growth of a genuine Arab nationalism”.⁵⁵ Despite instant recognition, the U.S.-Israeli relation did not become special from the start. When the first Arab-Israeli war broke out in May 1948, Washington’s policy was to stay out of the conflict; Truman “regarded further expansion as out of the question” and agreed with the U.N. proposal of an arms embargo, which stayed in place until 1949.⁵⁶ De jure recognition and the approval for the 100 million dollars loan Israel requested were similarly postponed until after its first elections were held, in January 1949.⁵⁷ At the beginning of the 1950s, therefore, Israel was far from being a real partner to the United States; it was more of a source of distress. As stated by Spiegel,

One major aim of American policy was to ensure that, however the Palestine question was resolved, the Soviet Union would not benefit. [...] Regionally the Palestine question was a nuisance for it threatened to ruin American relations with the Arab world and disrupt oil supplies to the West.⁵⁸

During Eisenhower’s years, the relationship was cooler than ever. His administration approached the Arab-Israeli question with the aim of treating both factions equally. This

⁵³ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.81

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.82-84

⁵⁵ O.A. Westad, *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.127. See also D.Little, *op. cit.*, p.87 and R. Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis*, cit., p.25

⁵⁶ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.88; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.39

⁵⁷ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.40

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.47

attitude became reality in 1953, when Washington suspended the economic aid promised by the previous administration, subsequent to Israel refusal to stop an irrigation project at Banat Yaacov notwithstanding a U.N. explicit request.⁵⁹ Indeed, before 1960, “the special relationship was much more with France than the United States, and was driven largely by the sense of sharing a common enemy, Gamal Abdel Nasser”; as his strong personality and political beliefs made him the main promoter of Arab nationalism, both the French and the Israeli saw him as threatening their security interests.⁶⁰ This partnership, supported by Britain too, and the Czech-Egyptian arms deal of 1955, pushed Israel to strike pre-emptively on Egypt after Nasser seized control of the Suez Canal in July 1956 and determined to nationalize it. Consequently, another major crisis in the U.S.-Israeli relations ensued between 1956 and 1957. The Eisenhower administration strongly disagreed with Israeli moves, and menaced sanctions unless Israel withdrew from Sinai and Gaza. In the end, an open clash was avoided, since Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir managed to find an agreement, sponsored by the United Nations: in exchange for withdrawal, Israel received “guarantees of freedom of shipping in the Strait of Tiran and assurances that Egypt would not exploit the Gaza Strip as a terror base” against it.⁶¹

After the Suez crisis the relationship somehow improved but Israel continued to be perceived as a “security and political burden” by Eisenhower, who consented only limitedly to provide defensive weapons, and aid levels were kept low.⁶²

As Eisenhower left office and John F. Kennedy entered the White House, the topic of major concern in relations with Israel was the building up of a nuclear reactor at Dimona, promoted by the French. The American Intelligence and Kennedy feared that if Israel succeeded in obtaining atomic weapons, the situation in the Middle East might soon become irretrievable. As a consequence, Kennedy searched for assurances from Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion that Israel was not likely to “go nuclear”; he obtained them, but at the same time Ben Gurion raised the demand for defensive weapons. JFK, although keeping in mind the risk of a possible regional arms race, in 1962 sold Hawk anti-aircraft missiles to Israel.⁶³ During the Kennedy administration, U.S.-Israeli special relationship began to come

⁵⁹ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.89. The excavation of a canal to deviate the Jordan river was contrasted by Syria. It violated the 1949 Armistice agreement according to which the zone was a no-man’s-land.

⁶⁰ R.J. Lieber, *op. cit.*, p.13. Nasser supported rebellion in Algeria, a French colonial possession.

⁶¹ Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *op. cit.*, p.235. See also D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-93

⁶² Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *op. cit.*, p.236; D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.94

⁶³ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.95

to light: he “created preliminary conditions for a patron-client relationship. He was the first president to define U.S.-Israeli relations as special, to take seriously Israel’s security problems, and to provide Israel with major defensive arms”.⁶⁴

President Lyndon B. Johnson continued the trend of JFK. Like his predecessor, Johnson’s prime target was refraining Israel from nuclear proliferation. He was aware that the rising Soviet arms bargaining with the Arabs placed more and more Israeli pressure on Washington for arms supply, not only for defensive but also conventional weapons. Cautiously, Johnson resolved in May 1964 to “transfer tanks to Israel indirectly through West Germany”, thus hoping to avoid open Arab retaliation.⁶⁵ In 1965-1967, after West Germany’s refusal to continue arms transfers, Washington decided to provide Israel with conventional weapons directly, on condition that Israel kept a defensive attitude in the Arab-Israeli dispute and rejected nuclear proliferation.⁶⁶ The 1967 Arab-Israeli War marked the beginning of a tighter political collaboration between America and Israel. Border clashes existing between Egypt and Israel “over the Sinai and Strait of Tiran escalated in the spring of 1967”.⁶⁷

Johnson, at first, tried to manage the crisis through diplomatic moves. Washington found itself in a difficult situation: on the one hand, it could not support Israel’s decision to start a military offensive against Egypt because it would damage U.S. image in the Arab world; on the other hand, it had to keep a favourable position to Israel yet restraining it, and work out the crisis.⁶⁸ Faced with such a dilemma, “U.S. officials naturally considered the advantages of simply allowing Israel to escalate to hostilities”.⁶⁹ Feeling that Washington did not oppose Israeli military action, full war erupted. After only six days of fighting, Israel, armed with U.S. weapons, could proclaim its victory. As stated by Bar-Siman-Tov, “the swiftness of Israel’s victory proved crucial because it alleviated the U.S. fear that it would have to rescue Israel”.⁷⁰ However, the Six Day War also saw a moment of crisis in U.S.-Israeli relations, when on June 8 the “U.S. Naval technical research ship *Liberty* was attacked at 3:05 p.m. (Sinai Time) by Israeli aircraft and torpedo boats”.⁷¹ Although “the weather was clear in the area of

⁶⁴ Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *op. cit.*, pp.236-237

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.237-238 and D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp.97-98

⁶⁶ Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *op. cit.*, p.238 and D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99

⁶⁷ Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *op. cit.*, p.239

⁶⁸ P.L. Hahn, *The Cold War and the Six Day War*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *The Cold War in the Middle East: Regional Conflict and the Superpowers 1967-73*, New York, Routledge, 2007, p.19

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.23

⁷⁰ Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *op. cit.*, p.240

⁷¹ CIA, “Intelligence Memorandum: The Israeli Attack on the USS *Liberty*”, 13 June 1967, p.1, at

the attack, the Liberty's hull number [...] was prominently displayed and an American flag was flying", the CIA suggested that the matter had been an incident, since "Liberty could be easily mistaken for the Egyptian vessel *El Quesir*".⁷² Some did not believe the CIA, and thought it was a deliberate attack to prevent the U.S. from discovering some shady Israeli practices in Syria and Egypt.⁷³ In any case, Johnson and the majority in Washington accepted the "incident" thesis.⁷⁴

1968 was an important year: Israel and the U.S. signed an agreement for fifty Phantom jets, that is, offensive weapons. According to Bar-Siman-Tov, it was Israel's enhanced military and strategic power in the Arab-Israeli arena that made this decision possible. After the 1967 war, the Arab-Israeli conflict and superpower competition were interlocked.⁷⁵

President Nixon's approach to the Middle East was somehow stronger than Johnson's. He felt the need to settle the situation, to stabilize the region and render it less vulnerable to Soviet intervention. In order to do so, he envisioned a diplomatic solution, where Israel would make territorial concessions, even the returning of all the Egyptian territories recently conquered, in exchange for peace.⁷⁶ To accomplish this aim, Secretary of State William Rogers advised to use "arms supply as a lever"; National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, conversely, believed that a stronger Israel would play into the hands of the U.S..⁷⁷ Nixon agreed with the latter advice:

Nixon believed in firmly countering the Soviet threat and saw Israel as effective in that role. For the first time in the U.S.-Israeli relationship, a U.S. president emphasized Israel's security-strategic importance to U.S. interests and saw Israel as a strategic asset in regional and global terms. Because Israel had an important role to play in the U.S.-Soviet power balance, it should be kept strong.⁷⁸

Still, he also adopted Rogers' solution. In fact, in 1969-1970 U.S. financial assistance and military supply were kept quite low.⁷⁹ The turning point in the U.S.-Israeli relationship came in September 1970, when civil war broke out in Jordan between King Hussein and

www.fas.org/irp/cia/product/liberty0667.pdf, accessed December 2, 2011

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.4

⁷³ P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.33, note 32

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.25

⁷⁵ Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *op. cit.*, pp.241-242

⁷⁶ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.104

⁷⁷ Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *op. cit.*, p.243

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.244

⁷⁹ D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp.104-105

Palestinians, backed by the pro-Soviet regime of Syria. Being Jordan one of the major U.S. allies, Nixon and Kissinger decided to intervene, and asked Israel for support on the ground against Syria. The American-Israeli cooperation proved successful, and Jordan was stabilized in the end.⁸⁰ This success “turned the relationship from a regular patron-client one into a special one, because the United States recognized the importance of Israel as a strategic asset and a loyal ally”. Consequently, U.S. financial and military aid increased, and American pressure on territorial concessions softened.⁸¹ U.S.-Israeli relations flourished in the years from 1971 to 1973.

The 1973 October War represented one more challenge. Following the distressing years of skirmishes of the War of Attrition (1968-1970) between Egypt and Israel along the Suez Canal, and the persisting stalemate in diplomatic initiatives, on October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria coordinated to attack Israel in the Sinai and Golan Heights territories respectively. Israel was taken by surprise, since neither Israeli nor American intelligence services thought an Arab strike to be impending, and initially failed to counter the attacks. Egyptian forces crossed the Suez Canal, while Syrian ones gained territories in the Golan. After the initial setback, Israel managed to counter-attack, but not to take back all the territories it had captured during the 1967 Six Day War. It needed great quantities of weapons to replace those destroyed in the conflict and requested them to the U.S..⁸² Yet, arms delivery was a strategic matter: if the war ended in stalemate, the United States could have a primary role in the negotiating process; moreover, if U.S. arms delivery was limited, Soviet involvement could be defused. So, “during the initial stages of war, Kissinger delayed arms delivery to restrict Israel’s military activity. Only when the Soviet Union refused to limit arms supplies to its clients and Egypt defied a cease-fire did Kissinger approve an arms airlift to Israel”.⁸³

After the war, Israel’s strategic role was related almost exclusively to its readiness to compromise and achieving results in the Arab-Israeli peace process, thus strengthening the U.S. “honest broker” position. It continued to be kept strong even during President Ford years, through huge military and economic aid and “memorandums of understanding” in which the U.S. committed to Israel’s security.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.105-106

⁸¹ Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *op. cit.*, p.246

⁸² W. Burr (ed.), *The October War and U.S. Policy*, at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB98, accessed December 30, 2011

⁸³ Y. Bar-Siman-Tov, *op. cit.*, p.247

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.248-249

Containment

Preoccupation with the Soviet presence in the Middle Eastern region has been a constant in American foreign policy from the Truman to the Reagan administrations. The expansion of Soviet influence in this area was deemed as a “mortal threat to the United States”, to its “national security”.⁸⁵ In fact, ever since before World War II, American economy was tightly linked to developments in the Middle East, because American companies had invested in the petroleum industry and established their presence in the region’s oil fields. In order to prevent damages to national security, which loss of oil resources would inevitably cause, the United States focused on preserving such investments and maintaining amiable relations with oil producing countries.⁸⁶ That was why Soviet expansionism had to be “contained”. The formulation of “containment” of the Soviet offensive behaviour in the Middle East and other areas was first issued by George Kennan in the anonymous “X” article in *Foreign Affairs* and then adopted by President Truman in his doctrine.⁸⁷ Even if the word “containment” did not appear, it was a clear message to the Soviet Union, warning that “the United States was prepared to intervene in the relations between Communist and non-Communist states on behalf of any non-Communist country which was being attacked, overtly or covertly, by Communist forces”.⁸⁸ How this intervention would take place was further clarified by the National Security Council Paper NSC-68 of 1950. After refusing a policy of isolation and affirming the necessity of getting involved in foreign affairs, the report went on defining the policy of “containment”:

As for the policy of “containment”, it is one which seeks by all means short of war to (1) block further expansion of Soviet power, (2) expose the falsities of Soviet pretensions, (3) induce a retraction of the Kremlin’s control and influence and (4) in general, so foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system that the Kremlin is brought at least to the point of modifying its behaviour to conform to generally accepted international standards. It was and continues to be cardinal in this policy that we possess superior overall power in ourselves or in dependable combination with other like-minded nations. One of the most important ingredients of power is military strength. In the

⁸⁵ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.117

⁸⁶ E. Di Nolfo, *op. cit.*, p.822 and D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.427

⁸⁷ See page 28 for Kennan, pages 31 and 32 for the Truman Doctrine.

⁸⁸ D.A. Graber, *The Truman and Eisenhower Doctrines in the Light of the Doctrine of Non-Intervention*, in *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. LXXIII, No.3, September 1958, p.321

concept of “containment”, the maintenance of a strong military posture is deemed to be essential [...].⁸⁹

Moreover, economic, political, but also moral and psychological preponderance were considered to be necessary so as to “foster a world environment in which our free society can survive and flourish”.⁹⁰ As far as military capabilities were concerned, they had to be improved. Since the U.S.S.R. possessed atomic weapons too, it was fundamental to develop a “general military superiority”: this meant “increased air warning systems, air defences, and vigorous development and implementation of a civilian defense program”.⁹¹ In addition, thermonuclear weapons should be developed “ahead of the U.S.S.R.”.⁹² The authors then contemplated some possible “courses of action”: a return to “isolationism”, “war” and a “more rapid building up of the political, economic and military strength of the free world”.⁹³ Only the last one, they argued, was “consistent with progress toward achieving our fundamental purpose”.⁹⁴ Besides deterring the Soviet Union by rising military expenditures, “a substantial increase in military assistance programs, designed to foster cooperative efforts” was also part of the program.⁹⁵ The constitution of an anti-Soviet defensive system of association of the free countries emerged first in Europe through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in 1949. In the Middle East, first among such initiatives were the Middle East Command (MEC) and the Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO) in 1951-52, forwarded by British and American officials. They both failed very soon, because Egypt, which was expected to be the key country in the anti-Soviet regional organizations, rejected MEC and MEDO and expressed its disappointment, not so much for the Soviet Union, but rather for the persisting shade of British imperialism.⁹⁶ President Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles realized that the United States should leave the building of a regional defense organization to the countries of the region; to this aim, the “Northern Tier”, that is,

⁸⁹ NSC-68, “United States Objectives and Programs for National Security” at www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study-collections/coldwar/index.php?action=docs, accessed December 19, 2011, p.21

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.22

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.37

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.38

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.44

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.54

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.57

⁹⁶ D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp.126-127

Turkey, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq, was viewed as fundamental.⁹⁷ This organization began to take shape in April 1954, when Turkey and Pakistan entered a treaty of alliance. Then, in 1955, Turkey and Iraq signed an “anti-Soviet mutual defense agreement”, known as the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO, Central Treaty Organization). Later, also Great Britain, Pakistan and Iran joined the alliance.⁹⁸ Even this initiative proved not to be effective in the end; as a matter of fact, the Pact was envisioned to comprehend Egypt as well, in a way as to impede access to the Mediterranean to the Soviets.⁹⁹ But, due to the fact that it was identified again as an instrument of British imperialism, Egypt refused to join. On the contrary, British participation to the Pact contributed to bring Colonel Nasser closer to the Kremlin.¹⁰⁰ As Arab nationalism spread and British presence in the region faded, Eisenhower outlined the new U.S. strategic doctrine. The Eisenhower Doctrine was proclaimed in January 1957; it was “more limited in scope than the Truman Doctrine”, since it was focused in particular on the Middle East, stressing the basic importance for American security of keeping the region free from Communism. In order to do so, the United States would offer economic and military aid to those countries who requested it, if they were menaced by a Communist aggression.¹⁰¹ Eisenhower sketched out the situation in the region:

Persistent crosscurrents of distrust and fear with raids back and forth across national boundaries have brought about a degree of instability in much of the Mid East. [...] All this instability has been heightened and, at times, manipulated by International Communism. [...] The free nations of the Mid East need, and for the most part want, added strength to assure their continued independence.

Thus, the President went on asking the cooperation of Congress, and proposing his action plan:

It would, first of all, authorize the United States to cooperate with and assist any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East in the development of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence. It would, in the second place, authorize the Executive to undertake in the same region programs of military assistance and cooperation with any nation or group of nations which desires such aid. It would, in the third place, authorize such assistance and

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.127-129 and E. Di Nolfo, *op. cit.*, p.822

⁹⁸ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.129 and E. Di Nolfo, *op. cit.*, p.823

⁹⁹ E. Di Nolfo, *Ibidem*

¹⁰⁰ D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp.130-131

¹⁰¹ D.A. Graber, *op. cit.*, p.322

cooperation to include the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations, requesting such aid, against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism.¹⁰²

The Eisenhower Doctrine was put into practice in Lebanon in 1958, when president Camille Chamoun asked for assistance to prevent chaos and a Communist takeover; U.S. troops were sent to Beirut.¹⁰³ However, in time the Eisenhower Doctrine did not seem effective. In fact, following politicians realized that U.S. direct intervention was regarded as a continuing colonialist pattern, first British, then American.¹⁰⁴ Accordingly, President John F. Kennedy and then President Johnson followed a “two pillars” policy in the Middle East, in which two local powers assumed Westerners’ role as guardians of the region’s stability: Saudi Arabia and Iran. These partnerships were supported by American selling of weapons and advanced military technology, as well as by economic aid.¹⁰⁵ This “two pillars” strategic doctrine was the core of Nixon’s policy in the Middle East too. His aim was to avoid direct U.S. military involvement in the Third World. With the long and distressing experience in the Vietnam War in mind, in 1969 Nixon told some newsmen in Guam about United States’ role in Asia that

Asians will say in every country that we visit that they do not want to be dictated from the outside, Asia for the Asians. And that is what we want, and that is the role we should play. We should assist, but we should not dictate. [...] As far as the problems of internal security are concerned, as far as the problems of military defense, except for the threat of a major power involving nuclear weapons, [...] the United States is going to encourage and has a right to expect that this problem will be increasingly handled by, and the responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves.¹⁰⁶

Such remarks, which formed the “Nixon Doctrine”, were applied not only in Vietnam, but also in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and Iran were confirmed as strategic allies in the region, receiving aid, both economic and military, to assume the role of “America’s proxies”

¹⁰² “Eisenhower Doctrine”, January 5, 1957, www.millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3360, accessed December 19, 2011

¹⁰³ D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp.134-135

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.137

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 137-140

¹⁰⁶ Richard Nixon, “Informal Remarks in Guam with Newsmen”, July 25, 1969, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. At <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2140>, accessed December 20, 2011

in containing Soviet Communism.¹⁰⁷ President Jimmy Carter agreed with Nixon's policy. American proxies seemed stable strategic assets, fundamental in keeping the Middle East free from Soviet expansionism. However, the situation changed dramatically in 1978-79. First of all, one of the longtime allies of the United States, the Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran, was forced to leave his country, after the Islamic Revolution that saw anti-American Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini coming to power.¹⁰⁸ Then came the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, in December 1979.¹⁰⁹ Even though the majority of scholars agree that the Soviet move was more of a defensive one, so as to avoid the establishment of a hostile regime on their border, than one mired at gaining control on the Persian Gulf, Carter and others in the administration perceived it as an aggression to U.S. interests in the region.¹¹⁰ Faced with such a situation, Carter exposed his strategic doctrine in the State of the Union Address, delivered before a joint session of Congress, on January 23, 1980:

The region which is now threatened by Soviet troops in Afghanistan is of great strategic importance: it contains more than two thirds of the world's exportable oil. [...] Meeting this challenge will take national will, diplomatic and political wisdom, economic sacrifice, and of course, military capability. We must call on the best that is in us to preserve the security of this crucial region. Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of

¹⁰⁷ D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp.144-145

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149. In 1977-1978 discontent with the Shah's policies started to mount in Iran. At all levels of society there was criticism of the Shah's repressive regime and ineffective reforms. The fiercest opponent of the shah was ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who aimed at overthrowing the monarchy, which was tainted by Western values in his opinion. What he wanted for Iran was the establishment of an Islamic republic based on Sharia. After overt revolution broke out at the end of 1978, the shah's government collapsed, and Khomeini took power. Subsequently, in 1979, a most serious crisis took place between United States and Iran, when Khomeini supported the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran and fifty-two American citizens were held hostage, as a retaliation for the admission of the shah in the United States for medical therapy against cancer. The hostages were not set free until 1981. O.A. Westad, *op. cit.*, pp.289-299

¹⁰⁹ In 1978 the regime of Mohammed Daoud, who took the Soviet Union as a model, was overthrown by a coup organized by the Afghan Communist Party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). However, the PDPA was internally divided into two factions, and both struggled for Soviet support. The country was facing severe political instability. In 1979, civil war broke out in Afghanistan, as Islamist guerrillas, then covertly assisted economically and militarily by Washington, fought against the Afghan army, which was supported by Soviet advisers. In the last month of the year, the Soviet Union decided to intervene militarily in the conflict, supporting the Marxist-Leninist government, who had been long asking for assistance, against the mujahedin. O.A. Westad, *op. cit.*, pp.299-326

¹¹⁰ See for example D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp.150-151; O.A. Westad, *op. cit.*, pp.316-326; R.J. McMahon, *The Cold War. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p.143

America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.¹¹¹

1.2. American Orientalism

Pondering over the relationship between the United States and the Middle East during the Cold War and after, it can be agreed that what emerges is a very asymmetrical equilibrium. As stated by Salim Yaqub referring to the present, but in a sentence that could have been written in the 1970s as well, while the “Americans inhabit a world increasingly of their own making”, since the greatest part of international balances depends on them and this position of strength allows them a certain freedom of maneuver, “the Arab world, by contrast, faces political, economic, social, and existential problems that are staggering in their scale and apparent intractability”.¹¹² As one approaches the question of how did such distance come to exist, it is inevitable to stumble upon the word “Orientalism”.

The author that best investigated the roots and the ideological and cultural basis of this “style of thought” is Edward W. Said. In the very first page of his essay *Orientalism*, he defined it as “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience”,¹¹³ a place that perfectly epitomized the image of “the other”.¹¹⁴ “Orientalism”, therefore, “is a style of thought” that had its origins in the division into categories made by eighteenth century’s European scholars, “between the Orient” and “the Occident”,¹¹⁵ between “non-Europeans” and “Europeans”, from whose contrast Europe defined itself, its culture, its interests. “The idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures”¹¹⁶ thus surfaced.

Yet, Orientalism does not refer only to a political component, one of hegemony and control over the Orient, but originally most of all to a cultural one. Indeed, “to speak of Orientalism [...] is to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural

¹¹¹ Jimmy Carter, “The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress”, January 23, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. At <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33079>, accessed December 20, 2011

¹¹² S. Yaqub, *Imperious Doctrines: US-Arab relations from Eisenhower to Bush*, in *Diplomatic History*, vol.26, issue 4, Fall 2002, p.591

¹¹³ E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, London, Penguin Books, 2003, p.1

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.7

enterprise".¹¹⁷

As a matter of fact, since the eighteenth until the beginning of the twentieth century, France and Britain were the major colonial powers and predominated over the Orient; after years of explorations, conquests, and commercial enterprises, they had built an empire in the Eastern part of the world. The capture of new territories set in motion the Western interest for the culture of those countries, which were seen as an entirely new world, exotic, savage, mysterious, but, anyway, in an inferior position. It was just in the eighteenth century that the travel fiction trend developed, and not only that; new sciences, such as ethnology, anatomy, and psychological analysis also progressed. There follows that Orientalism is

a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction [...] but also of a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is [...] a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative or novel) world.¹¹⁸

Through military conquests, then, the Westerners took possession of Oriental culture and imposed themselves upon it, reshaping it according to their parameters, and corroborated some familiar beliefs that had already spread in the previous years. That was how a series of common places and stereotypes about the Orient grew stronger: "its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness".¹¹⁹ Such a codification of "the other" was still more reinforced at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when a scientific justification for racial inequality, based on biological grounds, matured.¹²⁰ What made this possible was the lack of correspondence between the effective reality and the one described in books and reports. In other words, what was missing "in contemporary Western culture" was the concept of the Orient "as a genuinely felt and experienced force".¹²¹ The British and French domination of the Orient, and, as a result, of Orientalism, stretched until the Second World War; then, with the deterioration of old

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.12

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.205

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.206

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.208

empires, the United States asserted itself on the international scenario and took the place of the European powers in the Middle East, even as far as their “style of thought” was concerned.¹²² In the words of Said,

modern American Orientalism derives from such things as the army language schools established during and after the War, sudden government and corporate interest in the non-Western world during the postwar period, Cold War competition with the Soviet Union, and a residual missionary attitude towards Orientals who are considered ripe for reform and re-education.¹²³

As it can be seen, American version of Orientalism was not so much a philological discipline, based on literature, but rather a specialization, a branch of Social Science. In fact, neither did America have a solidly codified Orientalist tradition, as it existed in Europe, nor did it enjoy an “experience of the Orient” comparable to that of France or Britain. In addition, it was also missing the emotional participation, which the Europeans knew, in relation to the crossing of the frontier, the contact with the different, because of the geographical position of the United States. As a consequence, “immediately after World War II [...] the Orient became, not a broad catholic issue as it had been for centuries in Europe, but an administrative one, a matter for policy”.¹²⁴

Now, in order to understand American approach to the Orient since the twentieth century, we shall take into consideration the images and concepts of the East that Americans formed in their minds during the nineteenth century.¹²⁵ The analogies between European imperial projects and American ones were apparent. The missionaries, for example, were instruments through which Western values had to be incorporated in the Oriental context. Religion itself became a parameter, discriminating “us” (superior) and “them” (Muslims, inferior):¹²⁶ owing to the fact that “Muslims were neither Christians nor Anglo-Saxon” they were esteemed inferiors according to a “well-defined hierarchy of race and culture in dealing with foreigners who looked and prayed differently”.¹²⁷ All those figures, that is merchants, tourists, diplomats and missionaries, who had direct knowledge of the Middle East during

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.284

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.291

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.290

¹²⁵ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.3

¹²⁶ E. W. Said, *op. cit.*, p.299

¹²⁷ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.41

the nineteenth and early twentieth century, therefore, collaborated to make American Orientalism bloom. Some of its main dogmas were summed up by Said:

[...] one is the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior. Another dogma is that abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a “classical” Oriental civilization, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities. A third dogma is that the Orient is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself [...]. A fourth dogma is that the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared [...] or to be controlled [...].¹²⁸

What is striking about these conceptions on the Orient is that they were never strongly denied, and that they encompass (still today) all the Arab world without distinctions between regional realities, as if it was a single whole.¹²⁹ What is more, such stereotypes were corroborated and inserted into popular culture through movies, books and magazines like *National Geographic*, which had a strong visual impact and fixed distorted images in the audience’s mind.¹³⁰

American Orientalism, because of economic and political strategic interests, such as oil, containment of Communism, and defence of Israel, focused on the Middle East and on the Islamic world. Indeed, since the late 1940s until nowadays, U.S. involvement in the region has extended, but the tendency to despise the Orient has remained still:

Influenced by potent racial and cultural stereotypes, some imported and some homegrown, that depicted the Muslim world as decadent and inferior, U.S. policymakers from Harry Truman through George Bush tended to dismiss Arab aspirations for self-determination as politically primitive, economically suspect, and ideologically absurd.¹³¹

Both in the Truman and Eisenhower’s administrations mistrust of the Arabs was marked; the anxiety that religious extremism and revolutionary forces would damage Western interests was evident too. It also dominated a certain amount of skepticism about the possibility that the values of democracy and liberalism could be imprinted into the Middle

¹²⁸ E. W. Said, *op. cit.*, p.301

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*

¹³⁰ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.17

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.11

East.¹³²

As far as the Kennedy and Johnson's administrations were concerned, Douglas Little stated that "the insiders who advised John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson [...] seem subconsciously to have embraced a hierarchy of race and culture in which the Arabs ranked far below the Israelis".¹³³ The same could be said for Nixon and Kissinger, although the election of Anwar Sadat as Egyptian President changed the situation a little. Actually, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter too, regarded Sadat as the example of the "good Arab", who is capable to get along and compromise with the West.¹³⁴

The general image of the Arab, however, had assumed a menacing look, especially from the late 1960s-1970s; since the 1967 June War, and even more after the 1973 October War, Americans began to pay more attention to the Arabs, but it was a negative one.¹³⁵ "He is the disrupter of Israel's and the West's existence [...]. Insofar as this Arab has any history, it is part of the history given him [...] by the Orientalist tradition, and later, the Zionist tradition".¹³⁶ The Arab had also become an oil supplier, who menaced the West with the oil-embargo weapon. As some of his basic features were thought to be dishonesty and brutality, his faculty to keep the oil fields was often questioned.¹³⁷ According to Said, another way in which the Arab was represented in popular images was as a religious fanatics, belonging to the multitude, capable of "irrational gestures".¹³⁸

Notwithstanding the larger knowledge of the Arab world, and criticism of American attitude exposed by influential scholars such as Said, Orientalism lived on even in the 1980s and 1990s, during the Reagan and George Bush years.¹³⁹ About this, some critics have argued that the menace of "Islamic fundamentalism" for the world was very much conceived by U.S. policymakers with the support of the American media, for the purpose of justifying their enduring military presence in the region after "the collapse of the Soviet Union", to "fill a "threat vacuum"". ¹⁴⁰ Even after the Cold War ended, and the menace of a Communist expansion in the Middle East faded, at the bottom a dichotomic perception of the world,

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.30

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.34

¹³⁵ E. W. Said, *op. cit.*, p.285.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.286

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.287

¹³⁹ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.35

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.36; Little reports the words of John Esposito (Georgetown University)

divided between a civilized and advanced West and a barbaric and inferior East persisted.

1.3. *A Clash of Ideologies: the U.S. vs. the U.S.S.R.*

Thus far, we have seen how the U.S. has perceived the Arab world and which was its attitude towards the Middle East in general, as well as American main interests in the region and how it behaved in order to protect those interests, in the context of the Cold War. It will be useful at this point to explain briefly how did the confrontation with Communism become the element that most affected domestic as well as foreign American policy, after President Truman entered the White House, in April 1945.

As stated by Ennio Di Nolfo, the American attitude was rooted in a deep mistrust of the strategic intentions of Stalin and of the Soviets in general.¹⁴¹ There were sharp disagreements over the future of Germany, Central Europe and the Balkans and it was mainly for this reason that between 1946 and 1947 American foreign policy was being reoriented. This shift originated from afar, that is, from the everlasting American political repugnance for Soviet Communism; moreover, it was firmly believed that wartime partnership had been imposed through force of circumstance, but it was necessary to put an end to it as soon as possible.¹⁴² Both the main factions in American public opinion – “liberals” and “conservatives” – shared this view. The republicans (conservatives) disapproved of Truman for being “soft on Communism”, while the democrats (liberals) were willing to “make the world safe for democracy”.¹⁴³ It was in this same period that the aforementioned shift took concrete shape:

la svolta maturata mesi prima venne tradotta in aperte dichiarazioni e azioni, riguardanti il campo politico- diplomatico e quello economico, che resero esplicite la nuova volontà che essa esprimeva di attuare una politica ricostruttiva propria e riconosceva l'esistenza di un soggetto diverso e ostile.¹⁴⁴

One important example of such “actions” was the “Long Telegram”¹⁴⁵ which George

¹⁴¹ E. Di Nolfo, *op. cit.*, p. 625

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.646

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* and O.A. Westad, *op. cit.*, p.19

¹⁴⁴ E. Di Nolfo, *op. cit.*, p.625

¹⁴⁵ For the full text of the telegram, see George Kennan’s “Long Telegram” (Moscow-to-Washington), February 22, 1946, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>, accessed November 15, 2011

Kennan, the Chargé d'affaires in the Soviet Union, sent to the Secretary of State James Byrnes in February 1946. It was later turned into an article and published in 1947 with the title *The Sources of Soviet Conduct*. It is an extremely noteworthy document since the author there expressed key concepts that became the foundation of American Cold War policy. According to Kennan, the Soviet Communists were skeptic "as to the possibilities of permanent and peaceful coexistence" of such rival forces as capitalism and Socialism. "Ideology" – said the diplomat – "taught them that the outside world was hostile and that it was their duty eventually to overthrow the political forces beyond their borders". This factor shaped the pattern of Soviet power, in which dictatorship and the perception of a constant "menace from outside" were strictly intertwined and interdependent. Antagonism between capitalism and Socialism was a basic feature of early Communism as much as of the current regime. Therefore, Kennan stated that,

since there can be no appeal to common purposes, there can be no appeal to common mental approaches. [...] In these circumstances it is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies. [...] the Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy, but which cannot be charmed or talked out of existence.

In other words, the United States could not expect any "political intimacy" with the Soviet Union: on the contrary, it had to regard the Soviet regime "as a rival, not a partner, in the political arena". At the same time, it had to be taken into consideration that Russia, if put into comparison with the West, was "still by far the weaker party". There followed that the United States should have faith in the values and methods of Western society and be confident as to its ability to guide other Western countries and provide security for them with a view to being united as in a single block.¹⁴⁶

The coldness of international climate was further exacerbated by the public speech of the former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri on March 5, 1946. Churchill warned that it was necessary to intervene swiftly in Europe so as

¹⁴⁶ X (George Kennan), *The Sources of Soviet Conduct* in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.25, No.1/4, 1946/1947, pp. 566-582

to restrain the “expansive and proselytizing tendencies” of Soviet Communism and of its international organization. Then, he went on to explain the situation in Europe:

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an *iron curtain* has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in some cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.

Churchill reiterated his alarm concerning the spreading out and the growth of Communist parties and of totalitarianism in eastern Europe’s countries and concluded by inviting the United States to cooperate with Britain with the aim of reaching “a new unity in Europe [...] for the safety of the world”.¹⁴⁷

Besides these, that could be defined as diplomatic initiatives, political and military developments also played an important part in making the Americans realize that a sharp division into opposite factions existed by now. After 1945, Germany was partitioned into four occupation zones – English, American, Soviet, and later French. The original Allies’ plan to rule the country as a single unity through a Control Council, however, failed in 1946-1947.

Discord had arisen between the United States and the Soviet Union as to the presence of a permanent American armed force in Germany: the Soviets would not allow such a strong military influence in Europe. Moreover, the two had contrasting visions of the economic reconstruction of the country. While the Americans were convinced that the post-war world needed a strong Germany, the Soviets felt quite the opposite, and insisted on reparations instead.¹⁴⁸

In addition, Soviet policy in Korea and the Communists’ imminent takeover in China had equally to be taken into account. One could therefore see that “la speranza di un sistema globale tutto interdipendente aveva ceduto alla realtà di un sistema effettivamente diviso in due campi”.¹⁴⁹

American growing awareness of the challenge facing it was clearly exposed in the speech

¹⁴⁷ Churchill, W.S., “The Sinews of Peace”, March 5, 1946, at http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1946/s460305a_e.htm, accessed November 16, 2011

¹⁴⁸ E. Di Nolfo, *op. cit.*, pp. 660-669

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 671

President Truman gave before a joint session of Congress on March 12, 1947. The President requested an aid package of 400 million dollars in order to support the governments of Greece and Turkey in their struggle against Communist influence, since the British government was no longer able to supply military and economic assistance to them. It was an occasion not only to promote political stability in Greece and Turkey but also to make clear to the Soviets and to the entire world the new attitude of American policy, which moved away from earlier isolationism, and championed the possibility of American intervention even in regional conflicts not directly involving it. Truman solemnly demarcated the rift between “a democratic western world and a Communist system”:¹⁵⁰

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. [...] One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio; fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms. I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way. I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes. The world is not static, and the status quo is not sacred. But we cannot allow changes in the status quo in violation of the *Charter of the United Nations* by such methods as coercion, or by such subterfuges as political infiltration. In helping free and independent nations to maintain their freedom, the United States will be giving effect to the principles of the *Charter of the United Nations*. [...] We must take immediate and resolute action. [...] This is a serious course upon which we embark. I would not recommend it except that the alternative is much more serious. [...] The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive. The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world -- and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own nation. Great responsibilities have been placed upon us by the swift movement of events.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 681

¹⁵¹ For the full text of the speech, see “President Harry S. Truman’s Address Before a Joint Session of Congress”, March 12, 1947, avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp accessed November 16, 2011

United States' mission, thus, was to sponsor and protect liberties from the spreading of Communism. The main focus were not so much civil but rather political liberties, of those countries in which American national interest and international commitments were more rooted, including where an overt invitation for the U.S. to intervene was not directly issued.¹⁵² It would have accomplished this mission with political and military measures, as well as with economic ones. It is precisely in this context that the initiative of the "Marshall Plan" was designed to fit.

On June 5, 1947 the Secretary of State George Marshall presented his program in a speech at the Harvard University: it envisaged an aid package for the post-war reconstruction of Europe, or rather, of that part of Europe which would side with the United States in safeguarding democracy and the economic principles of capitalist economy such as free enterprise and free market.¹⁵³ It was a measure the Soviet Union could not accept; indeed, it also prevented Eastern European countries dependent on Moscow from giving a positive response to the plan.

Between 1947 and 1948 Europe was so divided into two different "political systems".¹⁵⁴ Subsequent developments in Europe and Asia - from 1948 to 1950 - "aggiunsero alla scelta politica caratteri militari".¹⁵⁵ It can therefore be seen that an all out bipolar competition was emerging; there existed two blocks, which were politically, militarily, and ideologically divergent: the "empire of liberty" versus the "empire of justice". It will be necessary at this point to turn one's attention for a moment on the origins of American and Russian thinking so as to have a better understanding of the motives for their interventions.

"From its inception" - Odd Arne Westad said - "the United States was an interventionist power that based its foreign policy on territorial expansion".¹⁵⁶ Indeed, United States' construction process was the result of one territorial conquest after another. The foundations of American ideology were already there in the nineteenth century and so they would be until recent times, though evolving as time passed by. One central issue was "liberty", which, nevertheless, was not for all. According to Thomas Jefferson the concept of freedom was strictly connected to private property, as "by his property, or by his satisfactory

¹⁵² D.A. Graber, *op. cit.*, p.332

¹⁵³ E. Di Nolfo, *op. cit.*, pp. 699-707

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 731

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 625

¹⁵⁶ O.A. Westad, *op. cit.*, p. 9

situation, the American is interested in the support of law and order”.¹⁵⁷ “Liberty”, “property”, and “order”, then, were interdependent. But something else was also necessary to become an independent citizen: it was education. “Science as the progenitor of “rational action” underpinned American faith in the new state’s universal significance from the very beginning”.¹⁵⁸ Science, as an opposite of ignorance, was a necessary component for the individual to be independent, to be free from external influence and from useless superstitions. This need for individuality had political reflections on the structure of society, such as “anticollectivism” and the “reluctance to accept centralized political power”, which lied at the bottom of American ideology.¹⁵⁹ Another consequence of the centrality of the rational individual was “the market”, that is “the exchange of products and services based on their value in money alone, unfettered by patronage or by need”.¹⁶⁰ At first it was only a matter for sailors and merchants, then, as the industrializing process unfolded, “the market” became “the capitalist market”, and entered the lives of American people. Freedom, individualism, and self initiative combined into capitalism and came to constitute a key part of American foreign policy ideology, namely the “free market”.¹⁶¹ In free market exchanges, business’ interests meshed with national interests abroad, since along with the export of goods came also the export of American values and culture.¹⁶²

While in the first half of the nineteenth century the United States privileged commercial interests and advocated an isolationist solution as far as foreign policy was concerned, in the second half of the century the theory of “manifest destiny” began to take shape. In keeping with this theory, the United States was endowed with a sort of predestination in international politics. In other words, it was obvious and inevitable that the United States would expand itself, at first through North America, then through the Pacific Ocean and outside American borders. Such idea of “mission” persisted in American political ideology throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, and it was the driving force causing a shift from non-interventionism to interventionism in foreign policy.¹⁶³ This could be seen especially in World War I, but the same pattern was repeated in World War II, and in the

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.10

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.11

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.12

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p.29

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.14

Cold War as well: “rather than being *one* imperial power, the United States was fast becoming the protector and balancer of a capitalist world system”.¹⁶⁴

After World War I, President Woodrow Wilson was contradictory in affirming support for “self-determination”, while on the other hand preventing some nationalist projects to come into being “especially where he feared that radicalism or socialism were the driving engines”;¹⁶⁵ this attitude remained a constant in American foreign policy, even in Cold War interventions.

The very same effects of instability that Wilson wanted to avoid were substantiated by the Russian revolution in 1917. If at first the fall of the tsar’s regime was welcomed with favor, the “authoritarian collectivism” and the “emphasis on the permanence of revolution” of the Bolsheviks gave way to a feeling of abhorrence toward Soviet Communism which would last persistently in the years to come: It [Communism] “came to be seen as a deadly rival of Americanism, because it put itself forward as an alternative modernity; a way poor and downtrodden peoples could challenge their conditions *without* replicating the American model”.¹⁶⁶

The Soviet idea of modernity was fundamentally different from the American one ; while the latter had its core in “the market” and its expansion, the former was based on the firm belief that the notion of market should be overcome by a collective action toward a classless society, with no private property, and a more egalitarian economy. The emphasis was not laid upon the commercial sector, but rather on the agricultural one, and on heavy industry. While one of the core principles of American ideology was individualism, Communism aimed at evening society out, considering it as a whole submitted to what was good for the Country.¹⁶⁷ Under Stalin’s regime, Soviet economy was converted into an even more centralized economy when he collectivized agriculture and put it under central state control.¹⁶⁸ At the bottom of Soviet ideology lay Marxism, whose cardinal principles were equality, fair economy and social solidarity. Its ultimate goal was the revolutionary suppression of capitalist society and the establishment of a socialist society as the first step in the direction of a Communist social organization.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of World War II a “complete redirection of Soviet foreign

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.15

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.16

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.17

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.40

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.54

policy” occurred, as the Soviet Union entered an alliance with Britain and the United States to fight Nazi Germany. The Soviet leader Stalin was convinced that, after winning the war, Britain and the United States (the main “imperialist powers”) would compete against each other for their share of new conquests, thus leaving to the Soviets the role of world socialist power. None of this happened. On the contrary, the imperialist power *par excellence*, that is the United States, developed into a protector and the major European powers gathered together around it:

What was clear to Stalin was that a world dominated by the United States was much more dangerous for the Soviet Union than a system in which one could play imperialist powers off against each other. The advent of a capitalist hegemony meant that a concerted strategy for strangling the socialist state was in the making, Stalin thought.¹⁶⁹

According to Westad, it was this apprehension that persuaded the Soviets to fasten their grip on the Eastern European countries, where Communist regimes were imposed under Soviet military control.¹⁷⁰ Communist expansion had in turn a reflection on American perceptions of global danger, that brought to an open conflict between Soviet Communism and American liberal-capitalism:

The immense rise in Soviet power as a result of World War II [...] would have posed a challenge to any great power engaged in Europe or Asia. But it was the American ideological insistence that a global spread of Communism would, if not checked, result from the postwar extension of Soviet might that made the rivalry between the two powers into a Cold War.¹⁷¹

1.4. *The Middle East and the Cold War*

If one had to focus his attention on how the Cold War global conflict affected the Third World regions of the world, and the Middle East specifically, it would appear that “in two important respects the Cold War began in the Middle East or, more particularly, in what to the West is known as the “northern tier” and to the Russians as the “Central East””.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.58

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.59

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.25

¹⁷² F. Halliday, *The Middle East, the Great Powers, and the Cold War* in Y. Sayigh, A. Shlaim (ed.), *The Cold War and the Middle East*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 10

Besides tensions in Greece, immediately after World War II there emerged also conflicts in Turkey, which was at odds with the Soviet Union over the eastern provinces of Kars, Ardahan, and the Turkish Straits.¹⁷³ Situation became tense in Iran as well, where the Soviets were supporting Azeris and Kurds in their request for autonomy from the central government of the Shah in Tehran, backed by the British and the Americans. Accordingly, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Kurdish Mahabad Republic were established in the north of the country, in 1945.¹⁷⁴ As stated by Peter Sluglett, although “it remains unclear what the Soviet Union’s objectives were in Iran, [...] it certainly sought an oil concession in the areas around the Caspian, and a friendly local government on the other side of the border.”¹⁷⁵ These developments were contested by Washington, and the Soviet refusal to withdraw their forces caused a situation of crisis. All the same, the Soviet Union would not go far in the risk of an open confrontation, and backed down in May 1946.¹⁷⁶ The importance of the Middle Eastern region was testified by the fact that the Truman Doctrine of 1947 was addressed specifically to both Greece and Turkey in the face of this situation, but also, indirectly, to Iran.¹⁷⁷

If the dispute on Central Europe was the focal point of the politics of the Cold War until the first half of the 1950s, the second half of the decade saw a relative stabilization of the battle in the Old Continent:

L’ inclusione della Germania federale nella NATO, la nascita di un’organizzazione militare speculare a quella atlantica nel blocco sovietico (il Patto di Varsavia) e la firma del trattato di pace austriaco sembrarono congelare sine die la partizione bipolare del continente. Una prima Guerra Fredda – strettamente eurocentrica- terminava così alla metà degli anni Cinquanta.¹⁷⁸

This did not mean that the competition between the two blocs was over; on the contrary,

¹⁷³ R. Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis*, cit., p.83. The Soviets demanded a revision of the 1936 Montreux Convention allowing free passage through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles for Soviet warships and joint Turkish-Soviet control of the Straits. They also presented territorial demands for the territories of Kars and Ardahan, which were disputed since the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878. See also M. Brecher, J. Wilkenfeld, *A Study of Crisis*, University of Michigan Press, 2000, pp. 334 and ff.

¹⁷⁴ For a full account of the situation, see O.A. Westad, *op. cit.*, pp.60 and ff.

¹⁷⁵ P. Sluglett, *The Cold War in the Middle East* in L. Fawcett (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.49

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.48

¹⁷⁷ F. Halliday, *op. cit.*, in Y. Sayigh, A. Shlaim (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.10 and R. Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis*, cit., pp. 40-41

¹⁷⁸ M. Del Pero, *Libertà e Impero. Gli Stati Uniti e il mondo 1776-2006*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2008, p.313

it was as fierce as before, but, in the meantime, some other developments had ensued in the global scenario: the process of decolonization had crafted new “actors” and new arenas of rivalry in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and in the Middle East. It resulted in the East-West axis of conflict intersecting with the North-South one.¹⁷⁹ Such process had its origins in the 1920s and 1930s, as ideas of self-determination spread and the Russian revolution of 1917 became the example where to draw inspiration from, but had its zenith after World War II, when the powers in Europe were too weak to keep control on their possessions in the colonies:

The process of decolonization [...] began in the 1940s and lasted up to the 1970s. But already in the immediate post-war years, as the Cold War became the dominant international feature, the direction of future developments was becoming increasingly clear: the era of colonial rule in the Third World was quickly coming to a close.¹⁸⁰

For the countries that were breaking away from colonial rule, the fact that the world was so divided into two blocs corresponding to two superpowers, and that both of them sponsored the emancipation from the colonial heritage, represented a chance to receive “aid and support”.¹⁸¹ Here the Soviets found the greatest potential for revolutionary changes to occur, which could damage Western interests and imperialism.¹⁸² As for the Americans, by way of contrast, if on the one hand they supported the modernizing ambitions of new regimes, on the other they saw them as potential victims of radicalism and as fertile ground for Soviet antagonism.

The newly liberated states of Asia, Africa and Latin America, in contrast to the two blocs, declared themselves extraneous to Cold War logics, searching for a “third way”, that is, an alternative “both to capitalism and Communism”;¹⁸³ therefore, from the early 1950s this area came to be known as the “Third World”. The Asian-African conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955, represented an important initiative for the new nations from the viewpoint of a dialogue between African and Asian countries, and laid the foundations of the “Nonaligned Movement”, which would materialize in Belgrade, in 1961.¹⁸⁴ Yet, despite these

¹⁷⁹ E. Di Nolfo, *op. cit.*, p.807-808

¹⁸⁰ O.A. Westad, *op. cit.*, p.87

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.89

¹⁸² F. Halliday, *op. cit.*, in Y. Sayigh, A. Shlaim (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.8

¹⁸³ O.A. Westad, *op. cit.*, p.2

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 97-107

initiatives and its desire for autonomy, the Third World needed to maintain contacts with the industrialized powers, since in most cases these were the only ones who could provide them with the aid, capital, and technology they required so as to develop. “But”, as stated by Westad, “very little aid – none in the case of the Soviet Union and the United States - came without strings attached”.¹⁸⁵ Hence, a downright competition between the superpowers arose; each of them intended to absorb the newly decolonized in their respective strategic and economic sphere.¹⁸⁶ This is precisely why the “new Third World states” were “inextricably linked in time to the Cold War conflict and to Cold War ideologies”.¹⁸⁷ As a matter of fact, this area was the most vulnerable, due to its undefined political and economic system and social unrest; for this reason, the dichotomy between two “strategic ideologies” affected this part of the world as well:

For the USSR, the movements of the Third World were part of a worldwide upsurge of oppressed peoples against capitalism and imperialism, part of a correlation of forces shifting in Moscow’s favour. For the USA, the challenges of the Third World necessitated the enunciation of security doctrines to which every US president, except Gerald Ford, put his name.¹⁸⁸

As far as the Middle East was concerned, it can be agreed that in the 1950s this pattern of juxtaposition lay over the conflict between Arab nationalism and the residual colonial presence of France and Britain. The Soviet Union became the privileged partner of Arab nationalism, especially after the defining moment of the Egyptian revolution of 1952. At the end of World War II, Egypt experienced a rise of nationalist sentiments: along with protests against the exclusive power of the king and his corruption, calls for the complete withdrawal of the British from Egypt, which they occupied since 1882, were growing. Social unrest was at its zenith. As the Wafd, the Egyptian leading political party, failed to reach significant achievements at the beginning of 1952, all the hopes for a change in Egypt were set on the army. A group of young officers seemed to be particularly fit for this aim, and first among them was a strongly motivated Colonel: Gamal Abdel Nasser. Although it was not him who led the coup which overthrew the monarchy on July 23, 1952, he became Prime Minister in 1954, prevailing over General Neguib. Nasser was a real “revolutionary” and preferred a

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.96

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.92

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.74

¹⁸⁸ F. Halliday, *op. cit.*, in Y. Sayigh, A. Shlaim (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.8

radical transformation of Egyptian society to moderate reforms. The society he envisioned did not see democratic institutions coming; he favored a socialist reform for Egypt:

Nasser took the position that [...] the Egyptians were in fact not yet ready for the Western parliamentary institutions that the old regime had introduced only to pervert for its own ends. [...] A transition period was therefore necessary, a period in which Egyptians could be educated to understand and use effectively such institutions. Rather than political freedom, accordingly, the revolutionary leaders in Egypt chose to emphasize “social democracy”, by which they meant destroying the class distinctions of wealth and privilege.¹⁸⁹

The partnership with Moscow that later took form was one of those “alliances”, if one can term it so, which were created by a mix of “ideological cohesion” and “strategic considerations and economic needs”.¹⁹⁰ The United States, for their part, were afraid of a Communist expansion in the strategic zone of the Middle East and tried to ensure their backing to the more conservative, pro-Western countries. Accordingly, a system of “competitive alliance” took shape, in which “military, political, and diplomatic considerations combined to align states with one or the other bloc”.¹⁹¹ Still, this did not mean that the regional “clients” would blindly follow the lead of their “patron” superpower. Alliance was a matter of common ideological beliefs and interest, and very often of manipulation, as the local partner would not hesitate to shift camps depending on what better suited his country’s benefit, or who would provide goods and services, or supply arms.¹⁹²

Bipolar rivalry, then, affected also the Middle East region. The U.S.S.R. developed ties with revolutionary and nationalist military regimes in Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Libya, Iraq and South Yemen; the U.S.A., on the other hand, supported Israel, Turkey and traditionalist monarchies such as Saudi Arabia and Iran.¹⁹³ Both Fred Halliday and Rashid Khalidi agree that superpower rivalry between the two blocs combined with regional conflicts, as internal disputes in the region were intensified by Cold War competition’s logics. In a statement about the Arab-Israeli conflict, which, nevertheless, could be considered true also for other inter-state conflicts in the Middle East, Halliday maintained that “the causes of rivalry of the

¹⁸⁹ D. Peretz, *The Middle East Today*, Westport, Praeger, 1994, pp.230-240. Quotation at p.238

¹⁹⁰ O.A. Westad, *op. cit.*, p.399

¹⁹¹ F. Halliday, *op. cit.*, in Y. Sayigh, A. Shlaim (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.15

¹⁹² P. Sluglett, *op. cit.*, in L. Fawcett (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.53

¹⁹³ F. Halliday, *op. cit.*, in Y. Sayigh, A. Shlaim (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.15

two blocs acquired a Cold War character as each side sought to ensure strategic backing from one side or the other, and fuelled a regional arms race".¹⁹⁴ The prototype of Cold War two-blocs division (one backed by the U.S.S.R., the other by the U.S.A.) was then superimposed most notably in the Arab-Israeli conflict,¹⁹⁵ but also in other contexts, such as the war in Lebanon (1975-1990) and in Iran-Iraq conflicts (after the revolution in Iraq, in 1958). In all these arenas of regional competition, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. were actively supporting one of the opposite factions, providing military and economic assistance.¹⁹⁶ The main interest of each superpower, however, was not that of an immediate settlement of local conflicts, but rather the scoring of a point in the global Cold War contrast, at the expense of the other.¹⁹⁷ Between the 1950s and the 1970s, the Middle East was indeed one of the major stages where Cold War competition unfolded.

1.5. 1973 as a Watershed

The general context of the American relations with the Middle East so far sketched seems to suggest that one particular Arab country and one particular year were crucial to U.S. policy in the region, namely Egypt and 1973. At first glance, it appears as undeniable that the year 1973 was a major defining moment in at least three important aspects which deserve being underlined here, but will be more diffusely dealt with in the following chapter.

As previously mentioned, in 1973 the October Arab-Israeli War broke out, and its main actor on the Arab front was precisely Egypt. To begin with, being Egypt one of the main Soviet regional clients - although the patron-client relationship was at the time somehow eroding - and Israel the U.S.' protégé, this war deeply affected Soviet-American relations. Notwithstanding the flourishing of the policy of détente during the first years of the 1970s, clearly visible in the two Nixon-Brezhnev meetings in 1972 and 1973, the Soviet supply of weapons to the Egyptians made Cold War confrontation rise to unprecedented levels in the Middle East, even reaching a situation of alarm for a possible nuclear conflict. Moreover, this war represented a watershed also as far as energetic policies and international economy

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.14. See also R. Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis*, cit., p.102

¹⁹⁵ A sharp division of the superpowers into two fronts had not yet taken form in the first two Arab-Israeli conflicts, in 1948 and 1956. The 1967 Six Day War, instead, marked a "full identification with Israel of the United States, and, conversely, of the Soviet Union with the Arab states". R. Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis*, cit., p.117

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.101

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.129

were concerned. We will see how the OPEC rallied to Egypt's support, enforcing an oil embargo, whose heavy international repercussions included the cracking of American-European relations. Last but not least, the 1973 War represented a fundamental starting point for the Egyptian-Israeli peace process. President Anwar Sadat's resolve to enter negotiations with the Israelis, combined with American ability in diplomatic maneuvering, originated an epic change in the regional system of alliances and balance of power in the Middle East. From this point on Egypt reversed its partnerships, and the U.S.-Egypt relations improved more and more to the point where Egypt became a strategic American ally, in a process that next chapters will attempt to describe.

2. The United States and Egypt: 1950s-1973

2.1. Regional Relevance of Egypt

As one approaches the question of relations between the U.S. and Egypt, it seems quite evident that, starting from the 1950s on, Egypt became one of the main focuses of America's attention in the Middle East.¹⁹⁸ Several factors contributed to the regional relevance of the country. First, there were some intrinsic natural characteristics such as its geographic position, which made of it the "bridge" between "the Eastern and Western parts of the Arab world", and its bordering with Israel, which, as Mohamed Heikal said, "links it with the surrounding region, and brings it into the arena of world conflict".¹⁹⁹ Then, Egypt was also the Arab country where the major water resources lay, since it dominated the greatest part of the Nile river and its delta. Its strategic location gained even more importance when the Suez Canal, "a major waterway for global and regional commerce and navigation, linking the Mediterranean to the Red Seas", was opened in 1869.²⁰⁰ Moreover, Egypt had the largest population, the largest city (Cairo) and the largest seaport (Alexandria) in the Arab world.²⁰¹ In the words of Adeed Dawisha, "Egypt's population also provides her with a huge middle class that has helped her cultural domination in the region".²⁰² As a matter of fact, Egyptian journals, newspaper, magazines, and the media in general have spread their influence in the entire Arab world; the location in Cairo of the Al-Azhar Mosque and University, the most important centre for Islamic and Arabic studies in the world, contributed to make the city the "cultural and religious centre of the Arab East". Therefore, there had always been a sort of identification of the Egyptians with the Arab world and vice versa.²⁰³ The largeness of Egypt's population, in addition, endowed the country with a great military potential, if only well trained and equipped.²⁰⁴

That was why Egypt's growing centrality in the Arab world in the 1950s brought to its quest for modern weaponry, because the new revolutionary regime of the Free Officers needed

¹⁹⁸ H. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, Boston-Toronto, Little, Brown and Company, 1982, p.199

¹⁹⁹ A. Dawisha, *Egypt*, in Y. Sayigh, A. Shlaim (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.27-28

²⁰⁰ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, *Background Note: Egypt*, at www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5309.htm, accessed January 12, 2012

²⁰¹ A. Dawisha, *op. cit.*, in Y. Sayigh, A. Shlaim (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.27

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p.28

²⁰³ D. Peretz, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-261

²⁰⁴ A. Dawisha, *op. cit.*, p.28

“to give credibility to an activist Egyptian foreign policy”.²⁰⁵ Given that Washington’s chief objective was to keep the Soviet Union out of Egypt’s affairs, initially the U.S. responded favorably to the Egyptian demand for military aid.²⁰⁶ However, diplomatic disputes over the retaining of Britain’s military base at Suez, the conditions attached by the U.S. to aid first, and the linking of an Arab-Israeli settlement to military assistance after, led to a “marriage of convenience” between Egypt and the Soviet Union instead.²⁰⁷

2.2. Key Events Concerning the Relationship

The 1955 Czech-Egyptian Arms Agreement

One of the key events concerning the U.S.-Egyptian relation was the arms deal between Egypt and the U.S.S.R. of September 1955. According to William Burns, the agreement “was in many ways a watershed in U.S.-Egyptian relations”, because it marked a change of opinion on Nasser, first regarded by many in Washington as a “potential ally”, and then as a “potential enemy”.²⁰⁸ Indeed, the supply of Soviet arms to Egypt, although through Czech middlemen, represented a breakthrough not only in superpowers’ Third World policy but also in the more general Cold War balance.²⁰⁹ How this accord came into being was very much the result of a combination of factors, among which American aid policies should be underlined.

As previously noted, when the revolutionaries’ government was established, the U.S. at first declared itself favorable to a collaboration with Egypt, including through economic and military aid.²¹⁰ Despite this, the conditions attached to aid by Washington did not match well with Nasser’s will of absolute independence for his country. The year 1955 witnessed three important developments which would denote a decisive shift in Egyptian foreign policy, adding “a new sense of urgency to Egypt’s search for military aid”.²¹¹ Firstly, the formation of the anti-Soviet Baghdad Pact, in February 1955, and most of all the joining of Britain, deeply concerned Nasser, who saw it as a “direct challenge, supported by the West, to Egyptian

²⁰⁵ W.J. Burns, *Economic Aid and American Policy Toward Egypt 1955-1981*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1985, p.10

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.13-27

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.8

²⁰⁹ *Ibidem*

²¹⁰ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.61-62

²¹¹ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p. 24

hegemony in the Arab world”.²¹² The future president Anwar Sadat clearly explained his reasons in his autobiography:

Our revolution was, naturally, opposed to the pact. How could we agree to be members of such an agreement when our predecessors had turned down the idea of bilateral treaties? Besides, having just put an end to British occupation in October 1954 we could hardly be expected to tie Egypt down to a British-controlled pact or to any other foreign power.²¹³

The Egyptian government also prevented other Arab countries, such as Jordan and Lebanon, from joining the pact.²¹⁴ Even if the U.S. did not join the pact, nor did it fully back it, Nasser became more and more cautious toward American aid policy and his anti-imperialistic stance started to radicalize. Indeed, as asserted by Spiegel, “Nasser was led to expect arms by American representatives stationed in Cairo and many who visited from Washington. When he did not soon receive what he wanted, he began to consider turning elsewhere”.²¹⁵

Next, came a raid by Israel on Gaza on February 28, 1955, as a retaliation for continued terrorist attacks by fedayeen²¹⁶ from that area, which was controlled by Egypt. Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion ordered an attack that killed thirty-seven Egyptian soldiers.²¹⁷ For the Egyptians, it was a wake-up call that made their concern over the inadequacy of their arms equipment even more severe. In the words of Sadat, “that date - the last day of February 1955 - was of historic significance. It marked, in effect, a turning point in the history of Egypt, the revolution, the Middle East, and Third World countries, inasmuch as it made us realize how urgently we needed weapons [...]”.²¹⁸

The Bandung Conference of April 1955 revealed itself fundamental for subsequent Egyptian steps as far as foreign policy was concerned. There Nasser once again met President Tito from Yugoslavia, Indian Prime Minister Nehru and Chinese Prime Minister Chou Enlai, who, besides sharing Egyptian interest in neutralism, would be key in mediating

²¹² *Ibid.*, p.24; S.L. Spiegel, *op.cit.*, p.62

²¹³ A. Sadat, *In Search of Identity. An Autobiography*, New York, Harper&Row, 1977, p.135

²¹⁴ *Ibidem*

²¹⁵ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.63

²¹⁶ They were mainly Muslim Brotherhood members and “followers of the exiled Grand Mufti of Jerusalem”.
W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.25

²¹⁷ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.25-26

²¹⁸ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.135

an arms supply agreement between Egypt and the Soviet Union.²¹⁹ While as late as 1953 Stalin had refused to supply non-Communist countries with weapons, the new Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev fostered a more activist policy in the Third World. “The Egyptian government’s need to obtain arms provided the lever that Khrushchev was looking for”; thus, in May 1955, the U.S.S.R. expressed its approval for trading Soviet weapons for Egyptian cotton, “with no strings attached”.²²⁰

The American reactions to the U.S.S.R.-Egypt talks were divided; while the CIA warned about the seriousness of the newly born partnership and suggested supplying Egypt with American arms so as to bring it back into the Western sphere of influence, the White House and the State Department considered Nasser’s moves a bluff, and did not believe that he was actually looking to the Soviet Union for aid. “They did not comprehend” – said Spiegel – “that a regime might *choose* to deal with the Kremlin”.²²¹ Meanwhile, in Cairo, Nasser bargained about the list of armaments to be delivered, timing, and costs with Soviet diplomat Dmitri Shepilov. Subsequently, Nasser negotiated through Czech intermediaries: in this way the U.S.S.R. did not result directly involved in the deal, since this would cause harm to its relations with the U.S.. Thus, in July 1955, in Prague a final agreement was worked out, which provided for the trading of Egyptian cotton to Czechoslovakia in exchange for arms, an 86 million dollars deal (1955 dollars), according to Douglas Little.²²² Notwithstanding some last-minute American diplomatic moves to dissuade Nasser from signing, the Czech-Egyptian arrangement was openly announced in September 1955. Its crucial implications were from the start clear both to the Egyptians and the Americans. The Egyptian view could be summarized by Sadat’s words:

That deal helped to pull down the barriers that had been erected between us and the Soviet Union, and effectively raised the morale of the Third World countries, whose members began to feel that there was somebody they could resort to in their effort to liberate their national will from the

²¹⁹ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.26-27; A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.127

²²⁰ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.28-29

²²¹ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.65; W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.29-30

²²² D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.130; W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.30-31. A September 1955 report from the State Department’s special assistant for intelligence, W. Park Armstrong Jr. to Secretary Dulles indicated that Egypt received 252 jet aircraft and 100 heavy tanks, for a total value of 86 million dollars (1955 dollars), as Little stated. See C.P. Skardan, *A Lesson for Our Times*, Bloomington, AuthorHouse, 2010, p.42. About the amount of the deal, Burns quoted the words of Nasser, saying “the Revolutionary Command Council had arranged to trade part of the Egyptian cotton crop [...] for about \$ 200 million worth of military equipment”. W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.32. The exact sum, however, is still unclear.

colonial hegemony under which they had lived for centuries – even if this took the form of straightforward business transactions.²²³

For the U.S., it appeared evident that American aid policy of linking delivery of arms to diplomatic achievements had failed in Egypt, and that it had underestimated the role of the Soviet Union as an alternative supplier of weapons: “Once competitive bidding for Egypt’s favour began, the American bargaining position deteriorated rapidly”.²²⁴ As a consequence, U.S. containment policy in the Middle East was jeopardized, since the U.S.S.R. had now a great influence in Egypt, a country at the heart of the Arab world.²²⁵

In any case, “the regional strategy of trying to align the Arabs against the Russians was not altered by the Czech-Egyptian arms deal”.²²⁶ On the contrary, at the end of 1955, Washington hoped to improve relations with Egypt by offering aid for the construction of the High Dam at Aswan, along with help in solving the Arab-Israeli dispute.²²⁷

1956 Suez Crisis

The Aswan High Dam building project was “by far the most important” one “in the Egyptian economic development program in the mid-1950s”.²²⁸ The Nile River was certainly a resource of paramount importance for Egyptian economy, but a more effective way of exploiting it was badly needed. The construction of a new dam across the Nile near Aswan had been foreseen ever since 1947; it would improve both the agricultural sector, by increasing the size of cultivable land and, consequently, amplifying the quantity of exportable goods, and the industrial one, because it would supply the country with hydroelectric power.²²⁹ That was why, in an attempt to bring U.S.-Egyptian relations back to how they were before the 1955 Czech-Egyptian arms agreement, the Eisenhower administration offered financial support to the project. After consultation with the World Bank President Eugene Black, Washington and London formally announced their joint plan, on December 16, 1955: “America’s share was to be \$56 million and Britain’s was to be \$14 million, with the World Bank providing \$130 million”, to cover the first stage, while further

²²³ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.135

²²⁴ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.32; p.34

²²⁵ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.130

²²⁶ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.66

²²⁷ *Ibidem*; see also W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.36

²²⁸ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.38

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40; D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.168

help would be taken into consideration, but no formal commitment was made. The Egyptian government would contribute itself with a share of \$900 million in local currency.²³⁰ However, financial backing was not coming without strings attached. As a matter of fact, Egypt was asked to put its economy under the World Bank's lens, which would watch over monetary and fiscal policies. Moreover, future contracts would exclude Soviet participation, and a settlement should be reached with Sudan over the question of the Nile waters' allocation. What is more, it was later revealed that the U.S.' proposal was subject to an Egyptian pledge to progress in the Arab-Israeli peace process.²³¹ Faced with such conditions, Nasser was doubtful, and somehow sceptical, assuming that the Aswan Dam aid project would once again pave the way for colonial control over his country and for foreign interfering pressure on Egyptian economy; so, he did not accept right away.²³² "With Nasser's nonacceptance" - said Spiegel - "Washington's pro-dam coalition began to unravel".²³³ In point of fact, British voices²³⁴ pressuring Eisenhower for reviewing aid policies joined some very influential forces, which, considering that 1956 was an election year, weighed even more heavily with the decisional process of the American Congress. These were the "Israel lobby", which insisted that the Aswan Dam should not be financed unless Egypt consented to peace with Israel, and the "cotton lobby", a group of southern senators who saw their interests threatened by an increased production of Egyptian cotton, which would be much more competitive on the market than the American one. Furthermore, there were the "hard-line Cold Warriors", opposed to a policy of collaboration with Egypt.²³⁵ The fact that Nasser recognized the Communist People's Republic of China on May 16, 1956 dealt a fatal blow to American interest in sponsoring the High Dam project, and subsequent rumours of a Russian counter-proposal, supposedly issued by the new Soviet foreign minister Shepilov during a visit in Cairo on 17 June, gave way to the withdrawal of American and British offers. President Eisenhower was who made the final decision, and he formally announced it on July 19, 1956.²³⁶ According to Di Nolfo, Nasser was then in Brioni with Tito and Nehru. He had some talks with the Soviets but he realized that they could not offer the

²³⁰ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.54-55; quotation at D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.169

²³¹ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.53-55; D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.169

²³² W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p. 56; E. Di Nolfo, *op. cit.*, p.893; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.68

²³³ S.L. Spiegel, *ibidem*

²³⁴ The British were outraged when Sir John Glubb, the British commander of the Arab Legion in Jordan, was ousted by King Hussein after nationalistic demonstrations, which they considered to be inspired by Nasser.

²³⁵ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.69; D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.170; W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.68-70

²³⁶ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.69-70; D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.171

immediate financial assistance he needed.²³⁷ So, during a speech he gave on July 26, 1956 in Alexandria, the Egyptian President announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, which till then belonged to Britain and France, and declared that the revenues coming from the taxes on the crossing of the Canal would finance the Aswan Dam. The first British reaction was one of “shock, disbelief, and rage”, “although Nasser promised to compensate the firm’s British and French shareholders for their losses at book value and although he pledged to keep the canal open”.²³⁸ The governments of U.K. and France were deeply concerned about the possible consequences of Nasser’s gesture, since about two-thirds of Western European oil passed through the canal. It seemed clear that they would undertake military action to take the canal back. Washington’s position, however, was contrary to military intervention: “the President had no doubt from the beginning as to what the American position should be. Force was neither warranted nor justified in his view, and the essence of policy was to prevent the British and French from intervening militarily”.²³⁹ What Eisenhower wanted to avoid was a negative reaction from the Arab world, an anti-imperialistic response that would hamper American interests in the Middle East. In addition, he preferred staying out of an eventual conflict during the election campaign.²⁴⁰ Therefore, the U.S. organized to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis, involving the British in talks for a conference to be held soon. But, “while the public diplomatic show went on”, Britain and France “were also working secretly on a second track. They were making plans for military intervention in the Canal Zone, even though neither was well prepared to take such an action”.²⁴¹ Just such unpreparedness, according to Spiegel, convinced the British and the French to take part in the international conference held in London on August 16, and not to attack immediately.²⁴² What emerged from this conference was the idea of international management of the canal, and a delegation led by Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies was sent to Cairo to discuss the matter with Nasser, who rejected the plan. Nonetheless, the canal continued to function as properly as when it was controlled by the Europeans. Consequently, British and French belligerent intentions looked further unjustified.²⁴³ In

²³⁷ E. Di Nolfo, *op. cit.*, p.894

²³⁸ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.172; D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.483

²³⁹ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, pp.483-484 (quotation at p.484)

²⁴⁰ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70; D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.484

²⁴¹ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.484

²⁴² S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.72

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.73; D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-174

September, Dulles called a second conference of maritime powers in London, where the U.S., Britain and France put the basis for a Suez Canal Users Association (SCUA), with a view to future international control of the Canal. Egypt once again rejected the initiative. Then, “with no evidence that the Suez Canal Users Association, the United States, or the United Nations could persuade the Egyptians to accept international control of the Suez Canal”, the British PM Anthony Eden was pressed by Conservatives in his country for a prompt intervention.²⁴⁴ For their part, the French were eager for revenge over Nasser, who was supporting the anti-colonial rebellion in Algeria. So, searching for a “casus belli”, French, British, and Israeli leaders met in Sevres, near Paris, on October 24, 1956, to arrange a plan to strike Egypt before the newly obtained Soviet weapons could be effectively used. Their action design was codenamed “Operation Musketeer”: Israel, in response to fedayeen raids and the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba, would invade the Sinai and attack near the Suez Canal. Then Britain and France would issue an ultimatum, demanding that both Israel and Egypt retire ten miles on each side from the Canal zone. Given that Egypt would not respect the ultimatum, so they predicted, they would consequently be justified to attack, in order to protect the Canal.²⁴⁵

All this planning took place secretly. Therefore, when the Israelis attacked Egypt in the Sinai, on October 29, both Nasser and Eisenhower were taken by surprise. The American President was furious and felt betrayed by his allies, who were putting the U.S. in a difficult position vis-à-vis the Arab world, risking even a Soviet involvement in the matter.²⁴⁶ The next day, he and Dulles tried to work out an Egyptian-Israeli cease-fire before British and French intervention, but that same day the European powers issued their ultimatum. As they had planned, Nasser refused it, and they began their bombing campaign near Cairo.²⁴⁷ In the meantime, as reported by Yergin,

Nasser had been quick to act exactly where the most damage could be done. He scuttled dozens of ships filled with rocks and cement and old beer bottles, effectively blocking the waterway, and thus choking off the supply of oil, the security of which had been the immediate reason for the attack.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p. 175

²⁴⁵ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.74; D. Little, *op. cit.*, pp.175-176; D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.489

²⁴⁶ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.490; D. Little, *op. cit.*, p. 176

²⁴⁷ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.75

²⁴⁸ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.490

Eisenhower then refused to supply the European countries with American oil, thus punishing them for their betrayal. Besides, he was still enraged for the failure of the U.N. Security Council sponsored cease-fire blocked by Britain; so, he brought the matter to the General Assembly, where Britain could not impose its veto.²⁴⁹ On November 2, the U.N. General Assembly decided that an immediate cease-fire should enter into force and that all the Israeli troops should be withdrawn from the Egyptian territory, but Britain and France refused to implement the U.N. resolution, claiming that they were acting as a “police force” in the area. On November 5, British and French paratroopers landed at Port Said, in the Suez Canal zone, while the Israelis had by now control of the Sinai and the Gaza Strip, and captured Sharm al-Sheik, thus securing the Strait of Tiran.²⁵⁰ In the meantime, the Soviets had suggested that they might intervene militarily in the conflict, unless the United States authorized a joint peacekeeping force.²⁵¹ With this in mind, the U.S. reinforced its pressure on Britain, France and Israel for an immediate stop of all fighting, in a way as to avoid a dangerous superpowers involvement in the conflict. On November 6, the British and the French accepted the cease-fire. Although this was welcomed with relief in Washington, it was also underlined that it was not enough: the U.S. wanted a complete withdrawal.²⁵² Israel was warned too: “U.N. condemnations, attack by Soviet “volunteers”, termination of all U.S. governmental and private aid” would be forthcoming unless it conformed to a cease-fire. On November 8, Israel announced its withdrawal, but only after “satisfactory arrangements with the U.N. force then being established”.²⁵³ The first U.N. troops landed at Port Said on November 21. However, not until added pressure from the U.S., which menaced to continue to retain emergency oil supplies, did Britain and France finally agree to begin bringing their troops out of Egypt. One month later, as British and French troops completed their withdrawal, the United Nations Emergency Force took control of the Suez Canal.²⁵⁴ As for the Israelis, they “sought to delay their own withdrawal in order to explain their actions and obtain greater support from the American populace”.²⁵⁵ As a matter of fact, they did not pull out their forces from the portions of Sinai and of the Gaza Strip they controlled. After long

²⁴⁹ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.177; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.75

²⁵⁰ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.179; D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.491

²⁵¹ D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.180; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.77

²⁵² D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.491; D. Little, *op. cit.*, p.180

²⁵³ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.77

²⁵⁴ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.492; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.77

²⁵⁵ S.L. Spiegel, *ibid.*, p.78

diplomatic bargaining, a compromise was reached according to which Israel withdrew from those territories, where U.N.E.F. forces were displayed, in March 1957, but it was guaranteed free passage through the Strait of Tiran, which was re-opened.²⁵⁶

The Suez crisis was then definitively over, leaving Nasser's stature in the region tremendously grown. By way of contrast, British and French influence sank, leaving the role of major foreign power in the Middle East open to the U.S., which had adopted a balanced position in the conflict. In so doing, U.S.-Egyptian relations improved, although the regional conflict with Israel persisted unabated. Indeed, Sadat wrote in his autobiography that it was Eisenhower who saved the situation of crisis, that "it was U.S. attitude [...] that turned our defeat into victory". Yet, Nasser failed to grasp this element in full, and he missed a "chance to consolidate U.S.-Egyptian relations", as would be evident in subsequent developments.²⁵⁷

1967 Six Day War

The years following the Suez crisis of 1955 witnessed a steady improvement of the U.S.-Israeli relationship, first obtained during President Kennedy's presidency but carried further by his successor, President Lyndon B. Johnson. By way of contrast, U.S.-Egyptian relations had seriously worsened, and this divergence became more and more evident, especially since 1964, "in part because of the conflict in Yemen,²⁵⁸ in part because of quarrels over aid".²⁵⁹ To diplomatic setbacks added Johnson's aversion to Nasser's radical pan-Arabism which was putting Arab conservatives regimes, traditionally pro-Western and important oil suppliers, into jeopardy.²⁶⁰ Notwithstanding the President's personal sympathy for Israel, his initial approach towards the Arab-Israeli conflict was one trying to keep on good terms with both factions. In fact, to make an enemy of the radical Arab world would inevitably mean an enhanced Soviet presence in the region, which would give rise to the tangible risk of a superpowers' showdown.²⁶¹ That was why, at first, the Johnson administration was not willing to supply Israel with arms whenever it requested them, in the face of continued Soviet sell of weapons to Egypt: an effort limiting Nasser's purchase was made. Only

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.78-82

²⁵⁷ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp.146-147

²⁵⁸ Nasser supported the coup against the Yemeni king by republican forces in 1962, and continued his support after civil war ensued between the republican faction and the royalist one, backed by Saudi Arabia.

²⁵⁹ W.B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*, Washington, Brookings, 2005, p.24

²⁶⁰ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.122-123

²⁶¹ P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.17

afterwards, when a negative Egyptian response was received, the U.S. armed Israel, but also conservatives Arab states, such as Jordan.²⁶² However, the delivery of aid to Israel and Jordan brought to a growing Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi demand for Soviet weapons, creating tensions.²⁶³ Such tensions reached a peak in early 1967, when border skirmishes between Syria and Israel intensified, escalating even to an air battle in April 1967 in which six Syrian jets were downed.²⁶⁴ But the “spark that ignited the fuel”, causing a major crisis that would eventually lead to war, “came in the form of erroneous Soviet reports to Egypt on May 13 that Israel had mobilized some ten to thirteen brigades on the Syrian border”.²⁶⁵ As a consequence, Nasser decided to intervene in order to prevent Israel from striking at Syria, with whom Egypt had stipulated a Common Defense Pact, and also to underline once more his anti-Israel stance. The next day, he mobilized the Egyptian forces and made them converge into Sinai.²⁶⁶ American and Israeli immediate reaction was not an all-out alarm. As a matter of fact,

Nasser’s initial moves were interpreted in Washington primarily in political terms. Under attack by the conservative monarchies of Jordan and Saudi Arabia for being soft on Israel, Nasser was seen as attempting to regain prestige by appearing as the defender of the embattled and threatened radical regime in Syria. [...] Consequently the initial American reaction to Nasser’s dispatch of troops was restrained. Even the Israelis did not seem particularly alarmed.²⁶⁷

On May 16, American perceptions proved to be widely mistaken: Nasser demanded that the United Nations Emergency Force should be withdrawn from the areas where they kept peace ever since 1957, and so they did in the following days.²⁶⁸ Then, Egyptian troops were further organized and sent in territories by Israel’s border, at Sharm al-Sheik and into Sinai. In the meantime, the Israelis also moved to counter Nasser’s actions, but Washington intervened and invited his ally to stop and consult before taking any dramatic decision. President Johnson tried to open a diplomatic dialogue between Israel, Egypt and Syria through the United Nations, in an attempt to solve the crisis in a multilateral context and not

²⁶² *Ibidem*; see also S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131

²⁶³ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p. 132

²⁶⁴ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.24; P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 17

²⁶⁵ W.B. Quandt, *ibidem*

²⁶⁶ *Ibidem*; see also A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.172

²⁶⁷ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.25

²⁶⁸ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.137; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.25; P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 17

to involve the U.S. directly in the conflict, considering its heavy military burden in Vietnam.²⁶⁹ Despite the Israelis' demand for a clear American commitment, Johnson urged restraint, so as to avoid an escalation of hostilities in the area; he was particularly concerned with an eventual Soviet intervention on the Arab side.²⁷⁰ In the meantime, as reported by Sadat, Nasser was being pressured by Arab radicals for his decision of leaving the Straits of Tiran open to international navigation and above all to Israel.²⁷¹ He then asked the commander of Egyptian armed forces whether the armaments were ready and received assurances that Egypt was well organized to fight. Therefore, on May 22 Nasser ordered to close the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping and cargoes carrying goods to Israel.²⁷² "The declaration" – said Spiegel – "was technically an act of war, and the Israelis had held since 1957 that they would take military action to maintain their free access to the port of Eilat".²⁷³

It was now even more difficult for Johnson to invite Israel to patience; however, he succeeded into holding it back for at least forty-eight hours while at the same time taking a position against the Egyptian move, which was deemed "illegal and potentially disastrous to the cause of peace".²⁷⁴ All the same, the possible solution formulated at this stage of the crisis did not envision an Israeli military intervention, and less so an American intervention. What Washington proposed was a multilateral approach, according to which the U.N. Security Council would try to re-open the strait by diplomatic means and, if the mediation did not succeed, a "multinational naval force" would be set up and eventually sent in the Red Sea in order to safeguard ships destined to Israel.²⁷⁵ Yet, this line caused division in the administration itself; the Pentagon in particular disagreed with the American Navy taking part in the conflict, and judged that Israel could go through a war alone, by its own means.²⁷⁶ The State Department was supportive of the maritime plan instead, and proposed it to Israeli Foreign Minister Eban, when he arrived in Washington to discuss future steps in the

²⁶⁹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.25-26; P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *ibidem*

²⁷⁰ P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton, *ibid.*, p. 18

²⁷¹ In 1957 it was established that the Gulf of Aqaba comprehended international waters, thus it was open to everyone, including Israel

²⁷² A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp.172-173; see also W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.27; P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.18; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.137

²⁷³ S.L. Spiegel, *ibidem*

²⁷⁴ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.28; see also P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.19

²⁷⁵ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.28-29; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p. 138; P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.20

²⁷⁶ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.30-31

crisis, on May 25. But Eban carried with him Israelis' feeling of urgency for an armed intervention against an Egyptian attack that was thought to be just round the corner. In the words of Spiegel, "the Israelis were interested in speed, but American officials were content to warn the Egyptians not to use force while asking the Russians to urge a similar restraint on Cairo". Indeed, Washington did not believe that the Egyptians were going to attack.²⁷⁷

In the following days, more talks took place but the core of the matter did not change: the U.S. was asking Israel not to move against Egypt and wait for the international maritime plan to be worked out.²⁷⁸ As the crisis dragged on, however, positions began to change. Some parts of the administration, and apparently Johnson too, seemed not to be opposed to an Israeli intervention anymore. He was aware that Israel, "as a sovereign state", could take steps without the U.S. consensus, but he also stated that "if so, the United States [...] would not be committed to act".²⁷⁹ Moreover, President Johnson was also exploring the possibility of cooperation with the Soviet Union in defusing the crisis, and of arranging dealings with Nasser. Such developments influenced the Israeli cabinet's decision on May 28 of not going to war yet.²⁸⁰

Despite this, other changes in the scenario would cause Israel to act. First of all, the international maritime force was obtaining scarce consensus, and it would take far too long for a diplomatic solution to be coordinated.²⁸¹ Furthermore, Nasser's pledge that he would not be the first in striking, and his apparent will to negotiate, were matched by reiterated declarations of aversion to Israel. In addition, on May 30 Jordan entered a mutual defense pact with Egypt that resulted in Syria, Jordan, and Egypt establishing a joint command. Faced with such a situation, and with the civilian army in a state of mobilization, Israel felt it could not wait any longer.²⁸² The political crisis in the Israeli government that saw Moshe Dayan becoming Defense Minister fostered such a feeling.²⁸³ In the light of all these factors, "US officials naturally considered the advantages of simply allowing Israel to escalate to hostilities".²⁸⁴ And this, indeed, happened at the beginning of June.

On June 5, 1967, Israel attacked Egypt and rapidly destroyed the greatest part of the

²⁷⁷ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p. 139; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32

²⁷⁸ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.142

²⁷⁹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.144

²⁸⁰ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.36; P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.20-21

²⁸¹ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.145-146; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.37

²⁸² S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.147-148; P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.21

²⁸³ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.38

²⁸⁴ P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.23

Egyptian air bases and the air force there placed, and took most of Sinai and the Gaza Strip. Syria and Jordan then responded to the attack, but their air forces were severely damaged too.²⁸⁵ On the second day of the war, Israel advanced in Jerusalem and took part of the West Bank from Jordan. Already in the first days of the conflict the United States were communicating through a hotline with Moscow. Both parts encouraged a cease-fire but disagreement emerged over the linking of a cease-fire to the “return to prehostility borders”: the Soviets at first pushed for an Israeli withdrawal, but by June 6 the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. came to support the idea of a cease-fire in place. Nasser refused it. Egyptian speculative accusations of American involvement in the air attacks that led six Arab states to break relations with Washington, still, created a climate of hostility against the Egyptian President in the U.S., which, accordingly, was not willing to work in Egypt’s favor.²⁸⁶ On June 7, Israel dealt a major blow as it completed the capture of Jerusalem and the West Bank, and moved forward in the Sinai to the Suez Canal, conquering Egypt’s oil fields. By the next day, Egypt accepted the cease-fire. On June 9, fighting concentrated on the Syrian front, where the Golan Heights were under Israeli attack. When Israel menaced Damascus, the Soviet Union broke diplomatic relations with it, making clear that it would intervene unless Israel stopped its actions there. The U.S., in response, placed the Sixth Fleet close to Syria, hinting that to any Soviet move would follow an American reply.²⁸⁷ Yet, spirits soon calmed down, as Israel took the Golan Heights and Syria observed the cease-fire. By June 10, thus, the war was over and Israel had gained a tremendous quantity of territory: all the Sinai and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria.²⁸⁸

Differently from what had happened at the end of the Suez War, the U.S. did not press Israel for a return to the “status quo ante” in the aftermath of the war. Considering Israel’s reluctance to give up the territories it had just conquered and the radicalizing of Arab refusal of “negotiations or recognition of Israel”, President Johnson did not seem interested in an immediate peacemaking effort.²⁸⁹ His directive for a post-war agreement were clearly sketched in a speech he gave on June 19: “recognized right to national life, justice for the

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p.25; see also A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p. 175

²⁸⁶ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.43; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152; P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.25

²⁸⁷ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.44; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.151

²⁸⁸ P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.26; see also K.W. Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin and the Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace*, New York, Routledge, 1999, pp.50-51

²⁸⁹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.44-45; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.54

refugees, innocent maritime passage, limits on the arms race, and political independence and territorial integrity for all".²⁹⁰ The implementation of these directives did not foresee a unilateral U.S. diplomatic initiative, but rather a joint U.N. effort to draft a resolution that should contain them. However, discord arose between the Arab side and the Israeli one: the former wanted full Israeli withdrawal, a return to the status quo ante; the latter linked the giving up of territories to a comprehensive peace agreement. Such positions were generally backed by the Soviets and the Americans respectively, in a clear superimposition of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the superpowers' Cold War competition.²⁹¹

More disagreement surfaced when the matter was taken to the U.N. Security Council, where the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. sought to collaborate in view of a joint resolution providing the framework for peace. A Latin American draft resolution demanding Israel's withdrawal of forces "from all territories occupied by it as a result of the recent conflict" had no success. In August, then, an Arab League conference took place in Khartoum where the necessity for Israel to relinquish all the territories recently captured was restated, but no direct negotiations would be forthcoming. Indeed, their position was summed up by the formula "no peace, no recognition, no negotiation" with Israel.²⁹² In October, U.N. diplomatic activity was taken up again. This time a British draft resolution was endorsed, which was more ambiguous in wording, calling for "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict", without specifying which these were exactly.²⁹³ In any case, the resolution, U.N.S.C. Resolution 242, was passed unanimously on November 22, 1967 and the Swedish ambassador to the Soviet Union, Gunnar Jarring was chosen to put into action the principles adopted in it.

Afterwards, "the Johnson administration assumed a comparatively low profile in Arab-Israeli diplomacy, leaving the main task to Jarring", since its main preoccupation was now Vietnam.²⁹⁴ U.S.-Arab relations, moreover, were at this point badly strained, given that the United States' policy had shifted from keeping a balanced position to openly siding with Israel, linking "peace" to "land" and enforcing Israel through arms shipments. U.S.-Egyptian

²⁹⁰ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.45; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.154; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 54; P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.28

²⁹¹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.46; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.154

²⁹² W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.46; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p. 155; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.54

²⁹³ For the text of the resolution, see K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.55; see also S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.156; P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.28-29

²⁹⁴ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.46-47; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.157

relations, in particular, experienced a nadir, since Nasser's false accusations had repercussions in diplomatic relations between Washington and other six Arab states as well, besides causing the breaking of relations between the two, and the expulsion of the American technicians working to implement the economic aid program that "had played a central role in U.S.-Egyptian relations for more than a decade".²⁹⁵ What is more, soon after Resolution 242 was passed "low intensity warfare had erupted along the Israeli-Egyptian border" again. Border clashes and incidents became more and more intense towards the end of 1967, escalating into the War of Attrition in 1968.²⁹⁶

War of Attrition

After the 1967 Six Day War, Nasser's position of strong leader in his country and in the Arab world in general was undermined. He no longer enjoyed the absolute consensus he had before the all-out defeat: his regime was internally divided, the army and the students expressed their frustration, the already broken economy had been further damaged by the recent losses, and the Arab states providing aid pushed for continuing the struggle against Israel.²⁹⁷

The year immediately following the war was considered by Nasser as one of "Resistance", in which his main objective was recapturing Sinai. For this reason, absolute priority was given to the "reconstruction of the Egyptian armed forces and the fortification of defences along the Suez Canal".²⁹⁸ The peace initiatives set forth in 1967 were not enthusiastically brought on, since it was evident that Egypt did not accept the new status quo, and Israel, on its side, had no intention of relinquishing any territory unless a total peace agreement was reached. In other words, both parts had no incentives to negotiate, and Jarring himself was not the ideal mediator.²⁹⁹ Therefore, the Egyptians had to face a difficult situation, in which they wanted and needed to keep fighting with Israel, so that its possessions would not consolidate, but their military capability was not up to their intentions. So they chose a "low-intensity warfare", a war of attrition.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁵ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.170

²⁹⁶ P.L. Hahn, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.29-30; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.157-158

²⁹⁷ L.M. James, *Military/political means/ends: Egyptian decision-making in the War of Attrition*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.92

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.93

²⁹⁹ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.56

³⁰⁰ Zaki Shalom, *Israel's traumatic pre-1967 war experience and its implications for Israel's foreign policy decision-making in the post-war period*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.83

While the first signs of attrition were visible already in July 1967, and even more so in the period of August-September, a major moment was the sinking of the *Eilat*, an Israeli destroyer, in October of the same year. The Israeli responded by attacking the Suez oil refineries, but the clash stopped there. Nasser's objective was not an immediate escalation: his aim was maintaining a "fluid" situation pressuring Israel for withdrawal from Sinai, but no other such remarkable military action was taken apart from "small exchanges of fire" in March and June, 1968.³⁰¹ In September 1968, a second phase in Egyptian foreign policy began, one of "Deterrence". The timing was considered ripe, the armed forces strong enough, and a vast amount of troops was by that time displayed along the Suez Canal. Now the army, using artillery, had a more direct contact with the enemy: "on 8 September, the Egyptian forces opened fire, breaching the UN ceasefire and triggering a major artillery duel from Suez to al-Qantara, which resulted in fairly high Israeli losses".³⁰² Israel, in retaliation, hit an energy transformer, two dams and a bridge. At this point the Egyptians resolved to stop their operations, in order to build adequate defenses around civilian targets, rearm, and improve the troops.³⁰³ However, the renewed cease-fire did not last long, because the construction of the Israeli "Bar Lev" defense line along the Suez Canal and fierce air attacks prompted the Egyptians to fight again, in early 1969.³⁰⁴

In the meantime, President Nixon had succeeded Johnson at the White House. He seemed more interested in the Middle East than his predecessor; he considered the situation there as "very explosive" and he was willing to engage the U.S. in a more active policy, that should try to work out a "package settlement", in other words, "there would be no Israel withdrawal until all elements of a peace agreement on all fronts had been achieved".³⁰⁵ Indeed, the majority of Nixon's team concurred with each other in that the U.S. should promote a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute supporting the implementation of Resolution 242 and of Jarring's mission, working through bilateral talks with the U.S.S.R. and four power talks with Britain, France, and the U.S.S.R., for a common position on the substance of future peace negotiations. The National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, instead, believed that a stronger Israel and diplomatic stalemate would be useful, insofar as this would lead the Arabs to get tired of the Soviet Union and near to the U.S., searching for

³⁰¹ L.M. James, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.94

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 96

³⁰³ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.196

³⁰⁴ L.M. James, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.97

³⁰⁵ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.63, p.65

assistance. His priority was undermining the role of the Soviet Union in the region, not a peace agreement.³⁰⁶

While talks proceeded, in March and April the Egyptian-Israeli war of attrition began to escalate. Both sides stroke the other and both suffered severe damages and casualties, among whom there was General Riad, the Egyptian chief of staff.³⁰⁷ Laura James argued that one of the motives for such confrontation was that the “Egyptians remained skeptical of the diplomatic option” and that they believed Nixon’s policy to be not very much different from Johnson’s.³⁰⁸ In fact, in July Nasser rejected the Sisco Plan, which had been devised by Assistant Secretary Joseph Sisco and the Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin throughout March and April 1969, because it conceived an Israeli withdrawal only after a peace agreement was reached.³⁰⁹ During the summer, no more significant diplomatic initiatives were put ahead; meanwhile, the situation along the Canal was worsening, as, in mid-July, the Israeli Air Force’s raids caused a tremendous loss of personnel, weapons, and air forces. “By December” – said James – “the Egyptian SAM-2 air defence system had been wiped out, along with a substantial proportion of the air force. It was clear [...] that the strategy of attrition had failed and that the war was being lost”.³¹⁰

The Nixon administration was providing arms to Israel, while at the same time carrying on with diplomatic talks with the Soviet Union. What came out of these talks was the so called “Rogers Plan”, presented publicly in a speech on December 9, 1969, but previously submitted to Egypt. Its basic principles were: end of belligerence between Egypt and Israel, establishment of “demilitarized zones” and secure borders, freedom of passage through the Suez Canal (including for Israel), mutual respect and “acknowledge of each other’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and right to live in peace within secure and recognized borders”. It also foresaw a solution to the problem of the refugees and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Egyptian territory occupied in the Six Day War. Both Egypt and Israel rejected the plan.³¹¹

Instead of adopting a diplomatic solution negotiated from an inferior position, Nasser thought that the Arab states could help him in the war. At the Arab Summit Conference in

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.182

³⁰⁷ L.M. James, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.97

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.98

³⁰⁹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.64-65

³¹⁰ L.M. James, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.99

³¹¹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.57

Rabat, in December 1969, he proposed the opening of a second and third front in Syria and Jordan, and asked the oil producing countries to finance the purchase of sophisticated electronic weapons he had not obtained from the Soviet Union yet. But the summit was a failure. Consequently, Nasser evaluated Egyptian military capability and, by early 1970, he decided to seek supplementary air defense from the U.S.S.R..³¹² Israel was by that time striking Egypt hard with deep-penetration bombings, destroying even a civilian factory in the outskirts of Cairo. Nasser, then, decided to press the Soviet Union for a speedy delivery of SAM-3 surface-to-air advanced missiles. As a consequence, he was invited in Moscow on January 22, where his request for SAM-3 was accepted, but he also asked for qualified Soviet crews to operate them and Soviet pilots to manage air defense. Initially, the Soviet Union refused to send in a large number of soldiers, but then Nasser's threat to resign, leaving his place to someone able to negotiate the return of Sinai with the U.S., made it decide for the supply of stepped-up air defense forces.³¹³ By March, about 80 Soviet pilots and 2,500-4,000 military advisors were sent to Egypt, a number that would increase to 10,000-12,000 by June. As most historians agree, it was an extremely noteworthy moment in the course of the Cold War, since it was the first time that a non-Communist Third World country obtained such a large quantity of Soviet personnel.³¹⁴ Indeed, the deployment of the SAM-3 near Cairo first and closer to the Suez Canal after, along with the Soviet military presence succeeded in diminishing Israeli bombings, even though fighting continued. At the same time, Israel was pressing Nixon for further offensive Phantom jets, and many in the administration favored such request (first among them was Kissinger), in the face of growing Soviet involvement in Egypt.³¹⁵ However, the final decision was not to fulfill Israel's demands, at least for the time being; in an approach to Egypt, Joseph Sisco was sent to Cairo for talks with Nasser, in mid-April 1970. During this visit, Nasser restated Egypt's dependence on the Soviet Union, while at the same time keeping a door open for a possible diplomatic solution, "but only if all Arab demands were met", and if a new U.S. policy would be implemented.³¹⁶ Nasser confirmed his willingness to dialogue in a speech he gave on May

³¹² L.M. James, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.100

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p.101; see also A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.197

³¹⁴ See for example L.M. James, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.101; G. Golan, *The Cold War and the Soviet attitude towards the Arab-Israeli conflict*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.61; D.P. Adamsky, *How American and Israeli intelligence failed to estimate the Soviet intervention in the War of Attrition*, in N.J. Ashton, *op. cit.*, p.113

³¹⁵ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.70-71

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.72 and p.449, notes 44-45

1.³¹⁷ After the U.S. realized the magnitude of the Russian involvement in Egyptian operations, Nixon authorized “Kissinger to inform [Israeli ambassador] Rabin secretly that he would now supply new planes to Israel. This message was reiterated in a meeting between the president and Eban in late May”. Simultaneously, Nixon told Eban “that Washington would begin to push actively for a cease-fire”.³¹⁸ A possible cease-fire solution was, once again, arranged by Rogers. On June 19, the initiative was announced: it called for a three-months cease-fire, besides acceptance of Resolution 242 and pledge to future negotiations, but it made no reference to an Israeli return to the pre-1967 borders. Nasser announced his assent to the plan on July 22 after a trip to Moscow, where he had asked the Soviets for a “deterrent” weapon. Upon the Soviets’ refusal, he decided to accept it. His choice had also a strategic background, since the Egyptian president pondered that a cease-fire could allow him enough time to recover the troops and “complete the construction of the ‘missile wall’” along the Suez Canal.³¹⁹ Israel’s acceptance was obtained on July 31, after American assurances concerning the approval of future sell of weapons and that no pressure would be applied on concessions. The ninety-day cease-fire went finally into effect on August 7, 1970, “with a provision for a complete military standstill in a zone fifty kilometers wide on each side of the Suez Canal”.³²⁰ Nonetheless, Egypt soon violated the conditions of the cease-fire, continuing to place missiles by the Canal. Israel’s sense of insecurity mounted, given also that the United States were unwilling to make any strong move against Egypt that would disrupt the diplomatic process. Therefore, in September Nixon decided to sell more Phantom jets to Israel.³²¹ The Jordan crisis further convinced Washington that a tighter U.S.-Israeli relationship was fundamental to eliminating Soviet influence in the Arab-Israeli conflict.³²² Nasser’s death on September 29 marked the closing of an era. His successor, Anwar Sadat, was considered as less radical than Nasser, and was more inclined to formulate a diplomatic solution for getting Sinai back.³²³

³¹⁷ L.M. James, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.102

³¹⁸ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.192

³¹⁹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.73; A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.198; L.M. James, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.103

³²⁰ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.74; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.194

³²¹ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.194-195

³²² W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.76

³²³ *Ibid.*, pp.84-85; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.59

Expulsion of Soviet Advisers, July 1972

Anwar Sadat became the Egyptian president on October 15, 1970. He had fought as fellow of Nasser during the Egyptian revolution and had been near to him till his death. Now that he was president, neither politicians in his country nor outside it believed he would last in power for more than a few months.³²⁴ American diplomacy in this period aimed at resuming the Jarring mission and extending the cease-fire; Israel was willing to do so, provided that the U.S. stood openly on its side, selling arms and not pressuring it for concessions.³²⁵ Sadat was also disposed to renew the Rogers Plan since he wanted to work for peace and declared himself “prepared to go to any lengths to achieve it”.³²⁶ The new Egyptian attitude towards Washington was manifest also in a letter Sadat wrote to Nixon in late December 1970, where he stated that Egypt was not “within the Soviet sphere of influence”, that America should negotiate directly with Cairo, and that “we take our decisions freely and independently, so that if you prove friendly to us, we shall be ten times as friendly”.³²⁷ As no progress was made, and the cease-fire expired again, Sadat put forward a “Peace Initiative” of his own in a speech he made on February 4, 1971, according to which, in exchange for the reopening of the Suez Canal, Israel should retreat to the Mitla and Giddi passes within six months, while the other stages of withdrawal would be decided by Jarring. Then the Egyptian forces should “cross to the East Bank of the Canal” and relations with the U.S. should be re-established, while the state of war with Israel should be terminated. The cease-fire was then extended for one month, thus leaving time to the U.S. and Israel to consider the proposal.³²⁸ At about the same time, Jarring submitted another peace initiative to the parties, in keeping with which Israel should go back to the pre-1967 boundaries, while Egypt should allow it freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal and the Strait of Tiran, besides signing a comprehensive peace agreement with it. Since both factions rejected it, the Jarring mission was terminated.³²⁹

On the contrary, Sadat’s “interim” proposition was given attention by Washington, but Israel was not open to flexibility, especially on the matter of the return of territory, on its

³²⁴ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.205; H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.201

³²⁵ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.87

³²⁶ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-277

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.277-278

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.219 and pp.278-279; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.88

³²⁹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p. 89

size and conditions attached to it.³³⁰ However, Nixon decided to send Rogers to Egypt and Israel anyway, to see if a settlement could be pursued. Rogers' visit in Cairo was somehow positive, since Sadat seemed genuinely willing to make peace with Israel. Moreover, some days later, Sadat decided to remove from power his vice president Ali Sabri, the "chief Soviet agent in Egypt", together with other pro-Soviet elements who were plotting against him, in a move viewed with favor by Washington.³³¹ The Secretary of State's visit in Israel did not go equally well. Disagreement with Sadat's view was almost total on the issue of linkage of an interim agreement to an overall peace settlement, on the length of the cease-fire's extension, on the distance Israel should withdraw from the Canal and on several other issues.³³² Then, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan's intervention eased tensions a little, as he suggested a more moderate Israeli position. Assistant Secretary Sisco afterward traveled to Cairo to report on the situation but no solution was reached.³³³ At the end of May 1971, something else happened that, in the words of Spiegel, "undercut whatever progress Rogers may have made": Soviet President Podgorny and Sadat signed a Soviet-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship, reaffirming the mutual ties of assistance and closeness.³³⁴ Yet this did not change Sadat's intentions of achieving peace with Israel through the U.S.' mediation.³³⁵ As a matter of fact, Egypt's relations with the Soviet Union showed increasing signs of friction, as Sadat expressed his disappointment for the delay in the delivery of arms and he went so far as to help the Sudanese government in resisting a Communist coup in July 1971.³³⁶ In the meantime, Arab-Israeli diplomacy was no longer handled by Rogers alone; on the contrary, now Kissinger was the one directing American moves, and his approach was quite a different one. He was less inclined to push Israel for concessions and would rather use the negotiating process as a lever for the expulsion of the Soviet presence from Egypt, a process that should be kept secret, according to him.³³⁷ In any case, Nixon warned that any fundamental step in the Arab-Israeli arena should not be taken in an election year; therefore, besides the establishing of a back channel between Sadat and his Adviser on National Security Hafiz Ismail and Nixon-Kissinger, "during late 1971 and 1972

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.90; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.205

³³¹ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp.222-223; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.91; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.205

³³² W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.91

³³³ *Ibid.*, pp.91-92

³³⁴ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.225

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.285

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.226; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.206

³³⁷ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.92-93

U.S. Middle East policy consisted of little more than open support for Israel. The White House explicitly told the State Department not to consider any new initiatives until after the elections”.³³⁸

On a different diplomatic track, during 1971 and 1972, a dialogue between Moscow and Washington was emerging on several fronts, pursuant of the policy of détente that the superpowers were carrying on since the late 1960s. the situation in the Middle East was one of such fronts and indeed, as stated by Raymond Garthoff, “on two occasions in this period the Soviet leaders proposed remarkably far-reaching diplomatic collaboration with the United States”, in September 1971 and April 1972.³³⁹ About one month later, in May 1972 an epic summit took place in Moscow, between Nixon and Brezhnev, aimed at promoting international détente, from which it became apparent that Moscow’s prevailing global interests clashed with Egypt’s regional ones.³⁴⁰ In fact, in the meeting a joint communiqué calling for a “military relaxation” in the Middle East was issued; with this end in view, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. agreed on promoting UN Resolution 242 and the Jarring mission, although possible border variations were said to be possible and the formulation looked as more favorable to Israel. Moreover, the superpowers had the same opinion about restraining their own confrontation in the area.³⁴¹ In the words of Sadat, it was a “violent shock” to Egypt, since its military capability was very much subordinated to Israel’s, “and so “military relaxation” in this context could mean nothing but giving in to Israel”.³⁴² According to Quandt, such dissatisfaction with the Kremlin, added to a report made by Saudi Arabia’s minister of defense to Sadat stating that “the Americans would not press Israel for concessions” unless the Soviet presence was removed from Egypt, was what made Sadat decide for the expulsion of all Soviet military experts, on July 16, 1972.³⁴³

Most scholars agree that Sadat’s move represented the first overt sign of a swap of alliances occurring in Egypt, a reconciliation in U.S.-Egyptian relations. A general understanding existed also on the motives for such a decision, that is, a combination of Sadat’s growing impatience over Soviet reluctance to provide the requested weapons,

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.93-94

³³⁹ R.L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, Washington, Brookings, 1994, p.99

³⁴⁰ G. Golan, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.63

³⁴¹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.95; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.214

³⁴² A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.229

³⁴³ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.95-96; A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.230

Sadat's search for an active U.S. role in Egyptian diplomacy and the impact of the May 1972 U.S.-U.S.S.R. summit that exposed Soviet's preference for détente with the U.S. over Egyptian interests.³⁴⁴ A confirmation could be found in Sadat's very words, in which he also blamed the Soviets for their attitude of patronage and interference in Egyptian affairs connected to the sale of arms.³⁴⁵ However, he also stated that his decision was a patriotic one, and that he did not take it to "please the United States".³⁴⁶

Another aspect that has often been underlined was the abruptness with which the expulsion was undertaken and the shock it provoked both in the U.S. and in the U.S.S.R..³⁴⁷ In reality, Craig Daigle showed that this move did not come as a surprise to Washington, since "as early as May 1971 [...] American officials were well aware of Sadat's intentions and worked aggressively to ensure the removal of the Soviet presence from Egypt".³⁴⁸ Recently declassified F.R.U.S. documents offer evidence that this was true. Some conversations between Rogers and Nixon reporting Sadat's words held between April and July 1971, testify that he was "determined to become closer to the West for economic and political reasons".³⁴⁹ He was frustrated because a major part of Egypt's budget was being spent on Russian arms and on the salaries of Russian soldiers, severely damaging the Egyptian economy which was already in crisis. Consequently, Sadat promised Rogers that if the U.S. collaborated in drafting an interim agreement on Sinai, he would oust the Soviet troops from his country within six months, retaining only the advisers for training of Egyptian pilots.³⁵⁰ Rogers, on his side, seemed favorably impressed by Sadat's words and reported his optimism to Nixon in stating: "I think it is possible, if he [Sadat] stays in power, that we can make a breakthrough that will have tremendous importance. [...] it will be a step toward peace that no one thought was possible".³⁵¹ It can be seen, thus, that according to such dialogues and with the establishment of an intelligence channel in September 1971, the Egyptian system of alliances began to shift more than one year before the expulsion of Soviet personnel. The

³⁴⁴ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.96; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.214; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.62-63; R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, pp.355-357; G. Golan, *op. cit.*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.63; H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.204-205

³⁴⁵ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.173 and pp.230-231

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.287

³⁴⁷ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.214; A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.230 and p.287; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.65

³⁴⁸ C.A. Daigle, *The Russians are going: Sadat, Nixon, and the Soviet presence in Egypt, 1970-1971*, in *The Middle East Review of Foreign Affairs, MERIA Journal*, Vol.8, No. 1 (March 2004), p.2, at meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2004/issue1/daigle.pdf accessed October 28, 2011

³⁴⁹ FRUS, 1969-1976, vol.XIII, Washington DC, Government Printing Office, 2011, doc.241, Editorial note

³⁵⁰ *Ibidem*

³⁵¹ *Ibidem*

very term “expulsion” was put into question by Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, who, relying mainly on Soviet sources, claimed that “the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Egypt in 1972 was by prior consent”.³⁵² According to these historians’ sources, Sadat discussed his decision with the Soviet leadership prior to his formal announcement of dismissal, at least as early as June 1972, but some even ventured as far as dating talks in 1970.³⁵³ Even the second part of the expression, that is “advisors” appeared to be misleading, since Sadat himself stated that only the ground troops would return to Russia. In fact, “at least the bulk of the genuine advisers” stayed in Egypt.³⁵⁴

Be that as it may, what clearly emerges is that U.S.-Egyptian relations began to take a different shape in 1971 and that Sadat’s “changing of camp” was not the result of a sudden choice but rather an important point in a process that got Egypt closer to the West.

1973 October War

After the expulsion of Soviet experts, Sadat kept in contact with both superpowers. While he resented the Soviets’ attitude, he “did not wish to break with them altogether”, and was especially interested into a continuation of the flow of Soviet weapons to Egypt. On the other hand, Egypt’s secret dialogue with Washington was also being pursued. As a matter of fact, a visit by Hafiz Ismail, Sadat’s national security adviser, to the United States had been planned as early as September-October 1972, even if it did not actually take place until February 1973.³⁵⁵ Ismail met Kissinger in Washington and later in Paris; talks were polite but did not bring about a conclusion. The first insisted on the necessity for Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, even in stages, in exchange for the beginning of a dialogue with it. Kissinger, for his part, appreciated the Egyptian will to open a channel of communication with its counterpart, but stated that “some assurances” should be presented to Tel-Aviv. Considering that Egypt stood in an inferior position with respect to Israel, it could not permit itself to dictate conditions, but should demonstrate flexibility instead.³⁵⁶

The outcome of these meetings left Sadat more and more convinced that he would not achieve his goal through peaceful means: “hence Sadat’s main policy continued to be

³⁵² I. Ginor, G. Remez, *The origins of a misnomer: The ‘expulsion of Soviet advisers’ from Egypt in 1972*, in N.J. Ashton (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.139

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.141

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.149-156

³⁵⁵ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.233; p.238

³⁵⁶ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.237; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.66; A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.238

preparation for war to regain the occupied Egyptian territory".³⁵⁷ The Egyptian president could not stand the enduring situation of stalemate; he felt he should challenge the status quo, and covertly gave the Supreme Council of the armed forces the task of envisaging a War Plan to be implemented when the situation would seem more propitious.³⁵⁸

Soviet diplomacy was no more successful than the American one in convincing Sadat not to go to war against Israel, since he enjoyed the backing of most Arab, African and Non-Aligned countries.³⁵⁹ Collaboration was particularly close with Syria, whose president Assad met Sadat in April 1973. They examined some possible dates for the military attack and, among May 1973, August-September 1973 and October 1973, the last one was chosen, as the Yom Kippur celebrations would provide a certain degree of tactical advantage, being public activity limited on that day.³⁶⁰ So, D-Day should be October 6.³⁶¹

In the meantime, Kissinger was also trying to involve the Kremlin in a joint effort for peaceful Arab-Israeli negotiations; indeed, the situation in the Middle East was one of the main subjects dealt with during the visit he paid to Moscow in May 1973 to set the stage for the second Nixon-Brezhnev summit. On this occasion, the Soviets presented a paper to Kissinger where they expressed a position more sympathetic towards the Arabs compared to the May 1972 joint communiqué, advocating "complete Israeli withdrawal to the June 4, 1967, lines" and adding that "failure by either party to implement any part of the agreement would give the other party the right to refuse its own obligations".³⁶² The subject was further discussed during the June 1973 Washington U.S.-U.S.S.R. summit. Brezhnev underlined the high risk of an Arab-Israeli confrontation sparking from a joint Egyptian-Syrian intervention and requested the U.S. to push Israel to withdraw. However, Washington was not ready to compromise its position vis-à-vis Israel for the sake of détente; Kissinger, who, after the bursting of the Watergate scandal, was in charge of Middle East politics, and in August was nominated Secretary of State, worked to contain the Soviet role in the peace process, while the U.S. should emerge as the sole mediator and Israel should be the side in control of the balance of power in the region.³⁶³ Yet, his strategy failed to grasp the sense of frustration

³⁵⁷ R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, p.406

³⁵⁸ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp.234-237

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.240

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.241

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.242

³⁶² W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.100-101; R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, p.408

³⁶³ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.101-103; R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, pp.408-410

which was escalating in the Arabs precisely for the fact that the military balance was in Israel's favor; as stated by Quandt,

the military balance proved not to be the key to regional stability and the prevention of war. Nor did détente prevent the Soviet Union from continuing to arm Egypt, Syria, and Iraq despite the mounting signs of Arab intentions to resume hostilities. Nixon and Kissinger remained insensitive to the regional trends leading to war and ignored the growing importance of Arab oil as an element in the regional equation. [...] furthermore, Kissinger was not convinced of the need for a major American initiative in the Middle East.³⁶⁴

Such a series of wrong assumptions, matched by the secrecy of war preparations caused an underestimation of Egyptian bellicose intentions, which was exactly why the joint Egyptian and Syrian attack on October 6 in Sinai and Golan respectively took the Israelis and the Americans by surprise.³⁶⁵ Even if the responsibility for starting the war was evidently Egyptian and Syrian, the U.S. did not fully condemn them. Moderation arose from some tactical issues: first, the critical importance of oil in a period of "energy crisis" suggested caution in dealing with the Arab countries, especially since the Arab oil producers had clearly taken their side. Moreover, a bitter American intervention could bring the Soviet Union into the conflict, thus undermining the U.S.' mediator role and enhancing Soviet influence in the region, which was precisely what Kissinger wanted to avoid most. What is more, Egypt and Syria were fighting to free Arab occupied territories from the Israeli presence and this was not considered to be as immoral as an attack through recognized borders.³⁶⁶ In any case, Israel remained a strategic American ally and Washington could not stand by one side watching it being defeated without interceding on its behalf, especially if its adversary was armed with Soviet weapons.³⁶⁷ Therefore, right at the beginning of the war, the United States sought the Soviet Union's collaboration in the context of the U.N. Security Council to promote a cease-fire status quo ante.³⁶⁸

October 6, 1973, witnessed a major Egyptian air attack across the Suez Canal followed by an artillery attack to the so called Bar-Lev line and other key Israeli points. That same day,

³⁶⁴ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.104

³⁶⁵ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.245-247; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.105-106; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.69

³⁶⁶ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.106-107

³⁶⁷ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.249

³⁶⁸ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.107; R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, pp.413-414

the Egyptians managed to create a bridgehead east of the Canal, with the Second Army concentrated in the north and the Third Army in the south.³⁶⁹ October 7 and 8 were equally days in which Egypt retained the upper hand, and it was for this reason that president Sadat rejected the cease-fire proposed in the first hours of the war; he declared: "I won't have a cease-fire until the main targets of my battle have been achieved".³⁷⁰ Israel at first was caught off-guard and asked the U.S. for arms resupply, but Washington was not really receptive at such a demand, deeming it not indispensable, as fighting would soon end (they thought) and a low profile should be maintained. In the words of Spiegel, the Israelis' "sudden weakness strengthened the temptation to manipulate the war and create stalemate, thereby providing an opportunity for U.S. diplomacy and expanding U.S. influence in the area".³⁷¹ On October 9 the situation began to change: the Israeli plea for arms became even more pressing and Kissinger could not believe that Israel's losses were such as he was told.³⁷² Then, American strategy was re-calculated and, instead of a cease-fire status quo ante, a proposal for a cease-fire in place was put forward; in addition, a slightly increased delivery of arms was taken into consideration. Meanwhile, the situation on the battlefield had stabilized in the Sinai. On the Syrian front, Israel's counter-attack was so effective as to restore the lines existing on October 5. That same day, the plan for a cease-fire in place delivered by Kissinger was turned down by both sides, since Egypt believed it should be bound to an Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders, while Israel called for a return to the pre-October 6 lines.³⁷³ Therefore,

as a military stalemate developed in the Sinai, U.S. and Israeli objectives began to diverge markedly. For the American leadership, the stage had been set for a workable cease-fire before the Israeli forces could recoup and the Russians could begin to reequip their Arab clients. The Israelis, however, were determined to reassert their military dominance.³⁷⁴

That was essentially why Washington restrained arms transfers to Israel until October 12: Kissinger was using weapons as a lever for the acceptance of a cease-fire but he was at the

³⁶⁹ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.75; A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp.248-250

³⁷⁰ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp.252-253. The main targets were the Bar-Lev Line and the Sinai Passes; see *Ibid.*, p.289

³⁷¹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.108-109; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.248

³⁷² Z. Levey, *Anatomy of an airlift: United States military assistance to Israel during the 1973 war*, in *Cold War History*, Vol.8, No. 4, November 2008, p.486

³⁷³ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.109-110

³⁷⁴ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.250

same time delaying it because he believed that Israel should complete its counter-attack in Syria. This it did in the days between October 10-12.³⁷⁵

In the same period, the Soviet Union began to gradually resupply the Syrians and the Egyptians, given that it was worried about the destructive pace that Israel's attack was assuming. In the face of this, American strategy began to shift. Kissinger still believed that a prompt cease-fire would be the best solution, but an Israeli defeat could not be contemplated. Zach Levey explains the reasons that led to this shift: one was the fact that "Israel was running out of ammunition", so the battle on the Syrian front would be much more costly than it was expected by the U.S., and even positions on the Egyptian front would be at risk. Another reason was that Kissinger wanted to retain the control of "Israel's moves", which he could not do unless he managed the supply of ammunition, while he was still against providing hardware or sophisticated weapons. The final but no less important motive was the growing size of Soviet resupply to Egypt and Syria. Despite the danger of jeopardizing détente with the Soviet Union, the U.S. could not let his greatest ally go down without doing anything.³⁷⁶

On October 12, Golda Meir declared that Israel would be prepared to accept a cease-fire in place, and to work at the United Nations for its implementation. Diplomatic action was left to Britain, who was on good terms with both factions. The Soviets too seemed favourable to a peaceful solution, but Sadat refused the initiative even before it could be taken to the U.N.. So, when Israel later that day desperately called on Washington for speedy arms delivery nor Nixon nor Kissinger refrained from doing it anymore.³⁷⁷ In fact, in order to pursue their strategy of ending the war in military stalemate, so as to have full room for maneuver in the following negotiating process, it was now necessary to reinforce Israel. The U.S.' airlift to its ally thus started on October 13.³⁷⁸ At first, Washington decided to keep it secret; therefore, it was decided that America would send its planes at night. However, the stop at the U.S. base in the Azores, in Portugal (the only European country which had allowed the employment of its bases for refueling), took more than it was foreseen, because of the strong winds blowing in the isles; so, American planes landed in Israel at the full light

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.251; Z. Levey, *op. cit.*, p.487; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.112

³⁷⁶ Z. Levey, *op. cit.*, pp.487-488

³⁷⁷ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.113; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.254

³⁷⁸ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.255-256; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.114

of the morning of October 14.³⁷⁹ The following hours witnessed a major Egyptian defeat. They launched a military operation directed at the strategic Mitla and Giddi passes, but the Israelis repulsed it causing heavy damages to the Egyptian armed forces. Then Israel responded by driving its forces across the Suez Canal. Emboldened by the continued flow of American weapons, now it aimed at the “destruction of Egyptian missile fields, thereby exposing Egyptian ground troops to bombing by the Israeli air force. Also, Egyptian forces in the Sinai ran the risk of being cut off from their lines of communication and surrounded by the Israelis”.³⁸⁰ As Israeli offensive became harsher, American policymakers were concerned about the possible Arab retaliation. This was not late in coming, as on October 18-19 the Saudi King Faisal followed by the other members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) announced an oil embargo on the United States and on other European countries friendly to Israel. They also stated that “oil production would be cut by 5 percent each month until Israel had withdrawn from all Arab territories”.³⁸¹

At the same time, diplomatic work was carried on both by Washington and Moscow. The latter, after the recent grave Egyptian setbacks, was willing to convince the Arabs to accept a cease-fire; thus, Kosygin traveled to Cairo between October 16 and 18 to show Sadat the badness of the situation. The Egyptian president indeed declared that he acquiesced to a cease-fire, because the U.S. “was now taking part in the fighting by supplying Israel with weapons still being tested”, and he did not want to fight them. In his autobiography, he asserted that he “was not afraid of a confrontation with Israel, but that” he “would not confront the United States”.³⁸² Then, while talks between the Egyptians and the administration also went on, Kissinger planned a visit to Brezhnev to engineer a common agreement on termination of hostilities.³⁸³ According to Levey, he did it “intending that Israel have 72 more hours in which to consolidate (but not exceed) the military positions that suited US plans for the immediate post-war period”.³⁸⁴

In fact, Kissinger went to Moscow to negotiate in the first person. He believed he had a certain margin of bargaining with the Soviets and the Arabs, so he would be prepared to gain the formulation that suited him best. To put some pressure on the U.S.S.R. he would wait for

³⁷⁹ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.256-257

³⁸⁰ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.115; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.257

³⁸¹ Z. Levey, *op. cit.*, p.490; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.117-118; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.79

³⁸² A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.261

³⁸³ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.115-116; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.259

³⁸⁴ Z. Levey, *op. cit.*, p.491

giving his final answer, claiming that he needed to go back to Nixon for approval. However, while he was traveling to Moscow, he received a message from Nixon for Brezhnev where the President let the Soviets know that the Secretary was allowed to negotiate with full authority, disrupting in this way his delaying tactic.³⁸⁵ Another message from Nixon invited Kissinger to work with the Soviet Union to find a common comprehensive arrangement to be submitted to the respective partners. By the time he arrived in Moscow on October 20, Kissinger decided to ignore the President's instructions. He would rather follow a step-by-step diplomatic approach aimed at excluding the Soviets from the peace process and enhancing American influence on Egypt (and Syria).³⁸⁶ On October 21, Kissinger and the Kremlin quickly came to an agreement for a cease-fire in place connected to U.N.S.C. Resolution 242, and for negotiations between the parties "under appropriate auspices". The dramatic situation of the Egyptian Third Army, that was being encircled and isolated by Israeli troops, was the main reason why Moscow was so accommodating.³⁸⁷ Such agreement became the content of a cease-fire resolution, which was approved by the Israeli cabinet and then submitted to the U.N. Security Council. On October 22, Resolution 338 was endorsed, according to which all fighting had to stop within twelve hours and negotiations should begin.³⁸⁸

On that same day, Kissinger went to Tel-Aviv where he met Israeli leaders. According to the majority of scholars, Kissinger hinted to Meir that Washington would not react strongly if Israel violated the cease-fire to assure its positions in Sinai. In a way, he gave a green light to the continuation of warfare so that Israel could complete the encirclement of the Egyptian Third Army.³⁸⁹ Quandt argued, instead, that Kissinger was "very tough" with the Israelis on the point that they should not violate the cease-fire and keep defensive positions.³⁹⁰ In any case, the cease-fire was violated soon after it had gone into effect, also because the resolution had not provided for any measure of control of implementation or surveillance.³⁹¹ It is not clear whether the Egyptians or the Israelis violated it first, but what appeared as evident was Israeli offensive against the Egyptian Third Army; not only did they encircle it,

³⁸⁵ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.259-260; R.L. Garhoff, *op. cit.*, p.416; Z. Levey, *op. cit.*, p.491

³⁸⁶ R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, p. 417; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.261

³⁸⁷ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.119; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.84

³⁸⁸ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.119; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.85-89; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.261; R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, p.418

³⁸⁹ Z. Levey, *op. cit.*, p.492; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.91-92; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.262

³⁹⁰ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.120

³⁹¹ Z. Levey, *op. cit.*, p.492; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.262

but they tried to destroy it too, by cutting supply lines. They also pointed towards taking the cities of Ismailia and Suez.³⁹² On October 23, Kissinger received a phone call from the Soviets lamenting Israeli continued attack. The Secretary of State felt he had to stop Israel if he wanted the United States to act as the sole mediator in the future and if America's credibility had to be maintained at least with moderate Arab countries. Thus he collaborated with the Kremlin and a new resolution, U.N.S.C. Resolution 339 was approved on October 23, this time "urging" and not "demanding" the observation of the cease-fire lines of the day before. It also provided for the presence of U.N. observers in the zone for its implementation.³⁹³ However, Israel did not stop. On October 24, Sadat appealed both to the United States and the Soviet Union to intervene directly sending their troops to enforce the cease-fire. Washington opposed a superpowers' intervention. Moscow, on the contrary, considering Israeli violations, seemed to respond positively. As a matter of fact, Brezhnev wrote a letter to Nixon in which he suggested that the Soviet Union might go so far as to intervene unilaterally in Egypt if the U.S. would not join in sending military forces.³⁹⁴ Such a perspective would disrupt the entire Kissinger's strategy. So, after the President left the initiative to Kissinger, he convened a meeting of the National Security Council, where it was decided that a general Def Con III (Defense Condition III) military alert would be issued. This level of alert meant that strategic American nuclear forces were mobilized, bringing the risk of a nuclear confrontation as near as during the 1962 Cuban Crisis.³⁹⁵ Such an extreme reaction contained an implicit message to the Soviet Union, asserting America's readiness in defending its foreign policy's interests despite the Watergate scandal. In a way, it was also a message for the Israelis, prompting to stop military action and allowing resupply of the Third Army.³⁹⁶ At the same time, dialogue between Kissinger and Brezhnev was open on October 25 through a message in which the Secretary of State stressed the importance of détente and restraint on both parts and proposed a peaceful solution to the crisis, that is, the establishment of an international peacekeeping force and observers through the U.N. in which neither the U.S. nor the U.S.S.R. should take part. If the Soviets agreed, the alarm

³⁹² A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.266; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.92; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.262

³⁹³ R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, pp.420-421; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.120; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.262-263; K.W. Stein; *op. cit.*, pp.92-93

³⁹⁴ R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, pp.422-423; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.93; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.121

³⁹⁵ R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, p.427; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.122

³⁹⁶ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.95; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.122

could stop immediately.³⁹⁷

Brezhnev replied favorably to Kissinger's proposal and Resolution 340 was consequently issued by the U.N. Security Council: it called once again for an immediate cease-fire, as determined in the preceding resolution, and for the setting up of a U.N. Emergency Force to enforce it.³⁹⁸ The status of alert was terminated by October 26. Kissinger pressured Israel in order not to destroy the Third Army, since this would hamper his post-war strategy: as noted by Garthoff, "the American goal was to preserve the Third Army, Sadat, and the new U.S. position of potential leverage with the Arabs".³⁹⁹ The cease-fire was observed this time, and immediately afterwards talks on the diplomatic steps to take began, overseen by the United States. Indeed, the October War greatly improved American-Egyptian relations. Sadat felt that he could rely on Kissinger as a partner to reach his objectives of peace and return of Egypt's occupied territories, as Washington, not Moscow, was the sole power capable of influencing Israel in a future negotiating process.⁴⁰⁰ Even if the war had been won by Israel on the field, it could be agreed that it represented a success also for the Arabs, because they managed to challenge the status quo and the crisis started a process that would revolutionize the entire balance of the Middle Eastern region.

Impact of the October War on world politics

Besides having a serious impact on American policy toward the Middle East, the October War amplified the underlying differences existing between the U.S. and its European allies. Right from the beginning of the war, it appeared as evident that European and American policies vis-à-vis Israel were on two separate tracks. France and Britain refused to accept the proposal of a cease-fire resolution put forward on October 6; in the following days, Turkey and Greece declared that they would not allow the Americans to use their air bases for purposes concerning the Arab-Israeli war. Spain soon followed suit. In brief, all the U.S.' NATO allies rejected the employing of their facilities and even the overflight of their territories during the American airlift to Israel. Only the Netherlands, Portugal, and West Germany (only for a brief period), supported it.⁴⁰¹ "Dissociation from us in the Middle East war" – said Kissinger – "was [...] coupled with an attempt to opt out of any possible crisis

³⁹⁷ R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, pp.427-428; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.265

³⁹⁸ R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, p.428; Z. Levey, *op. cit.*, p.493

³⁹⁹ R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, p.429

⁴⁰⁰ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.124 and pp.126-128; A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.292; R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, p.430

⁴⁰¹ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.707-709

with the Soviet Union".⁴⁰² In fact, the economic and political ties that bound the Communist world and Western Europe were too important to be dissolved because of America's need to pressure the U.S.S.R.. On the contrary, the Europeans decided to move on with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe: interests were clearly diverging.⁴⁰³ The Arab oil embargo further exacerbated the lack of transatlantic cohesion.

An "energy crisis" had hit America at the beginning of the 1970s, as the demand of oil had tremendously grown, while production remained still. So the U.S. had come to depend on the Middle Eastern oil, even if not so much as it was for the European countries.⁴⁰⁴ Since the power of the oil producing countries had extended in the first years of the 1970s, now they had the faculty of deciding on the market's conditions, and prices were on the rise.⁴⁰⁵ In such a context, the menace of the "oil weapon" in support of the Arab struggle against Israel was remarkably threatening, linking energetic issues to political ones. Saudi King Faisal, in particular, was in contact with Sadat, who had been asking his collaboration ever since the spring of 1973. The King, being a friend of the United States, tried to warn it about the graveness of the crisis in the Middle East.⁴⁰⁶ As the war went into full gear on October 12, the representatives of the major oil companies too urged the American administration about the risk of a retaliation in Arab oil supplies.⁴⁰⁷ Nixon and Kissinger, however, did not take seriously this alarm, because their meeting with four Arab foreign ministers on October 17 seemed to go well, and oil had not been mentioned. In reality, starting from that same day, the Arab oil ministers took a series of measures, raising the posted prices, applying a total embargo on the U.S., the Netherlands, and the countries more friendly to Israel, including to Portugal for its colonial activities in Africa, and cutting production and supplies to various European countries, depending on how much "anti-Arab" their position was.⁴⁰⁸ The response to the oil crisis witnessed the United States and the majority of its European allies being again on opposite sides: while the Americans pressed for a "common front" of consumers against the Arab blackmail, advocating international concert in parting

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, p.710

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp.710-711; R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, p.451

⁴⁰⁴ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, pp.590-591; F. Petrini, *L'arma del petrolio: lo "shock" petrolifero e il confronto Nord-Sud. Parte prima*, in D. Caviglia, A. Varsori, *Dollari, Petrolio e aiuti allo sviluppo: il confronto Nord-Sud negli anni '60-70*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2008, pp.80-81

⁴⁰⁵ F. Petrini, *op. cit.*, in D. Caviglia, A. Varsori, *op. cit.*, p.86; G. Garavini, *Dopo gli Imperi. L'integrazione europea nello scontro Nord-Sud*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 2009, pp.203-204

⁴⁰⁶ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, pp.595-597

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.604

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.606-608 and 613; F. Petrini, *op. cit.*, in D. Caviglia, A. Varsori, *op. cit.*, p.87

alternative sources of energy between Western partners, the Europeans favored a more moderate response.⁴⁰⁹ After all, Europe was much more dependent on Arab oil and had closer contacts with the countries facing the Mediterranean Sea. The European Community preferred a cooperative approach to a confrontational one and tried to get away from the U.S., demarcating a distinct European identity.⁴¹⁰ In Kissinger's words, "the European Community's policy placed great stock in gaining the goodwill of the oil producers. [...] oil combined with conviction to drive Europe into ever-sharper opposition to our Middle East strategy".⁴¹¹ This opposition became explicit on November 6, when the foreign ministers of the Community met in Brussels and appealed for an Israeli withdrawal to the October 22 cease-fire lines as a first step, leading then to a further withdrawal to the 1967 lines.⁴¹² As a consequence, the Arabs suspended the 5 percent cut of supplies for the month of December to the European countries, except for the Netherlands. What is more, an Euro-Arab dialogue was set in motion, sparking bilateral contacts, which, in the allies' opinion, were much more useful than backing American politics.⁴¹³ The American reply was one of annoyance. Kissinger stated that "we were under the impression that the overriding concern of some of our principal allies was not to elaborate a long-range strategy but to end Arab oil cutbacks aimed at them – if necessary at our expense".⁴¹⁴ He feared that bilateral talks would jeopardize his mediating efforts in the Middle East.⁴¹⁵ So, in order to organize a coordinated response to the oil crisis by the main consumer countries, the U.S. made plans for an energy conference, that was held in Washington in February 1974, where some common ideas on energy policy were devised and the International Energy Agency was created, with the objective of coordinating Western strategies. Only France refused to take part in it.⁴¹⁶ By the time the embargo was lifted, on March 18, the United States managed to stabilize the Arab-Israeli situation.

Besides the reactions to oil cutbacks, disagreement straining transatlantic relations originated from the American nuclear alert, on October 24. The allies resented the fact that such a critical decision was taken without prior consultation; West Germany, Spain, Britain

⁴⁰⁹ F. Petrini, *op. cit.*, in D. Caviglia, A. Varsori, *op. cit.*, pp.88-89

⁴¹⁰ G. Garavini, *op. cit.*, p.202; see also D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.627

⁴¹¹ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.717

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, p.718; D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.628

⁴¹³ F. Petrini, *op. cit.*, in D. Caviglia, A. Varsori, *op. cit.*, pp.99-101

⁴¹⁴ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.721

⁴¹⁵ F. Petrini, *op. cit.*, in D. Caviglia, A. Varsori, *op. cit.*, p.101; D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, p.629

⁴¹⁶ D. Yergin, *op. cit.*, pp.629-630

and Italy disassociated themselves from American policy in public remarks.⁴¹⁷ Indeed they felt the U.S. had placed them in a dangerous position by putting the American forces in Europe in a nuclear alert, risking to drive them into a superpowers' conflict where there had been no Soviet menace to Europe. "To the allies the threat did not come from the Soviet Union but from unwise actions by the United States, taken unilaterally and without consultation".⁴¹⁸ Thus, it can be agreed at this point that European (West-East) détente and American-Soviet détente had taken separate paths, as the allies attempted to preserve their relations with the Soviet Union in a moment of confrontation in Soviet-American relations.⁴¹⁹

2.3. Kissinger's Shuttle Diplomacy

The Kilometer 101 talks and the 1973 Geneva Middle East Peace Conference

American post-October War policy distanced itself from its traditional course of avoiding a direct role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This change of attitude was most of all due to the new relationship which was taking shape between the U.S. and Egypt. President Sadat was now showing that he was ready to enter a negotiation process mediated by the United States, while President Nixon and Henry Kissinger were aware of the increasing importance Egypt was gaining in the Middle East arena.⁴²⁰

With Nixon entirely involved in the Watergate scandal, the configuration of the new American strategy was in the hands of Kissinger. He felt that the situation was potentially explosive; therefore he embarked on a diplomatic process aimed at avoiding the resumption of hostilities. What he envisioned was not an immediate "permanent, comprehensive settlement", because he knew this would be impossible considering that Israeli and Arab positions were irreconcilable on such a matter. Rather, he would strive for a settlement following a "step-by-step" approach, as "a more ambitious effort, if it failed, would make us [the U.S.] the target for everybody's frustrations – the Israelis would blame us for our exactions, the Arabs for our reticence, the allies for their impotence; the Soviets would

⁴¹⁷ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.712-714

⁴¹⁸ R.L. Garthoff, *op. cit.*, p.453

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.453-454

⁴²⁰ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.267; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.131-133

exploit the resulting turbulence for their hegemonic aims".⁴²¹ His post-war diplomatic activity started by the planning of a trip to Egypt to visit Sadat. But first, he met Egyptian Acting Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy and Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir separately in Washington, on October 29 and November 1 respectively.⁴²² In the meantime, Egyptian-Israeli military talks conducted by General Abdel Ghany el-Gamasy for Egypt and General Aharon Yariv for Israel had begun on October 27 at Kilometer 101 of the Cairo-Suez road, without the American presence but assisted by a Finnish General of the U.N. forces. The Arabs were mostly concerned with supplies to the Third Army, which was still isolated, while the Israelis insisted on the exchange of prisoners of war and the giving back of the dead, and on the free passage through the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, not declaredly closed by the Egyptians. So, discussions proceeded on two tracks, but the most effective would be that of Egyptian and Israeli representatives' talks with Kissinger in Washington.⁴²³ Fahmy's visit had a "psychological" intent, that is, one of creating an atmosphere of agreement and collaboration. No real political breakthrough was expected, since the Egyptians were firm on the demand of a return to the October 22 cease-fire line; Kissinger knew that the Israelis would never accept to withdraw immediately, and Sadat would not wait indefinitely without achieving an even modest result. However, Fahmy also reported that, in exchange for non-military supplies to the Third Army, Egypt would release the prisoners of war and lift the blockade at Bab el-Mandeb.⁴²⁴ Kissinger's meeting with Golda Meir, on the contrary, was charged with an unfriendly atmosphere: she was afraid that the developing American relation with Egypt would result in less support for Israel, and consequently refused the Secretary of State's request to allow resupply of the Third Army. The proposal of discussing a gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces was equally dismissed. Kissinger, confronting Israelis' intransigence, was irritated.⁴²⁵

After these initial talks, on November 5 Kissinger departed for the Middle East for a series of trips that would be the prelude to the "shuttle diplomacy", as his way of conducting diplomacy was called. After two stops in Morocco and Tunisia, he arrived at Cairo on November 6. The next day he met President Sadat. In a private meeting, the Egyptian President put forward his disengagement scheme, in keeping with which Israel should return

⁴²¹ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.615

⁴²² *Ibid.*, p.614

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, p.615; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.267; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.99-103

⁴²⁴ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.617-619

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.619-623; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.268

almost two thirds of Sinai, including the key Sinai passes. Kissinger did not tell him straight that it would be impossible, and diverted the course of discourse instead.⁴²⁶ He stated that, in order to succeed, a peace process needed mutual trust between the parties and then presented Sadat with an alternative: either he kept his position of demanding a return to the October 22 line, which Israel adamantly refused, in so doing requiring a major and prolonged diplomatic effort for a relatively small amount of territory; or he could acquiesce in the U.S.' proposal. According to Kissinger's strategy, Egypt should accept the status quo, but with supplies being received by the Third Army, while the United States would work for a limited but realistic Israeli pullback, with further steps to be decided. Surprisingly, Sadat agreed to the solution advanced by Kissinger.⁴²⁷ He also endorsed a six-point plan that the Secretary of State had submitted him, based on what he knew would be suitable by both parties, concerning the immediate implementation of the cease-fire, future discussions about the withdrawal to the October 22 line in the framework of a disengagement of forces "under the auspices of the U.N.", the opening of a non-military supply channel to the Third Army and Suez supervised by the U.N. and the exchange of all prisoners of war.⁴²⁸ After the plan was revised by Sisco and Saunders, it was submitted to Israel for approval. The Israelis, who would go to elections in the end of December, were not ready to engage seriously in negotiations, and demanded a series of assurances about the interpretation of the six points. Despite some uncertainties, the disengagement plan was announced on November 9, and it was finally signed by the Israeli and Egyptian generals at Kilometer 101 on November 11.⁴²⁹ In the meantime, Kissinger traveled to Jordan and Saudi Arabia asking for backing of his policy; he also debated the issue of the oil embargo with King Faisal, who declared he would be collaborative in retracting the oil weapon, but only after some progress in the negotiations.⁴³⁰ These two visits set the end of Kissinger's first journey to the Middle East, a successful one on the whole. Now his main goal was the convening of a conference in Geneva, where the disengagement agreements could be the topic of talks between all the main parts implicated in the process, under the aegis of the United States. While a Soviet collaboration was contemplated for the preliminary phases, diplomatic initiative should remain in Washington's hands, according to Kissinger's strategy. For this same reason, the

⁴²⁶ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.636-637

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.639-640

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.641; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.108

⁴²⁹ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.651-654; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.109

⁴³⁰ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.655-665

Secretary of State was not very enthusiastic about progress being made at Kilometer 101, where, since November 15 (when the first prisoners of war were exchanged), talks had begun about implementation of the six-point agreement.⁴³¹ Indeed, on November 29 these talks ended, interrupted by Egypt, but largely under Kissinger's influence. As a matter of fact, he was not "too eager for a breakthrough at Kilometer 101 before the Geneva Conference".⁴³² On the contrary, he believed it would be fundamental for the U.S. to achieve substantial results in the framework of the Conference, as the American role in the peace process should remain central.⁴³³ The idea of a peace conference in Geneva had been present ever since before the October War, as it was proposed by Hafiz Ismail in his secret channel with Washington. Then, during the war, Sadat had openly spoken about an international conference in a speech; so, when the concept of the Geneva Conference was taken up again, the Egyptian President was willing to attend and indeed saw it as a possible way through which achieving disengagement without linking Egypt's fate to Syria's one. In other words, such a context would enable him to obtain a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace in the future without Syria's veto.⁴³⁴ According to Kissinger, Israel as well was favorable to the conference, since the protracted state of "no war-no peace" meant a continued mobilization of forces which was becoming difficult to maintain.⁴³⁵ Therefore, Kissinger went on to arrange a multilateral conference with the help of the Soviet Union with the purpose of later turning it into a "framework for an essentially bilateral diplomacy" from which the Soviet Union would be excluded.⁴³⁶ A letter of invitation was drafted on December 5, stating that the U.N. should convene the conference in Geneva, starting December 19, which was then to be led by the United States and the Soviet Union, and invite Jordan, Israel, Egypt and Syria to attend.⁴³⁷ All the parties seemed to accept the invitation, except for Israel. In order to persuade it to participate, President Nixon wrote a letter to Golda Meir on December 13, hinting that America would fail to support Israel unless it decided to take part in the Geneva Conference. Nonetheless, the Israeli Prime Minister ignored it. That same day, Kissinger began his second journey through the Middle East.⁴³⁸

⁴³¹ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.270; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.138

⁴³² H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.752

⁴³³ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.138; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.111-112

⁴³⁴ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.747-748; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.118

⁴³⁵ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.749; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.271

⁴³⁶ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p. 755

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.758

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.759

After a short stop in Algiers, he arrived in Cairo. Sadat was receptive towards all the Secretary's propositions: they agreed on splitting the negotiating groups, on delaying the disengagement plan to after the Geneva Conference and on general principles on the separation of Egyptian and Israeli forces. Almost sure that Egypt would participate at Geneva, Kissinger left for Riyadh.⁴³⁹ While he was there he found out that Israel had not decided on its attendance yet; accordingly, he decided to postpone the starting date to December 21, but also to warn Golda Meir that the U.S. would take part in the Conference with Israel or without it.⁴⁴⁰ With attempts to convince Israel going on, Kissinger went to Damascus to meet President Assad for the first time on December 15. During their long meeting, Assad stated that Syria would not attend the Geneva Conference although he did not mean to boycott it. He went along with the principle of separate Syrian-Israeli negotiations through Kissinger, but only after a disengagement agreement of forces in the Golan Heights was reached. Since Israel would not permit this, Assad refused the invitation, but kept the door open for a posterior negotiating phase.⁴⁴¹ In the next days Kissinger fled to Jordan, Lebanon, and finally Israel, on December 16. Here he had to face the Israeli negotiating team, who raised a series of dubious points on the letter of invitation about the presence of the Palestine Liberation Organization at the Conference, about the role of the U.N. Secretary General, and even asked for a Memorandum of Understanding attesting that "the U.S. would veto any future participation of the PLO in a Geneva Conference without Israeli consent".⁴⁴² Once they obtained what they wanted, Israel acquiesced in participation, and on December 18 all the invited parts (except for Syria) accepted the letter of invitation.⁴⁴³

After some procedural hitches and some issues about the disposition of seating, the Geneva Conference finally convened on December 21. It consisted of an alternation of public speeches in which the representatives of the attending delegations addressed more to their respective "public back home" than to "one another". Besides the individual discourses, no tangible matter resulted from the Conference and it was adjourned until January. Nonetheless, it represented the opening of a "door to peace" inasmuch as Arabs and Israelis seated in a room together and both endorsed the American "step-by-step" negotiating

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.766-773

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.775

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.783-786; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.140

⁴⁴² S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.272; H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.789-790

⁴⁴³ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p. 792

approach.⁴⁴⁴ Subsequent diplomatic efforts would bring about an epic turning point in the Arab-Israeli scenario.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.795-798; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.141; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.140-145

3. The United States and Egypt: the Diplomatic Process (1974-1978)

From an analysis of the bibliographical sources taken into consideration, one could notice the outlining of a definite chronology in the development of relations between Egypt, the United States, and the latter's major regional ally, Israel. Such alternation of events signaled some stages in what was a diplomatic path which originated at the end of 1973 and reached a fundamental end in 1978 with the Camp David Agreements. This chapter aims at tracing it, highlighting in particular the moments which were more critical as far as the U.S.-Egyptian relation was concerned.

3.1. Step by Step: the Disengagement Agreements 1974-1976

The year 1974 witnessed the definitive transition of the relationship between the U.S. and Egypt from one of antagonism to one of partnership. It was a shift that originated from the beginning of the 1970s, when President Sadat reoriented Egyptian foreign policy towards mutual understanding with the United States and away from the Soviet Union.⁴⁴⁵ It had allowed Secretary Kissinger to start a peace process between the Arabs and the Israelis that had found an encouraging inauguration in the Kilometer 101 talks and in the Geneva Conference.

After the Geneva Conference was adjourned, Kissinger embarked in bilateral talks with Egypt and Israel. Both parts seemed willing to achieve diplomatic success, but Sadat was especially prepared to work out a Sinai disengagement agreement as soon as possible. Indeed, in the words of Kissinger, "the idea of completing the Sinai disengagement negotiation in one continuous assault came from Anwar Sadat, who suggested that my January trip – conceived as an effort to define principles of disengagement – be turned into the occasion for a definitive agreement".⁴⁴⁶ So, the Secretary and his team ended up "shuttling" between Middle Eastern capitals until an accord was reached. Even before this, the Egyptian-Israeli military working group in Geneva had met several times right after the end of the Conference, between December 26 and January 9, in order to discuss the main concepts for a disengagement. Some elements were accepted by both parts, namely, the

⁴⁴⁵ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp.291-292

⁴⁴⁶ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.799

idea of creating buffer zones between the respective forces and to station U.N. observers in the most critical zones. However, on some other issues such as the size of territory to retain, the extent of the buffer zone, and limitation of forces, difference of opinion persisted; thus these meetings brought to nowhere.⁴⁴⁷

While talks were held in Geneva, on January 4 Israeli Defense Minister Dayan went to Washington to submit to Kissinger the Israeli disengagement plan, according to which Egypt was allowed to maintain six to ten kilometers of territory on the east bank of the Suez Canal, while Israel would move its forward line to a zone at about twenty kilometers east of the Canal. In between, a United Nations buffer zone “of a width of six to ten kilometers” should be established. In addition, on each side the military forces would be narrowed in a “security zone” of six to ten kilometers and also in a contiguous “limited forces zone” of about thirty kilometers. He also prescribed the number of forces tolerated in each zone, except for Egyptian tanks, which would not be permitted on the east side of the Canal. As for artillery and surface-to-air missiles, their range must be so that it couldn’t reach the other side.⁴⁴⁸ Moreover, Dayan “wanted the state of belligerency with Egypt ended, the blockade at Bab el-Mandeb lifted, a pledge made to reopen the Suez Canal to Israeli vessels, and an assurance of arms supply from Washington”.⁴⁴⁹ The Secretary received the Israeli proposal as “a big step forward” and, although he foresaw some possible matters of contention, he nonetheless considered that an agreement would be feasible. So, after contemplating the various options with Dayan, he decided he would introduce the Israeli design to Sadat himself, as if it was an American proposal. In this manner, it would assume a more favorable light to the Egyptians.⁴⁵⁰ This strategy almost failed when Israeli General Mordechai Gur proposed at Geneva a plan almost identical to that of Dayan, hence implicitly disclosing the Israeli mark behind the scheme offered to Sadat. Despite this, diplomacy continued unimpeded, and Kissinger prepared his trip to Egypt. He left for Aswan on January 11.⁴⁵¹

There the Secretary met with Sadat, who expressed his eagerness to obtain a prompt conclusion of negotiations, either for better or for worse. For this reason he asked Kissinger to stay in the Middle East until a final agreement would be reached. “A disengagement agreement, in his view” – said Kissinger – “was essential to turn a new page in Arab-

⁴⁴⁷ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.147

⁴⁴⁸ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.800-801

⁴⁴⁹ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.147

⁴⁵⁰ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.802-803

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp.803-805

American relations and give momentum to the peace process with Israel".⁴⁵² The Egyptian leader went so far as to set a target date for the conclusion of negotiations, specifically January 18, when he was supposed to leave for a trip in the Arab capitals, thus showing his readiness to compromise in order to get results.⁴⁵³ The next day, Kissinger and Sadat went through the Israeli proposal. The President soon came to disagree with the position of the Israeli forward line: he was firm about the fact that Israel should withdraw from the Mitla and Giddi passes. Moreover, as far as limitation of forces was concerned, he expressed his refusal for Israeli restrictions on types of weapons, but agreed to reduce his troops east of the Canal. Facing the issues of the Bab el-Mandeb blockade and the closure of the Suez Canal, Sadat stated that these could be resolved after a disengagement would come into being. Regarding support to the Palestinian cause for the creation of a temporary government, Sadat acquiesced not to act in their support during the negotiations, since this could damage the negotiations' outcome.⁴⁵⁴

While Sadat said very little in his autobiography about this phase of negotiations, Kissinger was very meticulous in describing his meetings. As most or any autobiographies, his report is filtered through his own eyes. Quite obviously, he tended to emphasize his skills and to characterize the diplomats and politicians he dealt with depending on their being allies or rivals to him. In Sadat's case, there emerges a portrait with positive traits of a charming and astute man, who, on the other hand, is not too difficult to influence. Anyway, his being at the centre of diplomacy at the time, gives authority to his book, which, if one manages to distinguish personal memories from the diplomat's account, remains a primary source of information on the development of this phase of negotiations. Besides, it is also the work on which other influential writers drew intelligence. It is the case of Quandt and Stein, who associated Kissinger's memoirs with official documents of the American government.

According to his memoirs, after the meeting with Sadat Kissinger flew to Jerusalem to get the final draft of the Israeli plan, as approved by the Cabinet. He found himself confronting a proposition which was still harder than the one put forward by Dayan in Washington. According to the new plan, the Israeli forward line was kept west of the Mitla and Giddi passes, while the Egyptian one actually reduced Egyptian territory, giving it to the United Nations. As for the limitation of forces, the terms remained unchanged. Some other requests

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, p.811; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.142

⁴⁵³ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.811; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.149

⁴⁵⁴ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.812-814; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.148

were added, that is, the assurance of clearance of the Canal, the rebuilding of the Canal cities, and the permission of Israeli shipping through the Canal. Last but not least was the solicitation for a declaration of the end to the state of belligerency.⁴⁵⁵ Despite his prevision of a tough reaction by Sadat, the Secretary refrained from criticizing the plan, and in the evening of January 13 left again for Aswan. The next day, Kissinger stated Israeli ideas to the Egyptians. The President heard what he had to say and conceded that the Israelis could keep their line west of the passes. On other points, however, he bitterly disagreed. About the moving of the Egyptian forward line to the west, leaving territory to the U.N., Sadat refused to comply, on the basis that it would be unfair to ask a country to withdraw from its own territory. After consulting with his subordinates, he also resolved that he would not accept the Israeli division into “forward zones” and “zones of limited armaments”. He proposed instead a simpler division into three zones (Egyptian, U.N. buffer, Israeli) where limitations on deployment would cover a certain range of kilometers. As far as the amount of troops and weapons were concerned, he went along with the Israeli proposal only partially, as he rejected the interdiction of tanks and artillery.⁴⁵⁶ Then Sadat introduced an idea of his own which might ease the matter: he suggested that Kissinger intervened with an American blueprint on arms limitations, while for the other conditions he would declare his purposes in letters to President Nixon to be made public, not directly to the Israelis. As for ending the state of belligerency, he would not do that, although he could formally assert his compliance with the cease-fire.⁴⁵⁷ According to Kissinger, even if the two sides diverged on significant matters, the essential aspect was that the peace process kept on going:

the disengagement agreement, above all, would mark Egypt’s passage from reliance on the Soviet Union to partnership [...] with the United States; and it would give us a major stake in the peace process that would be further magnified by having it be seen to emerge from an American proposal.⁴⁵⁸

Consequently, Sadat and the Secretary agreed that the American negotiating team would draft two documents, the Egyptian-Israeli agreement and the American proposal on arms restriction and, after submitting them to the Egyptians, Kissinger would take them to Israel

⁴⁵⁵ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.816-817

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.822-825; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.149

⁴⁵⁷ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.825; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.143

⁴⁵⁸ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.825

for due consideration.⁴⁵⁹ In the morning of January 15, Kissinger came to know that the Israeli negotiating team had reunited with Prime Minister Golda Meir to take a decision. Afterwards, a meeting with the American team was convened, where limits on weapons were decided, along with approving the idea of a simplification of zones (from five to three) put forward by Sadat. The two documents, that is, the basic agreement and the American proposal on force limitations were also endorsed. In addition, Israel relinquished his bidding for an end of belligerency. The next morning Kissinger and his team left for Aswan, bringing the new U.S. proposal and a new map, slightly revised on the southern front, with them.⁴⁶⁰ Together with Sadat, they examined the papers. The Egyptian president showed himself extremely collaborative. Indeed, he accepted to reduce his forces on the east side of the Canal and he even gave assurances on two key points such as the repopulation of the area nearby the Canal, as a sign of peaceful intentions, and the authorization to U.S. random reconnaissance flights on the U.N. buffer zones. The only stumbling blocks to a final disengagement agreement were the distance of the surface-to-air missiles from the Canal - twenty-five kilometers according to Egypt - thirty at least according to Israel, and the additional quantity of Egyptian artillery Israel would permit on the east side of the Canal.⁴⁶¹

Back in Israel, on January 17 these last negotiating issues were resolved; the Cabinet approved the agreement and, that same evening, Sadat confirmed it as well. Then, President Nixon announced that the two Governments had come to “an agreement on the disengagement and separation of their military forces”, mediated by Washington.⁴⁶² While Golda Meir first, and Sadat after, signed the American proposal on arms restrictions separately, the disengagement agreement was signed on January 18 by the Chiefs of staff of Egypt and Israel under the witness of the U.N.E.F. General Siilasvuo at Kilometer 101.⁴⁶³

The extent to which U.S.-Egypt relations had changed was proven by the commitment with which Sadat engaged himself in negotiations and the trust he put on Kissinger throughout this whole phase. He certainly did it to gain his territory back, because only the U.S. could press Israel to negotiations effectively. As a matter of fact, in his autobiography Sadat stated that “the United States holds 99 percent of the cards in this game”, since “no one else except the United States can play this role, namely, that of mediator between two sides that

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.827-828

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.829-833

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.834-836; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.150-151

⁴⁶² H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.837-838

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.840-844; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.151; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.143

harbor intense hatred for one another [...]”.⁴⁶⁴ The reciprocity of such esteem can be inferred in turn from a letter Kissinger wrote to Sadat on January 25, 1974, after the first shuttle in the Middle East was concluded, in which the Secretary congratulates “on the successful achievement of the first stage of this quest, an achievement which would have been extraordinary difficult had it not been for the outstanding qualities of statesmanship which you have brought to our discussions”.⁴⁶⁵

About the dynamic of events which led to the first disengagement agreement, bibliographic sources tend to coincide and Kissinger’s report is not different in substance from Quandt or Stein’s. What can be observed, instead, is that in Stein’s account more consideration was given to Sadat’s character nuances and to his policymaking style than in Kissinger’s one. Basing on his interviews with Chief of Cabinet to Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy, Omar Sirry, with Fahmy himself, and with the Commander and Chief of Egyptian Army Abd al-Ghany el-Gamasy, Stein pointed out the marginality of the role of Sadat’s advisers in the negotiations in which the disengagement agreement was defined. He tells us that Sadat was the only one actually negotiating with Kissinger. Now, if this on the one hand does not add much to narration, on the other hand sheds light on the nature of the relationship between the United States and Egypt. As a matter of fact, one could reasonably affirm that “Egypt” fully coincided with “Sadat”. This picture finds validation in a declassified document by C.I.A., concerning Egyptian Foreign Policy in the 1980s. Even though it was redacted in March 1981, it can be plausibly taken as a reference, as Sadat’s style did not change in time. The report states that “Sadat’s personality sets the tone for Egyptian foreign policy decisionmaking” and that he relied only on a very small number of people for advice, but, in the end, “he alone makes the critical policy choices [...]. Sadat’s advisers are not counselors but assistants who carry out his decisions”. Moreover, he is described as “supremely self-confident” and considering his presidency as a mission aimed at restoring peace in the Middle East. To do so, he had a clear vision of a strategy in the broad picture, but he did not consider details, nor did he get involved in “day-to-day affairs of the foreign policy apparatus”. His foreign policy style was somewhat “unconventional”, since he often took key decisions or conducted secret negotiations without informing his Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This fondness for secrecy was matched by his preference for

⁴⁶⁴ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.293

⁴⁶⁵ “Secretary Kissinger’s Letter to President Sadat”, January 25, 1974, at sadat.umd.edu/archives/correspondence.htm accessed March 6, 2012

intimacy with key leaders: “for Sadat, personal relations with foreign leaders are critical components of foreign policy”. He hoped “that close relationships with other heads of state will help resolve troublesome substantive differences”.⁴⁶⁶ From this consideration, one could infer that the affinity between Sadat and Kissinger derived from their predilection for a foreign policy approach based on secrecy. Yet, if this in a certain way helped to get Egypt and the United States closer and to create the myth of Sadat as a “hero” of peace, it also contributed, as we will see, to damage Egypt’s leadership in the Arab world. In more than one occasion, one could say that the trust Sadat put on Washington and the mutual esteem succumbed, faced with Israeli inflexibility. The ineluctable Israeli influence on the United States would become an element with which Sadat would find himself always more consciously dealing with.

Once terminated successfully the first phase of disengagement, Kissinger needed to turn his attention to Jordan and Syria. As a matter of fact, a new agreement with Israel was necessary in order to keep Sadat from remaining in an isolated position in the Arab world. During his trip to five Arab capitals from January 18 to 23, including Damascus, the Egyptian President clarified his position, trying to convince the other leaders that he still wanted a broad Arab participation in the peace process and that he would not go on with Israel alone.⁴⁶⁷ While Sadat was travelling in the Middle East, Kissinger tried to set the stage for a new round of negotiations. He first went to Jordan to meet with King Hussein, who conformed to the American idea that “Syria had to be next” in achieving an agreement with Israel, but at the same time demanded for assurances that, afterwards, a Jordanian-Israeli disengagement would follow. Hussein, nonetheless, urged that talks be set in motion about the relinquishing of some territory in the West Bank.⁴⁶⁸ On the other hand, Kissinger saw no progress coming from this side. He knew that Sadat would not push for an agreement on the Jordanian front, even more so since a settlement on the West Bank would imply Israeli involvement in the Palestinian question. Besides, Israel itself was reluctant to embark on negotiations with Jordan.⁴⁶⁹ A Syrian-Israeli disengagement was a different matter, as Sadat required some steps forward in an agreement between the two Governments, with a view to not being accused of searching a separate peace with Israel. What is more, the

⁴⁶⁶ National Foreign Assessment Center, “Egyptian Foreign Policy in the 1980s: an Intelligence Assessment”, March 1981, p.1, at www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC_0000242127/DOC_0000242127.pdf accessed April 12, 2012

⁴⁶⁷ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.153; H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.846

⁴⁶⁸ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.847

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.848; K.W. Stein, p.154

accomplishment of such a disengagement agreement was tightly linked to the lifting of the oil embargo, which weighted heavily on U.S.' domestic politics ever since the October War.⁴⁷⁰

So, when during his visit to Damascus on January 20 Kissinger became aware of the fact that the Syrians “were clearly willing to negotiate, indeed afraid to be left out”, he decided that his next goal would be a Syrian-Israeli agreement.⁴⁷¹ Working to kick off a mediated dialogue, the Secretary designed a course of action he then conveyed to Assad on February 5, according to which the U.S. would give the number of Israeli prisoners of war to Israel, then Syria would transmit the list with the names of these prisoners to Washington. Once Israel would make an offer for disengagement and submit it to Kissinger, he would give them the list. Next, after a Red Cross check on the conditions of prisoners, the offer for disengagement would be dispatched to Syria and an Israeli official would go to Washington for consultations on the proposal. As a last step, negotiations would ensue in Geneva, in the Egyptian-Israeli military working group.⁴⁷² Assad approved this scheme on February 9.⁴⁷³

Since Nixon resolved to send Kissinger to the Middle East to achieve a “permanent peace”, the Secretary set off for Damascus on February 25.⁴⁷⁴ The next day, he met Assad late at night; as he had previously said, he granted Red Cross visits to the Israeli prisoners of war, but he had some doubts about the conclusion of the plan, that is, about negotiating at Geneva. Instead, what Assad had in mind was an imitation of the first Egyptian-Israeli shuttle carried out by Kissinger, a bilateral mediation. He also strongly stated he would not accept a withdrawal that would go back only to the pre-October war line on the Golan Heights; he wanted more territory or he would interrupt talks. Kissinger was skeptical that Israel would ever fulfill a demand even less ambitious than this one. Anyway, he made Assad a proposal on procedure, in keeping with which, rather than negotiating at Geneva, an Israeli officer and subsequently a Syrian one would visit Washington for discussions on the disengagement plan. Only after sufficient progress was made would he go back to the Middle East for the finishing touches. The Syrian leader assented, and the meeting was adjourned to the next morning.⁴⁷⁵ Thus, on February 27 the two met again; nothing essentially new emerged, but

⁴⁷⁰ K.W. Stein, *ibidem*; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.144, p.148

⁴⁷¹ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.849-851

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p.939

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.945; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.144

⁴⁷⁴ W.B. Quandt, *ibidem*

⁴⁷⁵ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.955-957

Assad displayed a certain disposition to compromise which Kissinger saw favorably.⁴⁷⁶ That afternoon the Secretary was in Jerusalem. He submitted to Meir the list of Israeli prisoners of war and a document concerning procedure. Following on, talks focused on the disengagement agreement. Dayan was very clear about the fact that Israel saw no real advantage in possible concessions to Syria, since what it would obtain in exchange was close to nothing.⁴⁷⁷ Such a statement was reflected in the “schematic presentation” the Israelis gave of a possible disengagement. The concept was much the same as that of the Egyptian-Israeli accord: it envisaged a U.N. buffer zone separating the Israeli zone from the Syrian one, but they were “all within the territory captured by Israel in October 1973. Not only would Quneitra remain entirely under Israeli control, but also Israeli forces would remain well beyond the October 6 lines”.⁴⁷⁸ To avoid an abrupt break off of negotiations, Kissinger decided not to report the full Israeli plan back to Damascus and to address only to the desire for successive, more accurate, discussion in Washington. Then, he departed for Cairo, in search of support for his delaying tactic.⁴⁷⁹

On February 28 Kissinger landed in Egypt. There he found an extremely collaborative Sadat, who sent General Gamasy to Syria in order to convince Assad to put himself into the Secretary’s hands. At the same time, Sadat pointed out that if Syria should go to war, not having succeeded in restoring the October 6 line, he had a moral obligation for which he could not fail to back it. Nonetheless, he would make every effort to corroborate the American strategy.⁴⁸⁰ It was a moment of great development for the U.S.-Egyptian relations, with affinity rising between the two countries:

Sadat extended an invitation to Nixon to visit Egypt. Bilateral issues, including aid and the long-term prospects for U.S. arms sales to Egypt, financed by Saudi Arabia, were also discussed. By that time Kissinger was relying heavily on Sadat’s advice on how to deal with other Arab leaders.⁴⁸¹

This balance was further emphasized by the formal reformation of diplomatic relations on February 28, even if, in reality, the relationship had gone back to normal terms since

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.958-959

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.963

⁴⁷⁸ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.145; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.276-277

⁴⁷⁹ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.965-966

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.966-968

⁴⁸¹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.145

November 1973. That the announcement was given on March 1, coinciding with a visit by Gromyko to Egypt, made still more clear to everyone the growing distance between the U.S.S.R. and its former client.⁴⁸²

The fact that this was a turning point and a moment of expansion for the U.S.-Egyptian relations was underlined both by Kissinger and by Quandt and Spiegel. The latter, however, do not record an element to which, on the contrary, Kissinger gave prominence, that is, the steady deterioration of the U.S.S.R.-Egyptian relations. There is a certain complacency in his noting how American presence in Egypt obfuscated Gromyko's visit, and how Sadat did his best to show the Soviets he had taken a new direction. Kissinger describes the Egyptian President's attitude as a studied move, as an entirely Arab decision. Even if there are no traces in Sadat's autobiography of the fact that this was a studied choice, as the Secretary of State implies, it seems probable that its scope was to call attention to the Egyptian "shift of alliances" once more. Ever since the beginning of the 1970s, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Sadat had shown himself open to a collaboration with the United States. The growing dependency from Moscow and the desire of coming out from the Arab-Israeli impasse were two among the major factors which brought Sadat to search an always more balanced position between the East and the West. Progressively in time, Sadat had come to believe that a partnership with the United States was the key to turn Egypt's economy around and bring his country back to the leadership of the Arab world. What contributed to this realignment, stated prominent Egyptian critics, was the perception that a collaborative relation with the U.S. could give him advantages vis-à-vis pro-Western Arab oil states, which were anti-Communist but were reluctant to an open alliance with the United States because of its special relationship with Israel. Egypt, nonetheless, could mediate between them, getting economic assistance in exchange.⁴⁸³ This being said, it seems appropriate to highlight that Kissinger's assertion that the U.S. would not intentionally expose Soviet impotence⁴⁸⁴ is dubious. From a previously secret document of March 1974, now declassified, it turns out that the Secretary's strategy as far as disengagement with Syria was concerned, was that of separating the Egyptians from the other Arabs involved in the negotiations and of neutralizing "the most radical elements", in a way so as to offset Soviet influence in the area.

⁴⁸² H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.969; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.276

⁴⁸³ See Zahid Mahmood, *Sadat and Camp David Reappraised*, in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol.15, No.1 (Autumn 1985), p.68

⁴⁸⁴ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.969

He was “very worried about the Soviets”. In a passage, he referred at them as “brutal bastards”, who wanted both the U.S. and Sadat destroyed.⁴⁸⁵ If publicly Kissinger stated he did not mean to humiliate Gromyko, he certainly did nothing to prevent this from happening.

In Damascus, Kissinger met Assad. Their discussion brought little change to the situation besides confirming the procedures of negotiations, and nothing significant for the outcome of the process happened until the end of March. In fact, around March 10, U.N. and American flights in the limited forces zone in Egypt found out that three missile sites had been built in a zone where surface-to-air missiles were not permitted, and that there were more tanks than agreed to. The Egyptians, once warned of the irregularity, acted speedily to remove the arms but took longer than Kissinger had foreseen. Consequently, Golda Meir issued an ultimatum, setting March 27 as target date for the removal, after which Dayan’s visit to Washington of March 29, that represented the kick off of Syrian-Israeli negotiations, would be cancelled. In the end the Israeli Prime Minister did not follow up on her menace, and a major crisis was defused, but it made Egyptian and American diplomats realize how fundamental it was to keep disengagements separate.⁴⁸⁶

Dayan’s March 29 proposal provided for some concessions to Syria but on the most important point, namely, setting the line of separation east of the October 6 line, nothing new emerged. The town of Quneitra would be retained by Israel too.⁴⁸⁷ The Syrian diplomat General al-Shihabi arrived in Washington on April 13; he consented to an arms restriction and to the concept of a buffer zone, although he rejected the Israeli forward line.⁴⁸⁸ At this point it became clear to Kissinger that working out a Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement would be much more time-consuming and complicated than the Egyptian-Israeli one. The territories at stake had a symbolic value for both sides that made difficult for them to relinquish even a few kilometers.⁴⁸⁹ The Secretary departed again for the Middle East on April 28 and arrived in Israel on May 2, where he faced an hostile Israeli negotiating team: their position had not changed from late March.⁴⁹⁰ The next day, in Damascus, Kissinger

⁴⁸⁵ “HAK/Dayan memcon”, March 29, 1974, pp.1-20, at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB193/HAK-3-29-74.pdf accessed April 12, 2012

⁴⁸⁶ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.1039-1042

⁴⁸⁷ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.148; H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.1042-1043

⁴⁸⁸ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, 1044-1045; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.158

⁴⁸⁹ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.1043, 1046, 1052; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.148-149

⁴⁹⁰ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.1057; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.149

abstained once again from presenting a plan to Assad and focused on secondary issues instead. The Syrian leader, for his part, was equally firm on the proposal presented at Washington in April, “requiring Israel to withdraw from over half of the pre-war Golan area”.⁴⁹¹ Between May 4 and 6, however, the Israelis began to make some adjustments to their proposal. They envisaged a division of Quneitra: one small part to Syria, the rest to Israel, and a shifting of their forward line west of the October 6 line, west of Quneitra.⁴⁹² The next day, the Secretary was informed of additional concessions Israel would give. On May 8, he finally presented the Israeli proposal to Assad, who did not refuse it completely, but had still some serious reservations about the status of Quneitra and the surrounding hills, even though the Israeli forward line was “near to the one he had indicated”.⁴⁹³

After a few days of useless bargaining, Kissinger forced the parts to express their maximum point of compromise; if the deadlock persisted and they were not able to overcome it, he would stop the negotiations.⁴⁹⁴ Even in the face of such a menace, what the Israeli negotiating team on May 13 assented to was only that Quneitra could be controlled totally by the Syrians, while the hills around it would be still under Israeli control. In Damascus, the next day, Kissinger received the response he was expecting, that is, Assad rejected the Israeli offer. At the same time, however, he also put forward a plan of his own, conforming to which the western hills would be under Israeli administration, and the eastern ones under Syrian administration, leaving the peaks to the United Nations.⁴⁹⁵ Despite a show of willingness to conclude negotiations successfully, both sides were refusing to make the step forward which would make this happen. Yet they demanded Kissinger not to leave the area, as he had said he would do.⁴⁹⁶ On May 16, therefore, he decided to present an American proposal, considering that it would be probably easier for Assad to accept it, derived from Israeli territorial concessions. Nonetheless, the Syrian leader stood firm on his demands, asking Kissinger to make one more try with Israel. Back in Damascus again after the Israeli negotiating team had offered something more on limitation of armaments, Kissinger reformulated the American proposal to Assad, who, surprisingly, accepted.⁴⁹⁷ In spite of the

⁴⁹¹ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.1058-1060

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.1062-1063; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.149

⁴⁹³ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.1067-1068; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.150

⁴⁹⁴ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.1074

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1075; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.150

⁴⁹⁶ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.1076-1077

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.1079-1089

apparent closeness of the last negotiating phase, disagreements arose on various aspects: the placing of the line of separation, the presence of the U.N. military force and the soldiers involved in it, and the Israeli request that Assad provide a pledge to avoid “Palestinian terrorist raids across the line of separation”, which the Syrian President could not allow himself to comply, lest he would throw the Arab world against him.⁴⁹⁸

The next days witnessed an hectic round of shuttling between Israel and Damascus, until, on May 25, a breakthrough seemed within reach:

Both sides had stripped themselves to the bone. They had agreed on the number of troops and types of equipment in a first zone of limited armaments ten kilometres from each side’s forward position. A “United States proposal” signed by both sides would spell these out. [...] The “United States proposal” would also spell out the arms limitations in the ten- to twenty-kilometer belt: No artillery with a range of more than twenty kilometers would be introduced there and no surface-to-air missiles would be deployed closer than twenty-five kilometers to the forward line.⁴⁹⁹

The position of the forward line was still to be defined, and only twenty-four hours later the talks stalled again. Kissinger then decided he would do one last effort; Assad should outline a document which would be brought to Israel for approval but no more negotiations would follow. Subsequent to the Syrian assurance that no fedayeen raids would be permitted from the Syrian border into Israel, the two sides reached an agreement. On May 29 President Nixon publicly declared that the final draft of the accord would be signed on May 31, in the context of the Egyptian-Israeli working group in Geneva.⁵⁰⁰

The signing and the subsequent implementation of the agreement improved not only U.S.-Syrian relations, so much so that diplomatic relations were re-established in June 1974, but also had a positive impact on the relationship between the U.S. and Egypt. Given that another Arab country had reached an agreement with Israel, Sadat no longer felt exposed to recriminations for “going alone” with “the enemy”. Now he was also ready to take another step in the Egyptian-Israeli peace process in cooperation with Washington. The newly established partnership would soon be evident in Nixon’s visit to Egypt during his forthcoming trip to the Middle East.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.1089-1091

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1093

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.1094-1107; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.151; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.280

⁵⁰¹ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.1108; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.161-162

Nixon's trip had been planned for months but it was delayed until the completion of the Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement. The President, in fact, hoped to revitalize his public image by visiting the Middle East in a moment when his domestic prestige was at the lowest because of the Watergate scandal, while America's stature in the region was increasing, due to the recent developments in the peace process it had been sponsoring.⁵⁰² Nixon's journey to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Israel and Jordan was indeed charged with significance, since, except for Egypt, he would be the first American President to visit them, symbolizing "a new departure".⁵⁰³ Cairo was the first stop. Nixon and Kissinger, who, however, had a minor role during the journey despite being the one who actually conducted foreign policy in the months before, arrived in Egypt on June 12. "From the moment Nixon stepped on Egyptian soil" – said Kissinger – "it was apparent that all had been designed to hail his role as the key factor in the peace process".⁵⁰⁴ Sadat greeted him with all the honors; he had set a series of huge mass demonstrations along the streets of Cairo, with hundreds of thousands of people saluting the limousine on which both Presidents rode.⁵⁰⁵ No other image could have better epitomized the epic turn U.S.-Egyptian relations had taken. After the glorious welcome, Nixon and Sadat conferred about the Middle Eastern scenario. The Egyptian leader conformed to the general Arab request of an Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 war borders and of a settlement of the Palestinian issue. For Egypt, in particular, he solicited a return of all the Sinai, not through a Geneva Conference but rather through bilateral negotiations, as it had been for the first Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement. Nixon, on the other hand, tried to avoid a clear answer by indirectly hinting that he would advocate Egyptian requests.⁵⁰⁶ During the succeeding journey to Alexandria, Nixon was hailed as a hero of peace with an enthusiasm even more considerable than that in Cairo. In a press conference, Nixon spoke about the prospects he envisioned in the Arab-Israeli arena. He stated that the step-by-step method would be maintained, starting once again from Egypt, "not because we want to go slow but because we want to get there".⁵⁰⁷ On June 14, Sadat and Nixon signed two agreements regarding cooperation between the two countries. One dealt with scientific, cultural and economic collaboration, and its scope was essentially "cementing political ties".

⁵⁰² H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.1124; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.162; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.280

⁵⁰³ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.1124; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.281

⁵⁰⁴ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.1125

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1126

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.1127

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.1128; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.163

The other concerned nuclear energy, and it contemplated the sell to Egypt of a nuclear reactor for energetic purposes. Yet, the latter was implemented only seven years after its signing, due to Israeli apprehension regarding an eventual military use against them, which led a part of the Congress to obstruct it.⁵⁰⁸ After returning to Cairo, the American President stopped in Jiddah, Damascus, Israel, and finally in Amman, Jordan, ending his trip on June 18. A few days after going back to Washington, Nixon wrote a letter to Sadat, in which he pondered about the great value the recent visit had for the U.S.-Arab relations in general, for the U.S.-Egyptian relation in particular, and for the ongoing peace process:

[...] By visiting the Middle East at this time, I wanted to demonstrate the strength of the United States commitment to work for a just and lasting peace consistent with the dignity and legitimate interests of all the states and peoples of the Middle East. [...] Progress toward peace, and progress in American-Arab relations, will reinforce each other, and I believe we have together made significant progress toward these objectives. I also feel that, as a result of our talks, each of us has a better understanding of the other's concerns, hopes and political realities. I particularly welcomed the opportunity to describe to you in detail our concept of approaching a final settlement step-by-step [...]. In this process, we consider it important that there be flexibility about procedures while keeping clearly in mind that the final goal is an overall settlement among all of the parties, and on the fundamental issues. As we move toward the goal, our relations will be strengthened and guided by the statement of principles you and I signed on my last day in Cairo. We intend to move ahead quickly with your government in establishing the Joint Commission and Working Groups we have agreed upon, and I look forward to keeping in close touch with you in the weeks and months ahead. Mr. President, I am convinced that we have witnessed in recent months a turning point in the history of the Middle East – a turning toward a honorable, just and durable peace – and have ushered in a new era in U.S.-Arab relations. [...] a direction has been set, and it is my firm intention to stay on the course we have charted.⁵⁰⁹

However, Nixon was not able to carry on the new political track he and Sadat had created. On August 8 he resigned, since the accusations moved on him following the Watergate scandal did not allow him to retain the strong political base he needed in order to conclude his term as President. The next day, former Vice-President Gerald Ford entered the White

⁵⁰⁸ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p.1129; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.281; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.163

⁵⁰⁹ "Letter from President Nixon to President Sadat", June 25, 1974, at sadat.umd.edu/archives/correspondence.htm accessed March 10, 2012

House and became the first American President not being elected.⁵¹⁰

Ford had a personality quite different from Nixon's. He was not very experienced as far as foreign policy was concerned, so he tended to rely on Kissinger, who he had confirmed as Secretary of State and National Security Advisor, for almost every single decision. His personal views on foreign policy were not really clear cut, according to the historians. Indeed he was reported to be quite passive, tending to prefer approving others' decisions than acting in the first person.⁵¹¹ He was a Republican anticommunist and as such had supported Nixon in his decisions in Southeast Asia. He was also a defender of Israel and on various occasions he had openly taken its sides, encouraging a greater quantity of military and economic aid, an aspect that changed after he became President.⁵¹² As a matter of fact, U.S. foreign policy was still in the hands of Henry Kissinger.

Hence, the Secretary had to face the dilemma of the road to take after the two disengagement agreements already obtained. He was confronted with three possibilities: going back to a comprehensive negotiation in Geneva, which he excluded for fear of possible Soviet meddling; abandoning the negotiations, an option he likewise left out, since it would make all the previous American mediating efforts vain; and resuming the step-by-step approach, which he favored. The front now taken into consideration for the next disengagement was the Jordanian-Israeli one, as Kissinger had promised to King Hussein.⁵¹³

Yet, it was plain from the start that this was not going to happen, both for inter-Arab reasons and for Israeli domestic ones. On the Arab side, the Egyptians were not eager for such an arrangement. Sadat had not enthusiastically assisted to a Jordanian-P.L.O. settlement aimed at reconvening the Geneva Conference, and although he agreed in principle that the question of the West Bank should be settled, he rather gave preferentiality to a previous second Egyptian-Israeli agreement.⁵¹⁴ As for the P.L.O., it also contrasted Jordan on a possible accord, since it arrogated for itself the right to have power over the territory Israel would withdraw from.⁵¹⁵ If the West Bank had a strong symbolic value for the P.L.O., being part of the ex mandate of Palestine, the same was true for Israel. The lands of Judea and Samaria, as radicals called the territory, "belonged to the Jewish people for

⁵¹⁰ H. Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp.1210-1214; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.154

⁵¹¹ W. B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.156; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.231

⁵¹² S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.232-233

⁵¹³ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.156-157

⁵¹⁴ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.168 and p.170

⁵¹⁵ *Ibidem*

religious and historical reasons”.⁵¹⁶ For this reason, the new Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin stated that any change in the West Bank should be decided by Israeli elections.⁵¹⁷ Moreover, Rabin preferred that the next diplomatic step be taken with Egypt instead of Jordan, being the stage already set for negotiations.⁵¹⁸

The new President received the parts involved in Arab-Israeli diplomacy in Washington shortly after entering the White House. The Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy reaffirmed his country’s willingness for a second step with Israel before a Jordanian-Israeli accord. Next, Ford met with King Hussein and the Americans let him know that they would first try to work out an agreement between him and Rabin, but that they would at the same time test the waters for another Egyptian-Israeli move. Then Ford had talks with Syrian Foreign Minister and with Rabin, who once again expressed his preference for Egypt over Jordan as a negotiating partner.⁵¹⁹ After this series of talks, Kissinger departed for the Middle East in October. Trying to hold up both Jordanian and Egyptian negotiations, he asked Sadat “for support of Jordan at the forthcoming Arab summit conference in Rabat”, while at the same time eliciting his negotiating position vis-à-vis Israel. Subsequently, with King Hussein, he hypothesized a resolution at Rabat sanctioning the P.L.O. as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians and, as such, negotiator for the West Bank, in which case Hussein would drop negotiations.⁵²⁰ What Kissinger had hoped would not happen at Rabat actually took place: contrary to what he had expected, on October 28, 1974, Sadat backed a resolution affirming “the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent national authority, under the leadership of the P.L.O. in its capacity as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, over all liberated territory”.⁵²¹ Hussein no longer had the right to negotiate for the West Bank. Therefore, after the Syrian refusal to a second disengagement agreement with Israel, American diplomacy focused on the Sinai front.⁵²²

In November, Kissinger returned to the Middle East to hear the Egyptian and the Israeli positions. Sadat wanted the Mitla and Giddi passes back, and the oil fields of Abu Rudeis and Ras Sudr, while Rabin demanded some “political” steps such as the ending of the anti-Israeli

⁵¹⁶ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.284

⁵¹⁷ *Ibidem*; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.169; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.157

⁵¹⁸ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.170; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.158; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.285

⁵¹⁹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.158; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.286-287

⁵²⁰ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.158

⁵²¹ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.170-171

⁵²² *Ibid.*, pp.171-172; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.159

campaign in the national media and of the boycott of diplomatic and economic relations with Israel, besides the opening of the Suez Canal to Israeli access and, most of all, the termination of the state of belligerency with Israel.⁵²³ Kissinger knew that Sadat would not declare non-belligerency, as this would damage his position in the Arab world. So, he urged the sides to concentrate on the other political requests, which were in a way “equivalent” to non-belligerency.⁵²⁴ Actually, the Israelis were ready to use strategy to pull out the maximum concessions they could from Egypt. Their intentions were exposed in an interview Rabin gave in early December, stating that his aim was “to separate Egypt from Syria, to delay negotiations until after the 1976 U.S. Presidential elections, and to delay talks until the West was less dependent on Middle Eastern oil”.⁵²⁵ This intransigent attitude persisted even in talks between the Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon and Kissinger in Washington on December 9, in which the former presented a ten-point proposal that contained basically nothing new from the request of non-belligerency and the denial to Egyptian demands. Kissinger submitted it to Sadat, who predictably refused it, and consequently insisted with the Israelis that their offer be more forthcoming.⁵²⁶ In the face of the standstill situation, and of an Israeli invitation to the Middle East for further talks issued while Allon was in Washington in mid-January, 1975, Kissinger decided he would undertake an “exploratory” trip in February.⁵²⁷ Early that same month, Rabin made public that in exchange for non-belligerency, more precisely for “a commitment not to go to war and not to use the threat to use force”, he was ready to relinquish the Sinai passes and oil fields.⁵²⁸ However, as Sadat was not ready to publicly declare he had abandoned the idea of a conflict with Israel, little changed. Subsequent to this “exploratory” expedition, on March 7 Kissinger departed for the Middle East to bring negotiations to an end.

On March 8 he arrived in Aswan, opening a new chapter of his “shuttles”. He knew which was the initial Egyptian position since he had become aware of it from a paper Fahmy had given him during his previous mission in February. Its salient points were: an Israeli withdrawal “east of the passes” and “from all the oilfields” in a peaceful manner; an agreement concerning the U.N. zone and mutual limitation of forces; the reactivation of a

⁵²³ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.173; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.160

⁵²⁴ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.289; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.160

⁵²⁵ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.174; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.289

⁵²⁶ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.161; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.290

⁵²⁷ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.161

⁵²⁸ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.174; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.290

bilateral “Mixed Armistice Agreement” and of a “Mixed Armistice Commission”; the “assurance” that Egypt “will not initiate military or paramilitary operations against Israel” provided Israel gave an identical written assurance to the United States; the Egyptian willingness to “go to Geneva to discuss with the parties concerned the conditions for a final, just and durable peaceful solution” if a Palestinian delegation was allowed in the discussions; the Egyptian pledge to keep on with the repopulation of the Suez Canal area and eventual reopening of the Canal once the disengagement agreement would be concluded; an “oral understanding” between Egypt and the U.S. concerning the end of the economic boycott.⁵²⁹ In his first talks with Sadat, Kissinger was able to obtain to separate the Egyptian disengagement from the Syrian one, thus easing the Israeli stance, and, most importantly, he got Sadat’s consensus to undertake a “no-war” declaration, although the exact formulation of the concept was still to be established. Together with General Gamasy, they also discussed Egypt’s military requests, which concerned the moving of Egyptian forces east of the Sinai passes.⁵³⁰ At dinner with Rabin in Jerusalem, the next day, the Secretary was also confronted with the Israeli perspective, which the Prime Minister spelled out in seven points. Israel stated its interest in a “separate agreement with Egypt”, which should not be linked to any other negotiation with another country or to a subsequent accord. Such agreement should be “a step towards peace”, that is, publicly declare a vow to non-use of force “towards Israel, between Egypt and Israel”. Likewise, the points called for a matter-of-fact understanding on a buffer zone, either to be managed by the U.N. or jointly by Israel and Egypt. The matters of duration of the agreement, its implementation, and the context in Geneva should also be addressed before the conception of a new Israeli line.⁵³¹ After the informal exposition of the Israeli idea, it was articulated in a formal document entitled “Proposed Main Elements of Agreement Between Egypt and Israel” of March 11. Clarifying and deepening the seven points, it listed a series of concrete actions the Egyptians should take in order to give substance to their aspirations to progress towards peace. Some among these were the opening of “bridges for tourists, family visits, goods”; “abstention from hostile propaganda”; “suspension of economic warfare and boycott practices”; “freedom of

⁵²⁹ “Salients points related to a second disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel”, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553949.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵³⁰ “Report to the President”, March 9, 1975, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553950.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵³¹ “Rabin’s seven points”, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553951.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

navigation on high seas, straits and waterways and freedom of flight over them”; “right of passage through the Canal”. About non-use of force, the new Israeli document explicitly mentioned the demand for a pledge to non-belligerency, “clearly and in its appropriate legal wording”. Regarding the buffer zone, it provided for a U.N.’s guardianship, and it also suggested adopting an alert system and “aerial reconnaissance missions” on the area evacuated. As for duration, the accord would “be in force until superseded by a new agreement”.⁵³² One of the main stumbling blocks that kept persisting was Israeli firmness in demanding from Sadat a public understanding of non-belligerency that the Egyptian President would not satisfy until Israel remained in the Sinai. What he could do, instead, was reaffirming Egypt’s peaceful intentions and his willingness to commit on non-use of force. He also agreed on many other points, such as the setting up of a U.N.E.F. force, freedom of passage through the Canal and the Straits of Bab el-Mandeb, freedom of movement and easing of the economic boycott. On the military side, an accord seemed equally far away.⁵³³ This round of negotiations proved harder than Kissinger had expected. For days, the shuttling went on with no progress to be seen. On March 17, the expression “non-use of force” was finally agreed to by both sides,⁵³⁴ but further disaccord persisted on other fundamental issues and the situation appeared as critical. Washington, while thinking that Sadat had gone as far as he could in concessions, blamed Israel’s intransigence for the standstill that had created, so much so that Kissinger on March 18 stated that an eventual failure of the negotiations “will require an overall reassessment of the policies of the U.S. [vis-à-vis Israel] that has brought us to this point”.⁵³⁵ The prospective of a possible cooling off of U.S.-Israeli relations did not ease Israel’s bargaining requests. As late as March 21, it was still firm on not withdrawing all the way through the Sinai passes, nor the oilfields, and there was also the issue of the early warning station at Umm Khisheiba which they wanted to retain in the buffer zone of the passes. A letter President Ford sent to the Israeli government expressing his discontent towards Israel’s unyielding stance did not succeed in

⁵³² “Proposed Main Elements of Agreement between Egypt and Israel”, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553953.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵³³ “Report to the President”, March 14, 1975, pp.1-3 at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553955.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵³⁴ See “Annex A and B”, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553960.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵³⁵ “Report to the President”, March 18, 1975, p.4, from *Kissinger Reports on USSR, China and Middle East Discussions* (Box 3 – March 7-22, 1975 – Kissinger’s Trip – Vol. II (3)) at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553961.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

pressing compromise forward either.⁵³⁶ Accordingly, on March 22 Kissinger decided to suspend the talks and not to resume them after a few weeks, as Israeli Foreign Minister Allon had asked him to do, because he felt that Sadat needed strong motivations before he could go back to negotiations, and the United States no longer had the stature to steer the situation in the Middle East after the breakdown of this “shuttle”. The next day, Kissinger departed from Israel and announced the opening of a period of “reassessment” in which all the sides could decide on the future course of the peace process.⁵³⁷ Then he went back to Washington.

For the following weeks, Kissinger and Ford openly demonstrated their attitude of resentment against Rabin. The latter pondered over reduced military and economic aid to Israel, as a lever to soften the Israeli negotiating team. The former consulted with some politicians of the Pentagon and the State Department such as George Ball, Charles Yost and John Mc Cloy that were not among the strenuous supporters of Israel and favored a new approach in the Arab-Israeli mediation, different from the step-by-step one.⁵³⁸ They supported a reemerging of the Geneva Conference, where the Palestinians and the Soviet Union would be involved too, and the proposal in this context of a comprehensive American peace plan conforming to which Israel should go back to the pre Six-Day War borders in exchange for security warrants. As many in the administration agreed with this idea, Ford and Kissinger seriously considered it, but the Secretary was still loathing a multilateral approach. Others put forward the hypothesis of a partial Egyptian-Israeli settlement, whereupon Israel would withdraw from part of the Sinai pursuant to an official Egyptian pledge of non-belligerency, but no final peace would be reached. A third possibility was going back to step-by-step diplomacy and try to bring to an end the March negotiations.⁵³⁹ However, the U.S.’ new policy of reassessment vis-à-vis Israel aroused the “Israel lobbies” in America. As a matter of fact, on May 21 President Ford was faced by a violent protest, in the form of a letter, where seventy-six senators demanded the lifting of American pressure on Israel and the continuation of the usual flow of military and economic aid to Israel. Confronted by such a demonstration and judging it the only feasible option, Ford and

⁵³⁶ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.292-293; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.163

⁵³⁷ “HAK/Rabin Memcon”, March 22, 1975, pp.8-9 at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553967.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵³⁸ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.164; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.294-295

⁵³⁹ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.165; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.295

Kissinger resolved to revert to a step-by-step approach.⁵⁴⁰ Moreover, the sides involved seemed to give encouraging signs. Sadat had announced in the spring the reopening of the Suez Canal on June 5, 1975, together with the repopulation of the Canal towns of Suez, Ismailia, and Port Said, and the return to Israel of thirty-nine corps of dead Israeli soldiers.⁵⁴¹ He expected nothing in return, but Israel “responded by unilaterally withdrawing troops from the limited forces zone established under the 1974 disengagement accord”.⁵⁴² So, in order to test the parts’ readiness to go back to negotiations, Ford met with Sadat in Salzburg on June 1 and 2 and later with Rabin in Washington. The meeting with Sadat went well. He asked Ford to publicly back an Israeli return to the pre Six-Day War borders, but the President offered only to act with that view privately. Regarding an eventual new diplomatic effort, Sadat did not oppose it, but his conditions had not changed since March. He conceded, nevertheless, that the early warning station at Umm Khisheiba could be manned by American civilian operators.⁵⁴³

Rabin conferred with Ford and Kissinger on June 11-12. Even if the idea of following again a step-by-step approach was the only one seriously contemplated at this point, the Secretary continued to use the possibility of reconvening the Geneva Conference as a lever to get further concessions from Rabin. Ford, too, insisted that Israel should withdraw to a line east of the Sinai passes, as Sadat asked. Then, he introduced Sadat’s idea of American civilian operators in the buffer zone as an American proposal. Rabin welcomed the idea of a new line in the passes but he did not get the Cabinet’s approval to it.⁵⁴⁴

With Rabin back in Israel, talks went on at a distance. In the next days, Israeli negotiators made an offer regarding their withdrawal to the eastern side of the strategic Sinai passes, keeping nonetheless control of “the high ground above the passes”. They also expanded Sadat’s concept, envisaging an American military presence in all of the buffer zone, which Ford rejected, opting instead for American civilians, who would supervise intelligence stations.⁵⁴⁵ Sadat, in turn, consented to expand the term of U.N. peacekeeping forces on the buffer zone for three years and left control of the intelligence station to Israel, although he demanded one for Egypt who would monitor the Israeli lines. He also gave in on other

⁵⁴⁰ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.296-297; W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.165

⁵⁴¹ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.271 and pp.273-274

⁵⁴² S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.297

⁵⁴³ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.166; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.298

⁵⁴⁴ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, pp.166-167; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.298

⁵⁴⁵ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.167; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.298

political requests.⁵⁴⁶ In July, Americans and Israelis tried to define a deal which would bring about Israeli acceptance of a new Egyptian-Israeli accord. Besides granting the aid Israel called for, that is, \$2.1 billion, Washington also acquiesced to relieve Israel from pressure on settlements on the Jordanian and Syrian fronts. This prompted an increased elasticity on the Israeli side, which came forward with a new negotiating position. After some weeks of debate on the main diplomatic issues between Israel, Kissinger and Egypt, “by mid-August United States and Israeli officials had completed work on a draft agreement”. Consequently, Ford sent Kissinger to the Middle East for the last shuttle in order to work out a final accord.⁵⁴⁷

As he arrived in Jerusalem on August 21, Kissinger found a turbulent situation. Right-wing factions and parts of the press had openly expressed their disappointment toward him, but, despite this, talks with Rabin kept on going. The Secretary made it clear to the Israeli Prime Minister that some issues needed to be addressed right from the start so as to transmit a draft of the agreement as soon as possible. These were the line on the passes, the Egyptian line, the question of Umm Khisheiba and the American civilian presence in the passes. Then assistance and the political issues should also be dealt with.⁵⁴⁸ Kissinger, as had happened months before, reported to President Ford the feeling that dealing with Israel was more like dealing with “adversaries” than with friends, “more the character of a necessary bargain to be struck with America; something Israel feels it must do, and do in such a way as to assure that at least part of the blame can be placed on the U.S. if something goes wrong in the future”.⁵⁴⁹ On the contrary, after a meeting with Sadat, which he described positively, he obtained the impression that the Egyptian leader was “ready to settle – and to settle expeditiously – on the best deal which proves attainable”. In what Kissinger defined as a “realistic approach”, Sadat had approved the Israeli line on the Mitla pass but not on the Giddi one. He had also consented to American warning stations and that both Egyptian and Israeli ones be manned by American civilians. Two main problems remained, concerning the road of access to the Sinai oil fields and political concessions. The Israelis wanted the Egyptians to yield more on the issue “of the boycott, political warfare, and reduction of

⁵⁴⁶ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.167; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.299

⁵⁴⁷ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.168 and p.470, note 91; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.300

⁵⁴⁸ “HAK/Rabin Memcon”, August 22, 1975, pp.1-2, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553968.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵⁴⁹ “Report to the President”, August 23, 1975, p.2, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553969.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

propaganda on Cairo radio”.⁵⁵⁰ While negotiations proceeded at full speed, on August 23-24 the negotiating teams began to refine issues and drafting documents complementary to the main one called “Agreement between Egypt and Israel”, which consisted of a letter on U.N.E.F. duration, a letter on non-use of force and a Memorandum of Understanding between Israel and the U.S., where the assurances given by Washington in July were formalized.⁵⁵¹ On August 25 an accord seemed within reach, largely thanks to Sadat, as differences over the Giddi pass line and on intelligence stations were almost overcome. The extent and configuration of the zone of limited forces and an agreement on American monitoring in the passes remained to be settled.⁵⁵² During the following days’ shuttling the gaps went narrowing and diplomacy produced many significant results. Yet, as late as August 27, some questions on language and giving public assurances were still causing problems, largely because Sadat feared that they could cause him trouble in the Arab world as they would be perceived as giving in to Israel. In addition, the Egyptian leader objected to a “tripartite agreement” between Egypt, Israel and the U.S. on the “maintenance and operation” of the early warning system in the Sinai, on the basis that he would not consent to a legal compromise in which Israel could decide on the management of the Egyptian territory.⁵⁵³ After some more days in which the main documents were modified, total accord was finally reached, and the Egyptian-Israeli agreement was initialed by Israeli and Egyptian representatives, in Jerusalem and Alexandria respectively on September 1, 1975. Then, it was officially signed in Geneva three days later.⁵⁵⁴ Pursuant to the agreement, the two Governments stated that they would resolve “the conflict between them [...] by peaceful means” and that they would not “resort to the threat or use of force or military blockade against each other”. New lines were designed, but the structure of the previous disengagement agreement was kept, so that a U.N. buffer zone divided the respective areas, which contained zones of limited armaments and forces. The mandate of the U.N.E.F. would be renewed annually. As for “non-military cargoes destined for or coming from Israel”, they

⁵⁵⁰ “Report to the President”, August 23, 1975, pp.1-2, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553970.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵⁵¹ See “Kissinger Reports on USSR, China and Middle East Discussions” (Box 4 – August 21-September 1, 1975 – Sinai Disengagement Agreement – Vol. I(4)) at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553971.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵⁵² “Report to the President”, August 26, 1975, p.1, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553973.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵⁵³ “Report to the President”, August 27, 1975, p.1, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553977.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵⁵⁴ W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.168; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.178

would be “permitted through the Suez Canal”. Finally, the parties pledged to keep on negotiating for a final peace agreement “within the framework of the Geneva Peace Conference in accordance with Security Council Resolution 338”, while this agreement would be in force “until superseded by a new” one.⁵⁵⁵ The text of the agreement was accompanied by a complementary annex regarding the definition of the lines and areas, the definition of the buffer zones and their regulation, aerial surveillance the extent of limitation of forces and armaments, and the process of implementation of the accord.⁵⁵⁶ Also attached, there was a proposal on the U.S. managed early warning system, concerned with the number and functions of technical and administrative personnel and with the system of surveillance of the early warning stations.⁵⁵⁷ Two Memoranda of Agreement spelled out a series of assurances the United States granted to the Israeli government. One involved military and economic assistance and supply of oil by the U.S. in case of need, to compensate the quantity lost because of the withdrawal from the Sinai oil fields. Moreover, the two governments were of one mind about the fact that “the next agreement with Egypt should be a final peace agreement”. The U.S. also undertook to thwart eventual proposals which could damage Israel’s interests.⁵⁵⁸ The other dealt with the Geneva Peace Conference. Of particular importance was point 2, where the U.S. stated that it “will not recognize or negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization so long as the Palestine Liberation Organization does not recognize Israel’s right to exist and does not accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338”.⁵⁵⁹ As further assurance, President Ford sent a letter to Rabin on September 1, 1975, in which, besides military and economic assistance, he promised the supply of advanced equipment “such as the F-16 aircraft” for defensive aims and the study of “high technology and sophisticated items, including the Pershing ground-to-ground missiles with a conventional warhead, with the view to giving a positive response”. In the same letter, Ford addressed the question of a deal between Israel and Syria, essentially affirming that Israel should not withdraw from the Golan Heights.⁵⁶⁰ Some assurances were

⁵⁵⁵ “Agreement between Egypt and Israel”, September 1, 1975, pp.1-3, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553990.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵⁵⁶ See “Annex to Egypt-Israel Agreement”, September 1, 1975, pp.1-4, *ibidem*

⁵⁵⁷ See “Proposal”, pp.1-4, *ibidem*

⁵⁵⁸ See “Memorandum of Agreement between the Governments of Israel and the United States”, September 1, 1975, pp.1-9, at www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/0331/1553991.pdf accessed February 28, 2012

⁵⁵⁹ See “Memorandum of Agreement between the Governments of Israel and the United States: the Geneva Peace Conference”, September 1, 1975, p.1, *ibidem*

⁵⁶⁰ See “Letter from Ford to Rabin”, September 1, 1975, pp.1-2, *ibidem*

conveyed to Egypt too through a letter President Ford wrote to Sadat, but they were considerably minor if compared to those given to Israel. Ford declared that the U.S. would make a “serious effort” to produce “further negotiations between Syria and Israel, as well as that it would encourage the achievement of “a just and lasting peace in the Middle East”. He also asserted that in case of an Israeli violation of the agreement the U.S. would discuss a possible reaction with Egypt and that the U.S. would offer assistance for the Egyptian intelligence station.⁵⁶¹

The signing and implementation of “Sinai II”, as this agreement was called, represented a further step forward in the U.S.-Egyptian relation. It stood as an evident proof of the fact that the two governments could work together successfully. After Sinai II, Sadat accepted Ford’s invitation and visited the United States in October 1975. It was a most remarkable moment, since no Egyptian President had done it before. During his trip, Sadat asked for economic and military assistance. Some into Congress opposed the sale of arms to Egypt, even more so because Ford coupled the decision of delivering six C-130 Hercules transport planes to Egypt with a reduction of aid to Israel. Economic aid was also consented to. After Sadat cancelled the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the U.S.S.R. in March 1976, the planes were sold to Egypt. Yet, because of Israeli fears weighting on Congress, “no further military deals” were concluded “with Egypt in 1976”.⁵⁶²

These components, those of economic and military assistance, were fundamental ones, and in time they would become always more crucial to understand the relationship between Egypt and the U.S., being it the result of political strategy. William Quandt and Steven Spiegel dwell on the crux of the beginning of military assistance to Egypt following the conclusion of “Sinai II”. They report the most salient traits of the congressional debate which ensued in 1975 as described in some articles by the authoritative Bernard Gwertzman, who dealt with the U.S.’ foreign policy for the *New York Times*. What can be noticed, not so much in Quandt’s *Peace Process* which is very much balanced, but rather in Spiegel’s book, is the weight of pro-Israel section in Congress. In the passage described above it emerges what would be a sort of recurrent pattern in the U.S.-Egypt-Israel relation, on which Spiegel does not fail to bring one’s attention, nor here, nor in other points of his account. He lingers over analyzing this dynamic, which makes clear the constant unevenness of such triangle. No

⁵⁶¹ See “Letter from Ford to Sadat”, September 1, 1975, pp.1-2, *ibidem*

⁵⁶² W.B. Quandt, *op. cit.*, p.171; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.307

matter how hard the United States tried to bring Egypt and Israel to parity of assistance supplied, the conformation of American domestic politics is such that equivalence is hard to reach. In fact, it seems clear how routinely Egyptian positions have been brought to succumb to Israeli ones' in the competition of the two for securing U.S.' interests.

Besides establishing new assistance and commercial relations with Egypt, no other remarkable progress was made in the Middle East by the Ford administration in 1976. Being 1976 an election year, the President considered it too risky to embark on another Arab-Israeli agreement, and he said openly to Sadat that a comprehensive settlement would have to wait until his re-election. Moreover, the Lebanese civil war had now become the most urging issue U.S.' foreign policy had to confront.⁵⁶³ The victory of Jimmy Carter over Ford, on November 2, 1976 would open a new chapter in Arab-Israeli diplomacy and in U.S.-Egyptian relations.

3.2. Carter and Egypt: 1977-1978

When Jimmy Carter started his term as President, on January 20, 1977, his ideas on the Middle East arena were hardly known. During his election campaign he had depicted himself as a supporter of democracy and a promoter of human rights. Differently from his predecessors, he had put the accent over morality as a basic element of politics, probably influenced by his religious convictions of born-again Christian. By the same token, he also advocated restriction of armaments, both of nuclear weapons in the U.S.-U.S.S.R. confrontation and of selling of arms to Third World countries. He maintained, instead, that governments should invest on social politics for the welfare of their own people. Yet, Carter did not attach concrete measures to his theoretical statements and on several occasions appeared to contradict himself.⁵⁶⁴ Scholars also agree in saying that the fact that he was trained as an engineer affected his presidency's style, inasmuch as he faced matters presented to him one by one, separately, and tried to solve even more than one problem at the time. So, if on the one hand he was certainly a hard worker, on the other hand he failed to create a comprehensive foreign policy approach.⁵⁶⁵ As far as Middle East policies were

⁵⁶³ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.181, p.183; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.310

⁵⁶⁴ S. Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled: The Foreign Policy of the Carter Administration*, DeKalb, Illinois, Northern University Press, 2008, pp.12-16

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.16; W.B. Quandt, *Camp David. Peacemaking and Politics*, Washington, Brookings, 1986, p.31

concerned, one of Carter's main objectives, if not the main one, was to settle the Arab-Israeli dispute. Finding a solution to the Palestinian question was equally important, and was consistent with the stress laid by the President on human rights. Connected to these matters, oil supply also stood as a top priority subject in Carter's mind, and the defusing of a future energy crisis very much depended, in his opinion, on the achievement of stability in the region.⁵⁶⁶ The others key members of the foreign policy team saw eye-to-eye with Carter on such issues, although they were very different in their characters. In fact, while Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was mild-tempered and quiet, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski was "more vocal, self-promoting, and willing to engage in political battle than his counterpart in State". Despite their diversity, both diplomats agreed that the Arab-Israeli dispute would be better solved with Soviet collaboration, although the U.S.S.R. was still considered as a rival (not so much by Vance, but especially by Brzezinski).⁵⁶⁷

So, the beginning of Carter's presidency witnessed a general consensus of chief American decision-makers that the U.S. should assume an active role in Middle East diplomacy, in order to fulfill a comprehensive settlement, differently from the "step-by-step" approach adopted by Kissinger, which they no longer considered as appropriate to achieve significant results. An Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, or almost so, was advocated.⁵⁶⁸ The timing seemed ripe for a new American initiative, as the main Arab countries involved in the negotiating process were on good terms with the U.S. and the current situation of no war-no peace was deemed as unstable. In particular, President Sadat, who was increasingly gaining consideration in Washington, was facing social unrest in Egypt because of his decision to raise the prices of some essential goods. Such riots made Sadat's desire for a successful outcome of the peace process with Israel even more compelling. What is more, Israel would deal with elections in May, thus indicating the possibility of a new, tougher, government.⁵⁶⁹

As far as American perceptions at the beginning of 1977 were concerned, the presentation delineated by Quandt in his *Camp David* is undoubtedly an authoritative source to grasp the spirit with which the Carter administration approached the Middle East. In fact, he was deeply engaged in Middle East politics, and in the shaping of American policy in the region, since he was a member of National Security Council staff, the main instrument through

⁵⁶⁶ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.32; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.320

⁵⁶⁷ S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, pp.17-20; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.320-322

⁵⁶⁸ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.323; W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.34-35; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.187

⁵⁶⁹ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.35-36; W.B. Quandt, *Peace Process*, cit., p.179

which the President consults his advisors in the decisional process for national security and foreign policy issues. As such, he had access to American documents of special importance. In some cases he even composed them himself, during Carter's presidency. Certainly thanks to his role of "front row" witness, the picture he gave of the situation at the beginning of Carter's term finds correspondence in a partly declassified C.I.A. document concerning world trends and developments of February 1977. The memorandum substantiates the fact that the greatest matters of concern about an Arab-Israeli settlement were pressures Sadat had to face and Israeli elections of May. Yet, another element is taken into consideration, which conversely Quandt ignores, namely, the role of the Soviet Union. The C.I.A. contemplates that an agreement between Egypt and Israel "will surely require Moscow's acquiescence". It is predicted, additionally, that Soviet moves in the Middle East will be directed to trying to maintain the greatest influence possible, as their role had been severely reduced by the American strategy. In particular, they will try to revive the Geneva Peace Conference and "they will remain alert for any opportunity to improve their relations with Egypt – the key to their lost position in the Arab world – should the Egyptian-U.S. relationship falter". From this memorandum, one could infer that the administration had also very much in mind that an eventual failure to bring about an accord would cause "the Arabs' resentment at the U.S.", thus re-opening the door to a more active Soviet role in the area, which Kissinger had worked so hard to exclude.⁵⁷⁰

On February 4, 1977, it was decided that Vance would travel to the Middle East so as to debate the road to take in the negotiations. According to Brzezinski, the first step consisted in reaching an agreement "on broad principles, which could then be implemented in stages". The Arabs would be required to pledge to peace unequivocally and through physical actions, like establishing diplomatic relations and building links of trade and tourism. The Israelis, in return, should go back to the 1967 lines or approximately so. Regarding procedure, a Geneva conference was foreseen as the most appropriate context in which conducting negotiations, but, for the time being, the focus should be on pre-Geneva agreements, "through bilateral American diplomatic contacts with each of the parties".⁵⁷¹

The first leader Vance met in the Middle East in mid-February was the Israeli Prime Minister Rabin, who picked out the three main issues to be discussed, namely, the nature of

⁵⁷⁰ C.I.A., "Intelligence Memorandum: World Trends and Developments", February 1977, p.3, p.11 and p.35 at www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC_0000969725/DOC_0000969725.pdf accessed April 12, 2012

⁵⁷¹ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.38-40

peace, the extent of withdrawal, and the Palestinian question. Subsequently, the Secretary visited Cairo, Damascus, Amman, and Riyadh. Back in Washington, he summarized his impressions of a general positive attitude toward reconvening a Geneva Conference, and of harmony on substance. More problems surfaced when it came to procedure, that is how the Arabs should be represented at Geneva. Some favored a single delegation, including members of the P.L.O.; others, like Sadat, opposed it. He felt that the Syrians might stand in the way of a positive outcome while he did not want anybody to obstruct Egypt's way to peace. In fact, he even ventured to say to Vance that he would do his best to influence the P.L.O. on Israel's recognition, but, if this was not possible, then "the Egyptian Minister of defense would represent the Palestinians".⁵⁷² The Americans were pleased by his show of flexibility. Indeed, President Carter counted on Sadat as a valuable partner in reaching his objectives in the region, as demonstrated by a letter he sent to the Egyptian leader on February 14, 1977, stating

I count heavily on your advice as we begin to find ways to make significant progress this year toward a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. [...] Secretary Vance's visit will be the first step in what I am confident will be a searching and intimate dialogue. [...] The growing friendship and cooperation between Egypt and the United States have already brought us some steps along the path to peace. I am eager to join personally with you in finding ways to move ahead in the months to come.⁵⁷³

After Vance's preliminary talks, Carter became more directly involved in diplomacy. He met with Rabin on March 7-8 in Washington, with whom he examined the main points to be negotiated. It emerged that Rabin was more open for concessions on the Egyptian side, where a "peace-for-land" formula seemed applicable, while the Golan and the West Bank fronts would be more difficult to handle. As for the issue of Palestinian self-representation, Rabin was clear in stating that "there could be no third state".⁵⁷⁴ If the Israeli Prime Minister's position was well delineated, not the same could be said for President Carter. His public comments often did not coincide with those he gave privately, and this caused some friction in U.S.-Israeli relations. While Rabin was in Washington, he publicly spoke of

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, pp.40-43

⁵⁷³ "Letter from President Carter to President Sadat", February 14, 1977, at www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid25/cda01.pdf accessed March 27, 2012

⁵⁷⁴ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.44-46

“defensible borders” that Israel should be allowed to keep. For the Israelis it meant that they would not be asked to withdraw to the 1967 borders, while for Carter it was exactly the opposite, and he claimed he used the expression without second meanings.⁵⁷⁵ Then, on March 16, he further alarmed the Israelis by stating that, concerning the Palestinian problem, “there has to be a homeland provided for the Palestinian refugees”. Later he clarified that he did not necessarily suggest that a Palestinian state should be created, but his repeated contradictions led the Israelis and their supporters in the U.S. to be alarmed.⁵⁷⁶

The successive meetings between Carter and the main Arab leaders strengthened the impression on pro-Israeli forces that the President was being somehow pro-Arab and anti-Israeli in his policy. In his meeting with President Sadat on April 4, it became clear from the start that the two leaders went along very good and admired each other. Sadat seemed ready, actually eager, to reach a peace accord. He declared his willingness to recognize Israel but he also underlined that the establishing of diplomatic and normal and peaceful relations was a matter of sovereignty and should not be tied to the achievement of peace.⁵⁷⁷ Besides, he asserted that Israel should not be allowed to keep its soldiers on Egyptian territory, and in case Israel needed guarantees from the U.S., like a common defense pact, he would not object to it.⁵⁷⁸ Then he put the accent on the need for an American proposal to get the negotiations started again. He still favored the idea of a Geneva conference, but he preferred it to be only a venue for signing an agreement on whose basic points a consensus already existed. The Egyptian leader declared himself very much committed to the establishment of a Palestinian state, and that it should be tied to Jordan even if it was not clear to what degree. The next day, the focus shifted on U.S. military assistance to Egypt. While Sadat acknowledged that arms supply at this stage could be seen as linked to the achievement of an accord, sparking polemics among the pro-Israel forces in Congress, he nonetheless was grateful when Carter offered support to keep the Egyptian military arsenal up-to-date.⁵⁷⁹ After this first successful visit, Carter met with King Hussein, Fahd and Assad in the subsequent months, and, by May, he thought good initial bases had been set. Then, unexpectedly, the Israeli elections of May 17 were won by the Likud Party and Menachem Begin became Prime Minister on June 21, 1977, causing a general reassessment in Carter’s

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.47; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.331

⁵⁷⁶ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.48; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.193-194; S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p.78

⁵⁷⁷ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp.297-299

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.298

⁵⁷⁹ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.50-53

Middle East policy.⁵⁸⁰

As a matter of fact, Begin advocated Israel's right to control the territories of the West Bank, which he referred to as "Judea and Samaria", and expand settlements there. He based his statements not only on political but most of all on ideological convictions.⁵⁸¹ His ideas stood therefore openly in contrast with American general principles, that is, that the terms of peace should be based on a "land-for-peace" formula derived from the language of U.N.S.C. Resolution 242. According to the U.S.' interpretation, "withdrawal from occupied territories" stood for "withdrawal from all three fronts in the Middle East dispute – that is, Sinai, Golan, West Bank and Gaza".⁵⁸² When Carter first met Begin on July 19, 1977, he made clear once again which was the American position on the three key concepts of the nature of peace, territory, and the Palestinian question. However, he also maintained that he would not force a plan on Israel. This statement was in accord with Begin's idea of the role of the U.S. in the negotiations. In his opinion, the U.S. should limit itself to reunite the parties, while the substance of the talks should be decided by the Arabs and the Israelis alone.⁵⁸³ Begin showed himself approving to the reconvening of a Geneva conference to negotiate for peace in "mixed commissions" in keeping with Resolution 242, but as previously mentioned, the two sides clashed over its interpretation. Differently from his predecessor, moreover, Begin refused the P.L.O.'s participation in negotiations, either as part of the Jordanian delegation or by itself. He also objected to the creation of a Palestinian entity as an outcome of peace negotiations, claiming that this would bring about a Palestinian state, which was inconceivable, in his view. Later that same day, the Israeli Prime Minister informed Carter that he was planning to see Sadat and speak with him directly, setting an absolutely new course in Arab-Israeli negotiations.⁵⁸⁴ The meeting ended in a positive atmosphere but it soon became manifest that dealing with Begin would be hard. Soon afterwards, in fact, the Israeli cabinet recognized three more settlements as legal.⁵⁸⁵

In the following weeks, Carter became more and more convinced of the fact that if the U.S. coordinated with the P.L.O. so that it formally recognized Israel, and if the P.L.O. was made to take part in Geneva, a solution would be at hand. Therefore, Vance left for the Middle

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.55-63; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.195-198

⁵⁸¹ S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, pp.78-79

⁵⁸² W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.73; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.200

⁵⁸³ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.78

⁵⁸⁴ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.202

⁵⁸⁵ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.79-83

East in August 1977 to work out a possible way of representing the Palestinians, besides reviewing procedural questions.⁵⁸⁶ Sadat was the first Middle Eastern leader he visited. He was quite worried about the American change of mind, which no longer viewed agreement on basic principles as feasible before Geneva because of the irreconcilable positions of the parts and put increasing attention on procedure instead. First of all, Sadat wanted to know whether the American idea on withdrawal had been modified. When Vance told him that the concept remained that of a return to “the 1967 lines with only minor modifications”, he was comforted. Regarding the matter of Palestinian representation, Sadat believed that an Egyptian officer belonging to the Arab League should speak for a Palestinian delegation, not the Jordanians. However, he did not deem a single Arab delegation a good thing, since he foresaw internal fights that would lead to failure of negotiations. He proposed instead that bilateral working groups be set up under the United States’ supervision, in order to reach separate agreements which could be later ratified at Geneva. As far as Israel was concerned, Sadat commented that he would not establish normal relations until its complete withdrawal from Sinai. He would not consent to modifications in the border because it had been internationally recognized. Despite his combative attitude, it was evident that Sadat was willing to reach an agreement with Israel and pressed Vance for the drafting of general principles with details to be negotiated later. Quite surprisingly, he went so far as to give Vance an Egyptian draft of a peace proposal he would sign, which had to remain secret. The U.S. should push Israel to submit a proposal itself, and then Washington could put forward a compromise draft between the two. Sadat even wrote in the margins of his letter the points on which he could give in if necessary. Vance approved the idea and asked even Syrian and Jordanian leaders to come up with their own drafts. The Israelis committed to present a draft peace agreement too.⁵⁸⁷

Of the major bibliographic resources taken into consideration in this work, Quandt was the only one who gave a thorough description of this meeting between Vance and Sadat. Stein did not write about it, Spiegel mentioned it, but without going into the question. One could assume that the former’s proximity to the political protagonists allowed him to gain greater understanding of which was the relationship between the Americans and Sadat. What should be also observed is that the perspective is permanently the American one. In other

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.85-86; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.335

⁵⁸⁷ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, *cit.*, pp.87-91

words, rather than on an in-depth examination of Sadat's ideas about future prospects for Egypt, the author preferred to focus himself on the diplomatic collaboration between the U.S. and Egypt aimed at achieving an Arab-Israeli settlement. We should as well take notice of the fact that such collaboration was very much nourished by the Egyptian leader's desire to obtain the U.S.' trust, to show himself as a valuable regional partner. This desire, as can be observed from following points in the narration too, led him to concede much more than what he got in reward, and this would end up alienating him from the majority of the Arab world. Washington was aware, through Ambassador Eilts' report, that Sadat's position had been worsening in Egypt, and that his political choices were criticized, thus jeopardizing his "ability to conduct peace negotiations".⁵⁸⁸ Nonetheless, the U.S. did not act forcefully enough to actualise substantive progress in the Middle East, and it abstained from openly confronting Israel in favor of Egyptian positions.

In fact, no consensus was reached during Vance's trip on Palestinian representation or procedural matters, and the gap between the Arabs and the Israelis remained large. In sum, "the Vance trip had pretty much convinced the Carter administration that little more progress could be achieved in the absence of actual negotiations in which all the parties took part".⁵⁸⁹ Consequently, by September a conviction had come to form that the Geneva conference should be held soon; this would require a more active Palestinian and, because of their role as co-conveners, Soviet involvement.⁵⁹⁰

Thus, the idea that had been raised in May was further developed in September, namely, that of a joint Soviet-American statement on the Middle East. According to Vance, it could serve the strategic purpose of pressuring Syria and the P.L.O. for flexibility on procedural issues, while at the same time pressuring Israel in favour of the Palestinians. So, he asked Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and Ambassador Dobrynin to submit him a draft of a joint statement, which they did on September 9. It was very much based on U.N.S.C. Resolution 242 even if it did not mention it, except for the expression "Palestinian national rights", which was later changed into "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" (while Washington had previously spoken of "legitimate interests"). Once the draft reached a form accepted both by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., the communiqué calling for a Geneva conference was

⁵⁸⁸ "Memorandum for the President", September 13, 1977, NLC-1-3-6-41-6

⁵⁸⁹ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.95

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibidem*; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.205

issued on October 1.⁵⁹¹ If the communiqué was welcomed with favor by the P.L.O. and the greatest part of the Arab opinion, it created a massive reaction by the Israelis and supporters of Israel. Quite evidently, the Carter administration had underestimated the repercussions of such an action and had not consulted Congress nor tested the press or public opinion to see what the response could be. Carter was therefore confronted with the protest of American Jews, supported by many senators and congressmen, some of whom were among the most influential for American policy. Bringing the Soviet Union back in Middle East negotiations was deemed as a wring decision, one that, on the top of all, did not succeed in urging flexibility on Israel. As a matter of fact, Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan menaced to start a disparaging public campaign against the Carter administration involving American public opinion. In the face of this, Carter asked to meet Dayan to clarify the matter.⁵⁹² The encounter took place on October 4. During the talks the President reassured the Foreign Minister that Israel would not be obliged to accept the U.S.-U.S.S.R. communiqué. After a tough session of debate and negotiations, the U.S. and Israel convened to issue a joint statement, in which it was confirmed that the reconvening of the Geneva Conference was based on Resolution 242 and that the Israeli refusal of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. communiqué did not preclude the opening of a new session of negotiations at Geneva. Moreover, the parts reached an understanding on a working paper dealing with the main characteristics of the Conference. Israel would negotiate with a single Arab delegation comprising Palestinian Arabs during the opening sessions. Then talks would proceed in separate bilateral working groups, and the issues of the West Bank and Gaza would be covered in one of these groups, where Palestinian Arabs would be present.⁵⁹³ The outcome of this meeting was that the U.S.-U.S.S.R. communiqué was deprived of all meaning, and according to Quandt, both Israelis and Arabs “sensed that [...] Carter had backed down in the face of domestic and Israeli pressures. [...] The widespread perception [...] was that the United States had abandoned the position it had just worked out with the Soviets”.⁵⁹⁴ The Egyptian President Sadat had just that impression: he believed that, despite the growing friendship between the U.S. and his country, Carter could not ignore the domestic pressure coming from pro-Israel groups and from Congress. Fearing that all the attention put on procedure for the Geneva

⁵⁹¹ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.212-215; W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, *cit.*, pp.119-120 and pp.122-123; S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p.79

⁵⁹² W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, *cit.*, p.123, p.125; S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p.80; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.215-218

⁵⁹³ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.219; W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, *cit.*, pp.125-130; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.339

⁵⁹⁴ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, *cit.*, p. 131

Conference would not bring about considerable progress on substance, he decided he would take the initiative in the first person.⁵⁹⁵ Further corroborating his judgement was a letter he received from Carter, written on October 21, in which the American President asked Sadat for help in removing the obstacles which were hindering the way of the peace process.⁵⁹⁶

Carter's review of the impasse reached by diplomacy prompted Sadat to make a first proposal, encouraged by Romanian President Ceausescu, who told him that "Begin wants a solution". This proposal consisted of a meeting of the leaders of the permanent members of the Security Council, that is, U.S., U.S.S.R., France, Great Britain and China, with the main Arab parties involved in the process, namely, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinians in Jerusalem, to prepare for Geneva.⁵⁹⁷ Nonetheless, Carter rejected this initiative, since it considered it a risky one, not bound for success.⁵⁹⁸ Then another peace initiative made way through Sadat's mind – a visit to Jerusalem: "I therefore decided to go right to the Knesset [...], in order to submit to them the complete facts of the situation, and to confront them with the choice they would have to make if they really wanted to live in peace in this part of the world. I wanted to put the ball in their court".⁵⁹⁹ He made his decision known to everyone in the People's Assembly on November 9, but he needed to get Begin's go-ahead before starting to plan his trip. The United States eased contacts between the two leaders and Sadat finally received a formal invitation from Begin.⁶⁰⁰ Washington's initial reaction to the news that Sadat would actually go to Israel was positive, although a certain degree of preoccupation existed that such a move could cause discontent in the Arab front, in this way nullifying the possibility of recalling the Geneva Conference.⁶⁰¹ Sadat arrived at Tel Aviv on November 19, 1977. After formal meetings and a visit to the sacred places of Jerusalem, on November 20 he delivered his speech to the Knesset. Nothing new was said, but the only fact that the Egyptian President stood in front of the Israeli parliament stressing the need for a comprehensive peace was an epic development.⁶⁰²

As Egypt and Israel seemed to go on alone in the peace process, and Carter began

⁵⁹⁵ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.220-221; W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.136; W.B. Quandt, *Peace Process*, cit., p.189

⁵⁹⁶ See "Letter from President Carter to President Sadat", October 21, 1977, at www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid25/cda04.pdf accessed March 27, 2012

⁵⁹⁷ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, pp.305-307; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.340

⁵⁹⁸ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.144-145; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.222

⁵⁹⁹ A. Sadat, *op. cit.*, p.308

⁶⁰⁰ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.146-147; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.223-224

⁶⁰¹ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.147

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, p.147, see Appendix C, pp.345-355 for the full text of the speech; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.226-227

questioning on the role the U.S. would have in this changed situation, the Arab countries expressed their lack of support towards Sadat's initiative.⁶⁰³ Indeed, as Ibrahim A. Karawan reported, many scholars concluded that Egypt's "foreign-policy shift represented a radical alteration of Arab policies toward Israel and that with Egypt out of the war equation, the regional balance of power had changed dramatically".⁶⁰⁴ Karawan further argued that such a policy shift depended on the fact that Sadat "had no Pan-Arabist designs". Differently from Nasser, he did not believe in the primacy of Arab Nationalism but of Egyptian nationalism, "Egypt first". In fact, even if he suggested his decision to Assad before going to Jerusalem he did it to inform him and not for consultation. He had already decided that, if it would give him Sinai back, he would negotiate with Israel. Indeed, he had already started to do so, since in mid-September he had sent his envoy Hassan al-Tuhami in Morocco for secret talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan. He did not mean to sabotage the Geneva Conference, but he felt that a "secret channel could be used to open up new options".⁶⁰⁵ Besides sparking a series of Arab critics, the most immediate consequence of Sadat's Jerusalem visit was the reassessment of American policy.

First of all, Carter asked Sadat to delay the preparatory peace conference he had proposed to be set in Cairo, in order to consult the other Arab countries involved. Then, he sent Vance to the Middle East in December to reaffirm that the American goal was a comprehensive settlement, and to see if moderate Arabs could be involved in the Cairo peace talks.⁶⁰⁶ Upon his return, Vance reported that Israel would not seriously negotiate with Egypt at the Cairo conference, but that anyway the U.S. should help the parts to come up with the "peace for withdrawal" formula plus some general settlement of the Palestinian question.⁶⁰⁷ While the Cairo conference was held, on December 13-15, Begin was in Washington. He went there to put forward a new proposal, which he would submit to Sadat in their next meeting at Ismailia, according to which on Sinai Israel would withdraw almost completely in exchange for a peace treaty. The real new element, though, concerned a plan for "administrative autonomy" over the West Bank and Gaza, leaving open the issue of sovereignty. Carter saw some positive points in this proposal, and at the end of the talks he phoned Sadat to tell him

⁶⁰³ S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, pp.80-81

⁶⁰⁴ I.A. Karawan, *Sadat and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Revisited*, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.26, No.2, May 1994, p.249

⁶⁰⁵ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.109; I. A. Karawan, *op. cit.*, pp.252-253, p.256; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.206

⁶⁰⁶ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.149-151

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.153-154

so, even if he added that it was not as forthcoming as the Egyptian leader would expect.⁶⁰⁸ When Sadat and Begin met in Ismailia on December 25, the Israeli Prime Minister repeated the ideas he had submitted to Carter in Washington, with minor modifications, in the form of two documents – one concerning an Egyptian-Israeli peace accord; the other “self-rule” for the Palestinians. Sadat, as Carter predicted, was not satisfied with the Israelis’ reluctance to complete unilateral withdrawal from Sinai (they wanted to retain some settlements and air bases, and Sharm el-Sheik). However, the two sides agreed to the formation of two committees, in Jerusalem and in Cairo, which would discuss political and military issues respectively.⁶⁰⁹

The actual failure of the Ismailia talks led the Carter administration to assume once again an active role in promoting the continuation of negotiations. Therefore, when it was decided that the political committee would meet in mid-January in Jerusalem, the U.S. took part in it. Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Israel opened the talks in a tense atmosphere. Each of them prepared proposals for a declaration of principles and, although their positions were still quite far apart, the U.S. delegation tried to mediate between the two by working on compromises. Still, the talks were soon adjourned since, during a dinner, Prime Minister Begin implicitly insulted the Egyptian Foreign Minister.⁶¹⁰ As Sadat recalled his delegation to Cairo, the possibility of an Arab-Israeli peace seemed to fade away. Thus, Carter and Brzezinski began to ponder on the feasibility of having both Sadat and Begin over to Camp David to push the negotiating process forward in whatever direction the two would agree on, “even if that meant not resolving the Palestinian question”.⁶¹¹ When Washington became aware of the fact that Sadat was losing the faith he had in Carter, that he felt left alone on the issue of Israeli settlements in Sinai, the President decided he would invite only Sadat for the moment. The Egyptian leader was key for a breakthrough in the peace process and Carter believed that the U.S.-Egyptian relationship needed to be rekindled.⁶¹²

It seems fair to say that this moment of transition from one year to another was generally recognized as a moment in which American policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict was adjusted. While at first Washington pointed at developing a broad agreement on established principles for a comprehensive peace, it then shifted to a different formula, which Sadat had

⁶⁰⁸ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.234-235; W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.155-156

⁶⁰⁹ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.158-159; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.343; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.239-241

⁶¹⁰ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.162-165; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.245-246; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.344

⁶¹¹ K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.248; W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.165

⁶¹² W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.166-167; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.345

deeply contributed to devise. This new approach was more restricted in its focus. It concentrated on key elements for an agreement, which increasingly approximated to the concept of a separate peace between Israel and Egypt. The Carter administration, as proven also by a document of January 1978 based on a report of National Security Council (document, therefore, almost surely known by Quandt), considered the approaching of the two parts as a point of strength of the foreign policy adopted. What seemed to be missing was “cohesion”, “clearcut priorities”, and “success on the level of tactical execution”.⁶¹³ It can be seen, actually, how this new awareness derived from a critical self-evaluation by Washington characterized Sadat’s visit at Camp David.

On February 3, he arrived at Camp David for what would be a very important visit in the path of the shaping of an effective collaboration between the U.S. and Egypt. As stated by Quandt, “this meeting forged a genuine friendship between the two men. It also marked an important step toward a joint U.S.-Egyptian strategy designed to persuade Begin to change some of his deeply held positions on how to deal with the Palestinian question”.⁶¹⁴ In talks with President Carter on February 4, Sadat expressed his disappointment with Begin, who would not give up on Israeli settlements in Sinai. So great was his discomfort, that he menaced to abandon the negotiating process. The American diplomatic team pleaded him not to do so, and to consider Begin’s proposal on autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza as a good starting point for a compromise. At Sadat’s request that the Americans put forward a proposal of their own, thus taking active part in negotiations, Carter consented, but he also said that the Egyptian President should collaborate with the U.S. to a strategy of pressure on Begin. According to Carter’s scheme, the American position should not be seen as resulting from the meeting with Sadat, otherwise American public opinion would object to it. Rather, the American President would meet Begin, and, in the meantime, Egypt should propose a settlement for the West Bank and Gaza. Israel would almost surely refuse it, and the U.S. should appear as rejecting it too. Consequently, Washington would make public its proposal as a compromise between the parts, which would be near to Egypt’s stance. Sadat would have to make a stand initially, so that a complicity would not be evident, and finally agree. In this way, Begin would come out as the one who destroyed the peace process in the case he

⁶¹³ “Memorandum for the President”, January 12, 1978, NLC-128-9-14-2-3, pp.27-28

⁶¹⁴ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.172-173

did not renounce his position.⁶¹⁵

There was a certain irony in the fact that “the United States was in effect colluding with the Egyptians to confront the Israelis”, who were their major regional partner. Yet, this strategy did not succeed.⁶¹⁶ According to Quandt, the reasons were mainly two. One was Sadat’s failure to come up with an adequate proposal over the West Bank and Gaza in the following months. He did not appear as a strong advocate of the interpretation of Resolution 242 as connected to all fronts, but insisted mainly on the Sinai one. As Carter instead publicly struggled for Palestinian rights and declared Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza illegal, public opinion was left with the strange impression that Carter was being “more pro-Arab than Sadat”. In time, the American President came to realize that, despite appearances, Sadat was more interested in a bilateral deal with Israel than on a comprehensive agreement linking Egyptian-Israeli peace to the Palestinian issue.⁶¹⁷ The other reason was that another question surfaced which occupied great part of the time American policymakers had planned to devote to working on an American compromise proposal, that is, the sale of advanced equipment to Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel. Since Saudi Arabia was one of the main enemies of Israel, Carter was afraid that the Israel lobby in Congress would veto the sale, while Saudi support was key to American policy in the region. So, even if the three countries had asked arms separately, the three sales were associated in a package deal, so that refusal on one of them would deny supply for all three. Debate in Congress was harsh. In the end the sale was approved but the matter further jeopardized Carter’s position vis-à-vis Jewish support.⁶¹⁸ As Israel failed to present a coherent plan concerning ways to determine the future of the West Bank and Gaza after the proposed five years of autonomy, the peace process seemed deadlocked by the beginning of Summer of 1978.⁶¹⁹

In order to unfreeze the almost standstill situation, a secret planning group was put together by Vance, Brzezinski and other influential policymakers in Washington. Their first decision was to begin to draft an American proposal and bring Egypt back to negotiations.⁶²⁰ Sadat’s stance looked as if it had softened a bit: he backed down on Palestinian self-determination and showed himself willing to achieve results in his talks with the Israelis. A

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.173-175; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.248-249

⁶¹⁶ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.345

⁶¹⁷ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.176-177

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.179; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.346-349; S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, pp.81-82

⁶¹⁹ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.190; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.350-351

⁶²⁰ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.195

further push came from the American decision of a meeting of Secretary Vance with the Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan and the Egyptian Kamil in mid-July at Leeds Castle in England.⁶²¹ Even though the talks did not produce significant progress, since the respective positions were only slightly more forthcoming, new concepts had come to form that would resurface while reaching an accord at Camp David.⁶²² Sensing that an agreement, at least a partial one, could be accomplished despite tensions growing between Egypt and Israel, on July 20 Carter communicated to his advisers his idea of convening a summit meeting between Sadat and Begin.⁶²³ Ten days later, he confirmed his decision, and in August Secretary Vance went to the Middle East to invite the two leaders at Camp David. According to all the historians consulted on the matter, they both immediately accepted.⁶²⁴ Neither from Stein's account, nor from Spiegel's one do we get clues of the contents of the meeting between Vance and Sadat. Quandt is the only one deepening the question, reporting that the U.S. promised to be "full partners in the negotiations". From a document shortly preceding Vance's visit, one could infer that the Secretary submitted to Sadat a much more favorable picture of American ideas and proposals than how it later turned out to be. In other words, Sadat needed an encouraging perspective to take part in another trilateral meeting, and that was precisely what Vance offered him. Referring to a comment by Eilts, Brzezinski informed the President that

the signals are increasingly coming through that Sadat is not ready to give up his peace initiative and is willing to have a new round of talks, but adds that much will depend upon the kind of assurances we can give him that we are not wavering and will in fact work to implement the commitments made to Sadat at Aswan, Camp David, and Washington.⁶²⁵

It can be reasonably concluded that Israeli influence on the United States prevented it from urging for an accord more favorable to Egypt. And Sadat's huge desire to establish himself as a partner of the United States precluded his capacity to confront it, and played in the hands of Begin. As a matter of fact, Camp David would isolate Egypt from the majority of the other Arab states and cause it Arab and Islamic sanctions.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, p.198; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.351

⁶²² K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.250; W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.199-201

⁶²³ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.201; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.352

⁶²⁴ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.202, p.207; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.353; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.251

⁶²⁵ "Memorandum for the President", August 4, 1978, NLC-2-12-3-2-1

In the days leading to the summit, indeed, Carter and his advisers wondered about what should be expected from negotiations. The President aimed first and foremost to an Egyptian-Israeli agreement not necessarily linked to the Palestinian question. His foreign policy team believed, on the contrary, that some form of linkage should be present.⁶²⁶ Sadat had shown a great degree of flexibility regarding his position, except on territory and sovereignty. The problem was not so much Sinai, on which an agreement seemed feasible, but rather the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. Begin had stood firm on his position according to which he would never relinquish such territories. And Sadat could not be seen as going on a separate accord with Israel without achieving some sort of commitment for withdrawal on all the other fronts too. He would antagonize the entire Arab world by leaving the Palestinians to their destiny. Accordingly, he arrived at Camp David expecting American support for his idea of linking a peace treaty with Israel to progress on the Palestinian issue.⁶²⁷ It can be certainly said that Begin was the one who approached Camp David with less to lose. He was aware of Sadat and Carter's need for concrete results coming from the summit; they required a success for domestic politics reasons. He, on the contrary, could abandon negotiations and still be seen as a national hero in Israel for having refused to give up territory.⁶²⁸

The summit opened on September 5, 1978, with bilateral meetings. The next day, all the three leaders gathered together and Sadat presented a new Egyptian proposal. Carter had been told secretly that it was highly negotiable, but he nonetheless predicted Begin's negative reaction. Sadat's plan insisted on full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories, the right of the Palestinian refugees to go back to their original homes, and Palestinian self-determination after a transitional period of five years, during which the West Bank would be administered by Jordan and Gaza by Egypt. He would offer peace and recognition of Israel in return.⁶²⁹ On September 7, again at a trilateral meeting, Begin objected to all the points presented by Sadat the day before. He also made clear that he was not ready to give up to Israeli settlements in Sinai, a condition on which Sadat was firm. As the atmosphere became more and more tense and negotiations were not bringing the expected results, it was decided that the two leaders would not meet directly anymore until

⁶²⁶ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.207

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.207-215; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, p.251

⁶²⁸ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.208, p.219

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.222; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.354; S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p.82

the signing of an accord. In the meantime, Carter would shuttle between the Israeli and Egyptian negotiating teams.⁶³⁰ On September 10, the American negotiating team submitted a draft of an American proposal to the Israelis. Carter and his aides had been working on it for months but it was additionally refined before presentation. It focused on Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza and sovereignty over these territories, and on the Palestinians. It once again called for a return to the 1967 borders.⁶³¹ The U.S.-Israeli meeting lasted all night but little accord was reached, so that more time was given to the Israelis to express their comments. The revised draft was then submitted to Sadat. While he consulted with his aides, Carter's focus was shifting on Sinai, and, at Dayan's request, he began working on the terms for an Egyptian-Israeli treaty. The Egyptian response to the American revised draft was one of disagreement, and Sadat suggested that, if Israel could not be more forthcoming, he would abandon the summit. Yet, Carter got his almost total approval on the Sinai proposal. Thus, negotiations proceeded on two parallel tracks, one, more defined, on Sinai led by Carter, and a more general one on the Palestinian question, led by Vance.⁶³² On September 13, the language of the text of the general framework proposal was reviewed in detail by representatives of all the three delegations. However, by the next day, it appeared as evident that settlements in Sinai were an irremovable stumbling block, and other issues stood open still. At this point, negotiations looked like they were doomed for failure. Carter, faced with such a situation, decided to change his strategy: he would "get Sadat what he most wanted, the removal of Israeli settlements and airfields from Sinai, but at the price of watering down the already rather vague draft on the West Bank and Gaza".⁶³³ On September 15, Carter therefore urged the parts to expose their final positions and to draft a joint statement to give to the press two days later, when the summit would come to an end, with or without an agreement. Shortly afterwards, Sadat informed the Americans he would leave, and his whole delegation with him. He no longer believed a solution was possible. Immediately, Carter went to him and urged him to stay. He would not stand such a failure, and he hinted that such a move would have serious repercussions on the U.S.-Egyptian relation, indeed it would end it. Furthermore, it would almost certainly be a hard blow to his

⁶³⁰ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.223-225; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.354; S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p.83

⁶³¹ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.355

⁶³² *Ibid.*, p.356; W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.228-232; S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p.83

⁶³³ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.232-236; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.357

Presidency and to their personal friendship and trust.⁶³⁴ After he was reassured that he would not be bound to the concessions made in case of failure of the talks, Sadat decided to stay. He also “agreed to exchange ambassadors” with Israel “within nine months of signing the peace treaty” and convened with Carter on further separating withdrawal on Sinai from the other fronts. At this point, pressure on Begin to relinquish the settlements in Sinai mounted, even inside the Israeli negotiating team. An accord had already been made with Washington for compensation of the loss of the airfields Israel held in the Sinai.⁶³⁵ The next day, talks focused on the Palestinian question. The issue was resolved by resorting to ambiguous wording and splitting negotiations into two tracks: one would witness Israeli-Jordanian negotiations for peace, the other Israeli discussions with the Palestinian Arabs over the status of the West Bank and Gaza. The language of Resolution 242 would de facto apply only to the first track.⁶³⁶ That same evening, Begin finally surrendered on the issue of settlements in Sinai. He agreed to withdraw the settlers upon reaching an agreement on “all other Sinai issues”.⁶³⁷ The remaining problems were resolved, or at least so was in appearance, by side letters of each part which would be attached to the final document and by using ambiguous expressions which lend themselves to various interpretations.⁶³⁸ On September 17, the last day of the talks, Carter reported to Sadat the results of the talks with Begin, which gave an encouraging impression. About the status of Jerusalem, the only issue remaining to be solved, Carter proposed that, since the two parts were irreconcilable on this point, it should be omitted in the final treaty; Sadat accepted.⁶³⁹ Carter and his team were so eager to finish the summit with a signing ceremony that they left more than one important point unclear and open to discussion. They quickly drafted the final versions of the framework for peace and for the Egyptian-Israeli peace, together with side letters.⁶⁴⁰ The two accords were signed on September 17, 1978, at the White House. In keeping with the “Framework for Peace in the Middle East”, a committee formed by Egypt, Jordan and Israel would administer the West Bank and Gaza during the five-year period of transition to autonomy. Then, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Palestinian representatives would negotiate to

⁶³⁴ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.238-239; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.358; S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p.83

⁶³⁵ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.239-242; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.358

⁶³⁶ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.244; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.359

⁶³⁷ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.245; S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p.84

⁶³⁸ See W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.245-250; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.359

⁶³⁹ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.251-252; S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.360

⁶⁴⁰ W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., pp.252-254

establish the final status of the West Bank and Gaza. According to the “Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt”, Israel would fully withdraw from Sinai, including from military bases, settlements and oil fields. Sadat had conceded that the Sinai be entirely returned in three years. He had also pledged to establish normal diplomatic relations with Israel.⁶⁴¹

The Camp David Accords were certainly one of the major foreign policy achievements of the Carter administration. They also represented, together with the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of March 1979, a turning point in U.S.-Egyptian relations. As Egypt’s policy toward Israel shifted from rivalry to cooperation, U.S. relation with Egypt also transformed. From a successful diplomatic collaboration developed economic and military assistance. In fact, as stated by Quandt, “from his discussions with Carter he [Sadat] could conclude that American support of Egypt in both spheres [military and economic] would depend on achieving a peace treaty with Israel”.⁶⁴² This statement was corroborated by Scott Kaufman, who reported that “Washington promised Egypt \$1.5 billion in military aid” following the Camp David Accords.⁶⁴³ How economic and military assistance inserted in the structure of U.S.-Egyptian relations will be dealt with in the next chapter.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.254-255 (see Appendix G for the text of the accords, pp.376-387); S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p.84; K.W. Stein, *op. cit.*, pp.252-254

⁶⁴² W.B. Quandt, *Camp David*, cit., p.255

⁶⁴³ S. Kaufman, *op. cit.*, p.85

4. The United States and Egypt: Economic Aid and Military Assistance (1974-1978)

Parallel to the forging of a diplomatic collaboration between the U.S. and Egypt that resulted in the two disengagement agreements and culminated in the 1978 Camp David Accords, the relationship between the two countries evolved in the area of foreign assistance as well. This chapter will draw a brief overview of U.S. economic and military aid to Egypt in the years 1974-1978. Some general considerations on foreign aid should be made first.

4.1. Dynamics and Purposes of Foreign Aid

Foreign aid can be defined as the transfer on concessional terms “of public resources from one government to another”, which is “sizeable and sustained over time”.⁶⁴⁴ In most cases aid is delivered through loans and grants, but it can also take the form of technical assistance or of material goods. Debt relief can be considered a kind of aid too. These various devices are usually directed to different objectives, such as complying with “budgetary and balance of payments needs in recipient countries”, promoting research activities and investment projects, but also sustaining programs of reform in the economic or political sector. Giving “technical advice and training” and “humanitarian relief” are among the main aims as well.⁶⁴⁵ Moreover, even if aid has usually development as its main explicit purpose, a political meaning is implicit in its transfer: as a matter of fact, its awarding - in particular when the supplier is a strategic country or an important international organization such as the World Bank - can account either for the donor’s approval of the political choices of the receiver, when it is given in large quantities, or for his discontent, when it is restricted in size or withdrawn.⁶⁴⁶

The purposes of foreign aid have been a matter of controversy between scholars. The main

⁶⁴⁴ C. Lancaster, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics*, Chicago-London, The University of Chicago Press, 2007, p.1. Lancaster’s description is based on the definition – usually taken as a standard – by the Development Assistance Committee (D.A.C.) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (O.E.C.D.), according to which foreign aid comprises cash, technical assistance, and commodities given by a government or international institutions that have as their main purpose the promotion of economic development and welfare of a poorer country. Such transfers are provided on concessional terms, that is, as either grants or subsidized loans. See *ibid.*, p.238

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.11-12; see also W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.4

interrogative has been whether it should be considered as an “instrument of foreign policy” or if it is “an end in itself”. If one accepts the latter view, there follows that the main purpose of the donor would be the humanitarian one, that is, to improve the living conditions of the people of the country which receives aid. However, a general consensus seems to exist on the fact that aid giving is greatly conditioned by the interests of the donor country. According to this realist view, foreign aid is conferred mainly for diplomatic purposes, in other words, for promoting national and international security, achieving “international political goals” and for economic and balance of power interests.⁶⁴⁷ As said by Morgenthau, while military aid has an explicit political component, in that it is “a traditional way by which nations buttress their alliances”,⁶⁴⁸ foreign aid for economic development is more ambiguous. If on the one hand it has been considered by many a purely economic matter, on the other hand Morgenthau stated in his research that it must be regarded as part and parcel of the political policy of the donor. It would be wrong, in fact, to assume that economic aid is self sufficient and has no consequences upon the political reality of the country which receives it. Quite on the contrary, economic aid can bring about progress in some sectors of the economy more than in others (for example, in the industry), thus distressing the country’s social fabric. Similarly, in the Cold War context, economic aid was allocated to poorly developed countries in a way as to avoid that social unrest could bring them directly in the arms of Communist influence. So, a careful assessment of “intellectual, moral, and political preconditions” should be made if success is to be expected from foreign aid for economic development.⁶⁴⁹

Yet, if diplomatic purposes have predominated in allocating foreign aid, developmental aims have been noticeable as well, and there are more: humanitarian, commercial, and cultural, for instance. It must also be stated that such categories are rarely so clearly defined. In most cases aid programs combine in themselves more than one of these goals.⁶⁵⁰

The origins of foreign aid can be traced back to the post-World War II scenario, when the United States provided aid for Greece and Turkey in 1947, and later that same year the

⁶⁴⁷ C. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p.3, p.5, p.13; H. Morgenthau, *A Political Theory of Foreign Aid*, in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol.56, No.2, Jun. 1962, p.301; see also J.H. Lebovich, *National Interests and US Foreign Aid: The Carter and Reagan Years*, in *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.25, No.2, Jun. 1988, p.115

⁶⁴⁸ H. Morgenthau, *op. cit.*, p.303

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.304-309

⁶⁵⁰ C. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, pp.13-16

Marshall Plan was instituted.⁶⁵¹ At the beginning, as we have seen, it was nothing more than a diplomatic weapon in the Cold War battle to gain allies. It was in this period that the major international instruments for aid were set up: the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (in 1943), the International Refugee Organization (in 1946) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (in 1945), that is, the World Bank. Although formally independent bodies, they actually received the greatest part of the financing from the United States, thus giving it significant leverage on fund allocation. Then, in the 1970s and 1980s, with the rise of détente and of Non Governmental Organizations (N.G.Os), the purpose of aid for development obtained increasing importance, in this way prompting to help poor people, improving their living conditions in the more indigent countries and encouraging economic growth there.⁶⁵² However, “promoting human betterment was not initially an end in itself for most aid-giving governments, but a means to diplomatic ends having to do with national and international security”.⁶⁵³ The international component of foreign aid cannot be separated, in fact, from the domestic politics of the donor country. Since the budget destined to aid giving is fixed by every single government, the elements which act to influence decision-making should be kept into consideration. Very much depends also on the political structure of a nation, on the weight carried by the executive rather than the legislative power, and on other sources of pressure, besides the ideological background.⁶⁵⁴ How domestic politics works in the United States will now be briefly examined.

4.2. Domestic Politics of Aid in the United States

As we have said before, the nature of foreign aid in the United States has been mostly that of an implement of foreign policy strategy to achieve American diplomatic goals. After the first, postwar initiatives, U.S. foreign aid was reorganized in successive phases. In 1954, the food aid program was originated when President Eisenhower approved Public Law 480 (P.L. 480, later “Food for Peace”), according to which surplus American agricultural goods were sold to foreign governments with poverty issues or shortages of food. Such assignments

⁶⁵¹ See Chapter 1, pp.31-32

⁶⁵² C. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, pp.25-40

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.60

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4, p.6

were on concessional terms, usually involving long-term credit and low interests.⁶⁵⁵ Another important initiative took place in 1957 with the creation of the Development Loan Fund, conceived to furnish credit on favorable terms to most in need countries for their development. It was a separation from the purely Cold War logic of providing aid to move a nation away from Moscow's orbit. Then, in 1958, the International Development Association was initiated. It was a "soft loan window of the World Bank", a mechanism according to which local currencies coming from debt reimbursements of U.S. loans were turned over to the World Bank, which allocated aid at very advantageous conditions.⁶⁵⁶ With the Kennedy administration, the Development Loan Fund, together with the International Cooperation Agency, were replaced by a new body, the Agency for International Development (U.S.A.I.D.). It was partly dependent on the Department of State, since its administrator was subordinate to the Secretary of State, and on the President. It was conceived to simplify the organization of aid in the U.S. by merging together most of the means of foreign assistance under the control of a single agency.⁶⁵⁷ As a matter of fact, U.S.A.I.D. was key in managing the most important aid mechanisms, namely, P.L. 480, Development Assistance, and Security Supporting Assistance, later to be renamed Economic Support Fund, as its goals were broadened to encompass not only expenditures oriented to security, but also to development.⁶⁵⁸

Yet the U.S. aid policy is not only a matter for agencies: "any assistance program requires an outlay of funds from Congress and is connected to domestic economic conditions".⁶⁵⁹

The domestic environment has indeed a powerful influence on U.S. aid allocation. Carol Lancaster identified some factors as the most relevant. The first she cited are "ideas", which she defined as the general vision a nation has, in other words, "widely shared values (based on culture, religion, ideology) about what is right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate in public and private life".⁶⁶⁰ There exists a history that the United States created in time, one of liberalism, which brings a part of the government, namely, the one on the "right", to be critical towards foreign aid. A second noteworthy element are political institutions. Decisions depend very much on the government system. In the United States, the

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.68; see also www.fas.usda.gov/excredits/foodaid/pl480/pl480.asp, accessed April 27, 2012

⁶⁵⁶ C. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p.67

⁶⁵⁷ See www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/usaidhist.html, accessed April 27, 2012

⁶⁵⁸ C. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, pp.71-74

⁶⁵⁹ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.3

⁶⁶⁰ C. Lancaster, *op. cit.*, p.18

independence of the executive power from the legislative one and the weight of Congress on directives of domestic policy are such that the latter has the last word on the President, and it is often a word of criticism, especially if foreign aid causes dissension among constituents.⁶⁶¹ In addition, interest groups influence is regarded as heavily affecting U.S. aid policy. There are groups whose interests are more related to commerce and therefore support aid for some sectors in particular, like agriculture and the industry. Then, there are those organizations more distant from government, which privilege encouragement for aid directed to humanitarian purposes. Finally, ethnic and religious groups tend to exert pressure so that a distinct country or confession receive economic attention.⁶⁶² Lancaster dealt only marginally with the distinction between parties as an agent setting the pattern of aid allocation. She does not follow the quite rooted scheme according to which left-wing parties aim at assigning funds mostly for development projects, while right-wing parties, conversely, give more weight to commercial and security interests.⁶⁶³

An interesting recent article by two scholars from Princeton University, on the contrary, corroborates the deep-seated theory, and focuses more diffusely on domestic politics dynamics which lead U.S. legislators to increase or decrease foreign aid and shape their preferences about it. As stated by Milner and Tingley,

since aid is paid for by taxes appropriated annually by Congress, preferences toward aid are continuously revealed. As with other issues, presidents have to create a legislative coalition to support their proposals for giving foreign aid. Legislators have the opportunity to voice their preferences regarding aid by voting on and offering amendments to the president's requests. Because Congress must approve foreign aid allocations every year, their votes [...] provide a powerful lens for understanding support and opposition to aid.⁶⁶⁴

Being re-election the main concern of legislators, they give special attention to their electors' preferences. Given that their decisions about foreign aid have repercussions on all

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.19-20

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, p.21

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.20-21. A study by James Lebovich on U.S. foreign aid allocation during (Democrat) President Carter and (Republican) President Reagan's administrations seems to agree with Lancaster's position. What emerges from this analysis is that security interests were prominent in the policies of both presidencies, notwithstanding their differences, and developmental motives received minor attention from both. See J.H. Lebovich, *op. cit.*, pp.115-135

⁶⁶⁴ H.V. Milner, D.H. Tingley, *The Political Economy of U.S. Foreign Aid: American Legislators and the Domestic Politics of Aid*, in *Economics & Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 2, July 2010, pp.200-201

citizens, these obviously try to manipulate aid distribution. Increase in aid affects the taxes they have to pay, because aid is a significant part of U.S. foreign policy. It becomes clear, therefore, why donor interest is a prominent component in deciding to whom and how much aid should be given. The one who pays expects to receive a profit from his actions. Consequently, according to the authors, those who own or gain from capital and services export will be more inclined to approve foreign aid: “economic aid benefits certain groups within the donor country, hence making donor governments more willing to provide aid”.⁶⁶⁵ In those districts where agricultural production is high, then, it is more probable that measures relating with food aid will be sanctioned. As far as military production is concerned, on the other hand, what seem to prevail are not economic interests, but rather geopolitical and security ones. What is more, military industrialists usually choose alternative ways of inducement, exerting pressure not on Congress but on the Pentagon.⁶⁶⁶ In keeping with these scholars, still another element that legislators bear in mind when voting foreign aid provision is the political ideology which is dominant in their districts. Contrary to Lancaster, the authors maintain that there exists a left-right dichotomy with reference to foreign aid policy. Because of their opposite views regarding government intervention in the economy and redistribution, left-wing, liberal parties are more likely to be supportive of foreign aid, while right-wing, conservative parties are more likely to oppose it. If this is true for economic and food aid, the reverse happens for military aid, as conservative ideology gives more emphasis to security.⁶⁶⁷ Other factors, somehow secondary, contribute to affect legislators’ pronouncements, such as the influence of the President, even though this seems more significant for food and military aid than for the economic one. Then, there is “economic health”, that is, the state of U.S. economy: Congress is more likely to reduce aid when such health is poor. Moreover, as acknowledged by Lancaster too, “social interests” are relevant as well, since “districts with a high percentage of foreign-born citizens”, presumably more sensitive to the foreigners’ conditions, “appear more likely to support economic aid”.⁶⁶⁸ Organized economic interests are also considerable. Private financial institutions are supportive towards foreign economic aid, as well as organized labor is,

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.203-207

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.208, p.212

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.209, pp.221-222

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.213-214, p.224

assumedly for its underlying liberal ideology.⁶⁶⁹

Thus, as one can see, the American policy of foreign aid is deeply influenced by domestic forces, and this makes it somehow predictable to know how legislators will act toward voting. In Lebovich words, “donor interests are consistently more important than recipient needs in determining foreign assistance allocations”.⁶⁷⁰

After this general overview of U.S. aid policies, we shall deal more in detail with American assistance to Egypt, in particular during the years 1974-1978.

4.3. U.S. Economic Aid Program Toward Egypt

U.S. economic assistance became a key component of U.S.-Egyptian relations during the years of Sadat. The Egyptian President soon realized, as we have seen, that only through the United States could he aspire to turn his country around and take it out of the impasse it had reached at the beginning of the 1970s. As he shifted away from the Soviet Union, expelling Soviet advisers in 1972, he approached the Western hemisphere, with a mix of economic and political aims. In fact, “first, Sadat wanted urgent American help in the peace process”, to recapture the lands Egypt had lost due to the 1967 War and finally achieve peace with Israel. “Second, Egypt hoped the United States would be able to provide economic assistance, technology, and investment to promote economic growth”.⁶⁷¹

The Egyptian economy was actually going through a period of crisis. After years when, starting from the 1955 Czech arms deal, Egypt could benefit from favorable conditions of both Soviet and American aid by capitalizing on the Cold War competition in the Third World between the two, the situation changed in 1965. In that year the U.S. decided not to reconfirm its P.L. 480 food aid assistance to Egypt because of divergences which emerged on the latter’s foreign policy.⁶⁷² The circumstances still worsened following the 1967 War, since the major sources of foreign exchange had been damaged. Tourism had plummeted, Nasser had decided to close the Suez Canal, oil refineries in the Sinai were wrecked and, together with the Sinai Peninsula, oil resources themselves had been caught by Israel.⁶⁷³ After that,

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.214-215, p.223

⁶⁷⁰ J.H. Lebovich, *op. cit.*, p.115

⁶⁷¹ W.B. Quandt, *The United States & Egypt: An Essay on Policy for the 1990s*, Washington, D.C., Brookings, 1990, p.14

⁶⁷² W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.155-163

⁶⁷³ G.A. Amin, *Egypt’s Economic Predicament: A Study in the Interaction of External Pressure, Political Folly*

Nasser privileged military interests over the country's wellbeing. He approved expenses for the rearmament in a way so as to get his revenge on Israel, leaving behind development and cutting investments. According to Galal Amin, in the years 1967-1975

Egypt witnessed one of the bleakest periods in its modern economic history. Investment declined from 17.2% of GDP in 1964-1965 to 13% during 1967-1975. [...] But even with this big reduction in investment, the balance of payments continued to deteriorate. The deficit on current account increased by 86%.⁶⁷⁴

Thus, the deficit and the already present debt service obligations brought Egypt to borrow more and more from the Western world.

At the beginning of the 1970s, Sadat had come to believe that Nasser's economic "Soviet-style" policy of tight state control and restricted private investment had made its time. So, as after the 1973 War the diplomatic process witnessed a progressive approaching of Egypt to the U.S., and a reassessment of Egyptian relations with Israel got underway, Kissinger and Nixon put into practice their strategy of using aid as a lever for Egyptian restraint in the future steps of the peace process. They were conscious of Sadat's bold project of reforming the economy and got advantage of it. The reaching of the first disengagement agreement in January 1974 was accompanied by Kissinger's emission of \$85 million to rebuild the damaged Canal zone, and in March of that same year \$250 million were called for to sponsor development projects in Egypt. These developments further pushed President Sadat along the way of economic modernization:

As Sadat had come to the conviction in the early 1970s that the United States was a more desirable political partner than the Soviet Union, he had also decided that involvement in the Western economic system was far preferable to Egypt's deepening dependence on Soviet technology and markets.⁶⁷⁵

In this way, the *Infitah* came into shape, that is, the policy of "Open Door" that Sadat formally launched in October 1974. It provided for an "opening" towards the Western capitalist market, through the liberalization of the trade system and encouraging foreign

and Social Tension in Egypt, 1960-1990, Leiden-New York-Köln, E.J. Brill, 1995, pp.3-5

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.6-7

⁶⁷⁵ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.180-181

investment, most of all in the Egyptian private sector.⁶⁷⁶ In order to do this, a very permissive law, Law 43 of 1974 for Foreign and Arab Investment and Free Zones, was passed. In line with it, foreign investors were guaranteed a more favorable taxation, their capital and profit transfers were submitted to liberal terms, and they enjoyed broad privileges as far as labor laws, regulations, and licenses were concerned.⁶⁷⁷ Even if Sadat's initiative was welcomed with favor in the United States, it was also clear to see that the Egyptian leader had headed his country towards a series of challenging reforms. Egyptian economy's problem was really a structural one.⁶⁷⁸ From a closed and strongly controlled system a "market oriented" one had to be reached. Interest rate and exchange rate policies needed revising to boost competition and growth of the economy, and the public sector too should lean towards profit. However, the world economy had to deal with inflation, which had repercussions on the Egyptian economy as well, in the prices of essential goods like bread, oil, and meat. To contain potential turmoil of the population, Sadat kept on nourishing the policy of subsidies, which nonetheless weighted heavily on the country's budget. The constant demographic increase and liberalization had led to a huge raise of imports. Egypt consumed and imported more than it exported. Thus, foreign exchange earnings remained scarce, and anyway rested largely on the four instable sources of oil, remittances from workers abroad, tourism, and profits coming from the Suez Canal, which depended on international and political factors.⁶⁷⁹ What is more, in order to finance such raise of imports, the Egyptian government turned to an enlargement of the external short-term credit, further damaging the balance of payment. Still to be faced were issues tracing their roots back to the scarce attention and lack of investments from the previous presidency, namely, the decline of the agricultural sector and of infrastructures. The bureaucracy, then, was inefficient and unqualified to manage economic modernization.⁶⁸⁰ From this point of view, the *Infitah* policy was having positive effects, since foreign capital was invested in such areas. This represented a resource for the economy and employment; "but it was "growth with little development", if by development is signified a desirable

⁶⁷⁶ D.S. Brown, *Egypt and the United States: Collaborators in Economic Development*, in *Middle East Journal*, Vol.35, No.1, Winter 1981, p.3

⁶⁷⁷ G.A. Amin, *op. cit.*, p.32

⁶⁷⁸ M.G. Weinbaum, *Politics and Development in Foreign Aid: US Economic Assistance to Egypt, 1975-82*, in *Middle East Journal*, Vol.37, No.4, Autumn 1983, p.644

⁶⁷⁹ D.S. Brown, *op. cit.*, p.4; G.A. Amin, *op. cit.*, p.7

⁶⁸⁰ G.A. Amin, *op. cit.*, pp.8-9; D.S. Brown, *op. cit.*, p.5; W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.184-185

change in economic structure”.⁶⁸¹ It is in this context of contradictions and economic transition that U.S. economic assistance to Egypt after the October War is inserted.

As has been mentioned before, the resumption American aid after the long break started in 1967 had openly political objectives connected to U.S.’ interests, that is, the opening by Sadat of a peace process with Israel and the more general stability of the Middle Eastern region. On the word of Marvin Weinbaum, “had Egypt been just another friendly country in the developing world, the level of overall economic assistance from the U.S. would probably not have exceeded \$150 to \$200 million yearly”.⁶⁸² But a partnership with Egypt was especially strategic for the U.S., and Washington recognized the need to keep Sadat’s political position strong at home by compensating diplomatic efforts with improved economic and social conditions for all.⁶⁸³ The successful outcome of the second disengagement agreement (Sinai II) in September 1975 started a flow of American economic aid which would grow more and more in the following years, making Egypt second only to Israel. The U.S. would accordingly become also Egypt’s major creditor. In point of fact, Kissinger promised to supply Egypt \$750 million yearly, in grants and loans, and \$200 million in food aid. Yet, these figures were not established on the basis of in depth studies on peculiar necessities of the country or on the ability to administer aid. At the bottom laid a purely political and symbolic consideration, the reward for a faithful ally.⁶⁸⁴ As a consequence, when aid started to arrive in 1975-1976 there was no clear idea of where and how to direct it. The task fell to officials “on the field”, U.S.A.I.D. officials and to the Cairo Embassy. As indicated by Donald Brown, director of U.S.A.I.D./Cairo until 1982, the U.S. had three essential criteria to which they conformed in their assistance programs: stability, productivity and growth, and equity. For this reason, ever since the beginning aid included various fields and was made available through different formulas. The majority of it was provided in the form of funding for development projects, with precise objectives, aimed at creating new jobs and at a long-term growth, supported by technical assistance. A substantial part was devoted also to commodity imports through the Commodity Import Program (C.I.P.). It could envision transfers of raw materials or machinery and equipment for the industry or agriculture or products for general use. For the very development of the

⁶⁸¹ G.A. Amin, *op. cit.*, pp.103-104; D.S. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp.6-7

⁶⁸² M.G. Weinbaum, *op. cit.*, p.638

⁶⁸³ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.174-175

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.184; M.G. Weinbaum, *op. cit.*, p.639

private sector of the industry and agriculture, but also to give a tangible sign of the progress brought about by the alliance with the United States, the importance of infrastructure was highlighted as well.⁶⁸⁵ Starting in 1975-1976, four power generator constructions were launched in the key cities of Suez, Ismailia, and Port Said. Moreover, distribution of electric energy was also improved in these Canal cities, damaged by the war. In Cairo and Alexandria building of grain storage facilities was underway. Projects financing a new cement plant and the innovation and extension of a textile mill in the Nile Delta were conceived to give a boost to industry too. The remaining part of funds was provided under the P.L. 480 program for food aid (mainly Title I), which included loans and grants on highly concessional terms to buy wheat and wheat flour, so that Egyptian citizens did not suffer an increase in the price of bread during the first years of Sadat's liberalizations. In effect, U.S. economic assistance was aimed at sustaining the economic transition impressed on Egypt by the government through the new policy of "Open Door", toward "a more export-oriented industrial society, supplemented by a highly productive agricultural sector".⁶⁸⁶ However, in 1977 it became explicit that the reforms Sadat had adopted were not giving the expected results. While there had been a certain development in the economy, it went against the more disadvantaged groups of society. As previously stated, the inefficient bureaucracy and corruption affected the Egyptian productive sector. Washington's economic support was continuous and the A.I.D. mission kept on working to improve communications, by building new telephonic lines; transports, by ameliorating the port of Alexandria; and urban infrastructure, by investing funds on new water and sewage systems for Cairo, Alexandria, and the Canal Zone in particular. But when the government tried to alter the subsidy system to make the market more competitive, and prices of some essential goods such as bread rose in January 1977, popular riots broke out and Sadat's stance in Egypt was severely damaged.⁶⁸⁷ It was plain to see that there existed a line the population did not tolerate to be crossed, including for the sake of the economic reform. American aid intervened to fix the situation. As a matter of fact, there had to be stability in Egypt to pursue the political objectives Carter had in mind. Thus, it follows that economic aid took a political significance since "it was seen as strengthening Sadat at home to enable him to pursue risky policies

⁶⁸⁵ D.S. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp.9-10

⁶⁸⁶ M.G. Weinbaum, *op. cit.*, p.637; W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.186-187; D.S. Brown, *op. cit.*, p.8, pp.9-10

⁶⁸⁷ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, pp.188-189; D.S. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp.10-11

abroad".⁶⁸⁸ And the course the Egyptian President had undertaken, starting from his visit to Jerusalem, was particularly risky indeed. As a result, it was necessary to offer an incentive to Sadat that would enable him to take a step as bold as the Camp David Accords in 1978, with a view to signing an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. It was for this reason that the reconciliation with Israel at Camp David was followed by the promise of a \$300 million supplement in economic aid over three fiscal years.⁶⁸⁹

Table 1: US economic assistance to Egypt, FY 1975-81 (in millions of dollars)⁶⁹⁰

	FY1975	FY1976	FY1977	FY1978	FY1979	FY1980	FY1981
I. General Economic Support incl. Commodity Import and PL480, Title I							
I	250.0	518.1	647.1	500.8	564.6	702.8	588.0
Loan	248.1	501.1	620.7	476.5	462.1	605.0	345.0
Grant	1.9	17.0	26.4	24.3	102.5	97.8	243.0
II. Infrastructure	30.0	173.0	123.1	221.0	305.8	193.1	197.0
Loan	—	74.0	81.1	146.0	—	—	—
Grant	30.0	99.0	42.0	75.0	305.8	193.1	197.0
III. Decentralization	—	—	—	1.4	2.5	127.3	55.0
IV. Transport, Industry, Commerce and Finance	79.3	255.6	63.0	180.9	54.0	70.8	80.5
Loan	44.3	159.0	42.0	179.4	—	—	—
Grant	35.0	96.6	21.0	9.5	54.0	70.8	80.5
V. Food and Agriculture	—	32.5	41.8	13.8	105.5	78.0	64.0
Loan	—	31.0	37.0	—	—	—	—
Grant	—	1.5	4.8	13.8	105.5	78.0	64.0
VI. Social Services, incl. PL 480, Title II	12.6	7.4	17.0	17.2	33.7	112.8	143.7
Total, excl. PL 480	261.2	794.9	699.2	750.7	835.0*	865.0*	829.0
PL 480 Program	110.7	191.7	192.7	183.0	226.1	340.0	328.9
Grant Total, US Economic Assistance	371.9	986.6	891.9	933.7	1,061.1	1,205.0	1,182.6

*Including Supplemental Peace Allotment.

SOURCE: US Agency for International Development, Cairo, Egypt, February 1981.

If Sadat seemed to believe that the alliance with the United States and the peace with Israel could bring material benefit for all and could solve the country's economic issues, more than one element suggested, conversely, that such expectations would be disappointed.

After the Camp David summit relations with Arab states began to deteriorate and fell

⁶⁸⁸ M.G. Weinbaum, *op. cit.*, p.641

⁶⁸⁹ W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.192; M.G. Weinbaum, *op. cit.*, p.639

⁶⁹⁰ See M.G. Weinbaum, *op. cit.*, p.638. See pp.144-148 for details

entirely apart with the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Particularly important were the consequences regarding relations with the Arab Oil Countries (A.O.C.). In fact, the United States and the West were not the only ones to supply Egypt with aid. Indeed, at the beginning the major part of investments in Egypt came from Arab countries.⁶⁹¹ In 1974 Sadat had requested to the Gulf States a great amount of financial aid to alleviate the country's trade deficit. He obtained it mostly from Saudi Arabia, Libya and Kuwait, but it still was not enough to reduce Egypt's debt burden. The Egyptian economy was in bad shape and the relatively small sums provided for specific purposes failed to satisfy the government. In 1975, though, it managed to secure a commitment from three Arab Oil Countries for long-term loans amounting to \$1.2 billion: \$600 million from Saudi Arabia, \$500 from Kuwait, and \$100 from Qatar.⁶⁹² However, as Egypt was in no condition to repay its debts, Arab aid declined significantly in the years 1976-1977. Starting from 1976 the A.O.C. assembled the Gulf Organization for the Development of Egypt (G.O.D.E.) and instituted a \$2 billion Gulf Fund. It was its manager to decide on Egyptian requests for assistance now, while until then aid had been provided bilaterally, by each country. In addition, terms of aid turned harder, as "assistance would be extended only if Egypt adopted the reforms proposed to it by the IMF".⁶⁹³ Aid was revamped in January 1977, only to help the country overcome the food riots, when the A.O.C. allocated a \$1 billion loan for that year. The already great decrease in Arab aid further diminished after November 1977 Sadat's trip to Jerusalem.⁶⁹⁴ It is necessary to underline that until 1978 Arab aid was the predominant part among those Egypt received – "about 7 million of the \$12 million total external assistance, including military aid, came from Arab sources"⁶⁹⁵ in the period 1974-1977 – and that it was it that allowed to the country's economy to recover from the liquidity crisis starting from mid-1977. The Egyptian government considered it "insignificant" because it expected much more, considering the necessities of the country and the difficult reforms already adopted.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹¹ M.G. Weinbaum, *Dependent Development and U.S. Economic Aid to Egypt*, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.18, No.2, May 1986, p.127, p.134 note 21

⁶⁹² G. Feiler, *Economic Relations Between Egypt and the Gulf Oil States: 1967-2000. Petro Wealth and Patterns of Influence*, Brighton-Portland, Sussex Academic Press, 2003, pp.15-18

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.138

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.22-25

⁶⁹⁵ M.G. Weinbaum, *Dependent Development*, cit., p.134 note 21

⁶⁹⁶ G. Feiler, *op. cit.*, pp.39-40

Table 2: Arab aid to Egypt, in million of US dollars (excluding military aid)⁶⁹⁷

Year	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Grants	700	1,243	1,002	700	350	148
Loans and deposits	175	360	1,750	285	1,243	573
Loans for projects	30	—	22	87	158	164
Total	905	1,603	2,774	1,072	1,751	885

Source: K. Ikram, *Egypt – Economic Management*, p. 351.

It is clear to see that Arab aid, like the American one, carried a strongly political connotation. Its decline was owed to the Egyptian rapprochement toward Israel, which went against the prevailing Arab opinion. Sadat's moves were believed to be "an affront to notions of Arab unity" and one more of "Egypt's attempts to achieve hegemony in the Arab world, which they wanted to avoid at all costs".⁶⁹⁸ After the Camp David Accords, Arab nations, *in primis* Iraq, decided to punish Egypt and reunited in an Arab Summit to act accordingly. At the Baghdad Conference of November 1978 it was decreed that, if Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel, it would no longer receive Arab aid, that diplomatic relations would be broken, that it would no longer be a member of the Arab League and an oil boycott would be forced upon it. After March 1979, even Saudi Arabia, which had supported Egypt until that moment, ended up boycotting Egypt like the rest of the Arab nations. Even if private A.O.C.'s investment in Egypt did not cease entirely, it was a hard blow to the country's stature in the region.⁶⁹⁹

Many Egyptian officials wondered if U.S. assistance was really doing good to the nation, if Sadat had made right economic choices. There had been a certain degree of economic growth but it could not be ascribed to structural reforms, which the President had avoided to ward off popular revolts. It depended largely from "external" factors mentioned before, namely, tourism, increase in oil prices, profits from the Suez Canal, and remittances from workers abroad. Many saw the U.S. assistance as standing in the way of development rather than stimulating it.⁷⁰⁰ Since the task of allocating and managing economic aid was entrusted to A.I.D., the greatest share of criticism was directed to it. One of the elements most called into question was the complex bureaucracy that slowed down the provision of funds. Before these could be actually given, in fact, a series of feasibility studies and evaluations had to be

⁶⁹⁷ See *Ibid.*, p.32

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.140

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.146-147

⁷⁰⁰ M.G. Weinbaum, *Politics and Development*, cit., p.649

completed. This happened because a thorough and extensive project concerning how to orient the Egyptian economy had not been anticipated; on the contrary, the agency's technicians moved from study to study.⁷⁰¹ Furthermore, the prevailing political character of the U.S. assistance was such that these projects were not evaluated on the basis of Egypt's domestic economy but of American foreign policy. In other words, financing towards works easily identifiable with foreign aid - public works or of postwar reconstruction - tended to be favored, while for the industrial sector and agriculture the supply of raw materials and machinery allowing progress, even if a limited and short-term one, was backed.⁷⁰² Another critic which was presented was that, in effect, economic reforms were not associated to assistance. Since the latter depended essentially from Sadat's backing for American Middle East politics, "the highly political character of the American aid commitment assures a relationship that makes fewer demands domestically and affords less leverage than many other aid sources".⁷⁰³ The U.S., therefore, could not fully transmit its values to the Egyptians. The adaptation of the American liberal doctrine to the action of U.S.A.I.D. in Egypt witnessed favor in the upper-middle class of the nation, but for the majority of the urban and rural workers it did nothing but deepening social inequality. The leftist groups in particular did not agree very often with project aid distribution.⁷⁰⁴ There was discontent not only for the structure of economic assistance but also for that of the A.I.D. mission in Cairo. With the increase of the economic commitment, the size of the mission had increased too, and part of the funds went to the financing of the high wages of these technicians and administrators. If, on the one hand, they facilitated contacts between U.S. companies and the Egyptian government or private business, on the other hand they were perceived by some as an intrusion in Egyptian economic decisions, deviating the country from its development priorities.⁷⁰⁵ Such aspect was undoubtedly a legacy of the nationalistic component inherent in the Egyptians ever since the British presence, which made them suspicious and skeptical towards foreign aid donors. Considering that "U.S. aid programs normally stipulate that concessional financing be tied to American-made products, regardless of more competitive

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.640; W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.196; W.B. Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, cit., p.42

⁷⁰² M.G. Weinbaum, *Politics and Development*, cit., pp.641-642

⁷⁰³ M.G. Weinbaum, *Dependent Development*, cit., p.120; W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.197

⁷⁰⁴ W.B. Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, cit., p.42; M.G. Weinbaum, *Dependent Development*, cit., p.129

⁷⁰⁵ W.B. Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, cit., p.43; M.G. Weinbaum, *Politics and Development*, cit., p.651; W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, p.198

prices elsewhere and irrespective of Egypt's ability to produce the same items",⁷⁰⁶ one could reasonably support this nationalistic vision.⁷⁰⁷ It should also be kept in mind that aid went hand in hand with foreign debt, which bore heavily on the economy, by expanding the current account deficit.⁷⁰⁸ And yet, it is believed that without the U.S. economic assistance the economic situation of Egypt could have been far worse. As said by Weinbaum, "there is little doubt that U.S. financial aid in the mid-1970s [...] assured critical inputs for Egypt's industry and helped the country to overcome its pressing foreign currency reserve problems". Notwithstanding the negative repercussions it might have had on the U.S.-Egyptian relationship, striking a balance one could state that American aid favored the Egyptian economy's development.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁶ M.G. Weinbaum, *Dependent Development*, cit., p.121, p.125

⁷⁰⁷ W.B. Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, cit., p.6

⁷⁰⁸ See G.A. Amin, *op. cit.*, pp.37-39

⁷⁰⁹ M.G. Weinbaum, *Dependent Development*, cit., p.121

U.S. Economic Commitments to Egypt: FY 1975-1981 (Millions of Dollars as of November 15, 1981)

	L/G	FY 1975	FY 1976*	FY 1977	FY 1978	FY 1979	FY 1980	FY 1981
I. GENERAL ECONOMIC SUPPORT		250.0	518.1	647.1	500.85	564.6	702.8	601.0
A. Balance of Payments (Sub-Total)		248.1	501.1	620.7	476.5	547.1	660.0	588.0
Commodity Import Program	L	(150.0)	(315.0)	(440.0)	(300.0)	(250.0)	(280.0)	(70.0)
Commodity Import Program	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(85.0)	(55.0)	(230.0)
PL-480 Title I	L	(98.1)	(186.1)	(180.7)	(176.5)	(212.1)	(325.0)	(275.0)
B. Development Planning		1.9	17.0	26.4	24.35	17.5	42.8	13.0
Technical and Feasibility Studies	G	(0.9)	(15.0)	(18.0)	(12.0)	(5.0)	(6.0)	(8.0)
Technology Transfer and Workforce Development	G	(1.0)	(2.0)	(4.5)	(4.0)	(10.0)	(6.0)	(5.0)
Applied Science and Technology Research	G	(—)	(—)	(3.9)	(4.2)	(—)	(16.3)	(—)
Development Planning Studies	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(3.8)	(—)	(12.0)	(—)
Sinai Planning Studies	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(2.5)	(2.5)	(—)
Review of U.S. Assistance to Egypt	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(0.35)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Summary: Loan Component		248.1	501.1	620.7	476.5	462.1	605.0	345.0
Grant Component		1.9	17.0	26.4	24.35	102.5	97.8	243.0

Source for tables I-VI: W.J. Burns, *op. cit.*, Appendix 4

	L/G	FY 1975	FY 1976*	FY 1977	FY 1978	FY 1979	FY 1980	FY 1981
		30.0	173.0	123.01	221.0	305.8	193.1	276.0
II. INFRASTRUCTURE								
Electric Power Distribution Equipment	G	(30.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Ismailia Electric Power Plant	G	(—)	(99.0)	(42.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
National Energy Control Center	L/G	(—)	(24.0)	(—)	(17.0)	(—)	(2.5)	(—)
Gas Turbines Generators (Helwan/Talkha)	L	(—)	(50.0)	(19.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Urban Electric Power Distribution	L/G	(—)	(—)	(17.01)	(20.9)	(—)	(10.0)	(—)
Cairo Water System	L	(—)	(—)	(30.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(31.0)
Alexandria Sewerage I	L	(—)	(—)	(15.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Alexandria Sewerage System Expansion	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(87.3)	(—)	(—)
Cairo Sewerage	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(25.0)	(—)	(—)	(74.1)
Canal Cities Water and Sewage Systems	L/G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(60.0)	(36.0)	(—)	(—)
Telecommunications I, II, III	L/G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(40.0)	(80.0)	(80.0)	(—)
Low-Cost Housing and Community Upgrading	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(50.0)	(—)	(28.1)	(1.9)
Shoubra Power Thermal Electric Plant	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(100.0)	(—)	(90.0)
Summary: Loan Component		—	74.0	81.01	146.0	—	—	—
Grant Component		30.0	99.0	42.0	75.0	305.0	193.1	276.0
III. DECENTRALIZATION								
Decentralization Support Fund					1.4	2.5	127.3	94.0
Development Decentralization	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(50.0)	(—)
Basic Village Services	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(1.4)	(2.5)	(7.3)	(15.0)
Neighborhood Urban Services	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(70.0)	(—)
Provincial Cities	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(20.0)
								(20.0)

	L/G	FY 1975	FY 1976*	FY 1977	FY 1978	FY 1979	FY 1980	FY 1981
IV. TRANSPORTATION, INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND FINANCE								
		35.0	255.6	21.0	180.9	54.0	70.8	80.5
Suez Canal Rehabilitation	G	(22.0)	(2.6)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Road Building Equipment	G	(10.0)	(4.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Cargo Handling Equip. (Alexandria Port)	L	(—)	(31.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Suez Cement Plant	G	(—)	(90.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(10.0)	(—)
Mahalla Textile Plant Rehabilitation	L	(—)	(96.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Development Industrial Bank I	L/G	(—)	(32.0)	(—)	(2.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Hydrographic Survey for Suez Canal	G	(—)	(—)	(8.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Port Saïd Salines Production Plant	G	(—)	(—)	(13.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Suez Port Development	L	(—)	(—)	(—)	(30.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Industrial Production	L/G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(53.9)	(16.0)	(25.0)	(50.0)
Quattamiya Cement Plant	L	(—)	(—)	(—)	(95.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Private Investment Encouragement Fund	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(33.0)	(—)	(—)
Private Sector Feasibility Studies	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(5.0)	(—)	(—)
Vehicle Maintenance Training	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(4.5)	(—)
Industrial Productivity Improvement	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(8.5)	(30.5)
Mineral, Petroleum and Groundwater Assessment	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(20.7)	(—)
Tax Administration	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(2.1)	(—)
Helicopter Transfer	G	(3.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(2.1)	(—)
Summary: Loan Component		35.0	159.0	21.0	171.4	54.0	70.8	80.5
Grant Component			96.6		9.5			

		L/G	FY 1975	FY 1976*	FY 1977	FY 1978	FY 1979	FY 1980	FY 1981
			44.3	32.5	83.84	13.8	105.5	78.0	64.0
V. FOOD AND AGRICULTURE									
Grain Storage Facilities	L	(44.3)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
PVC Pipe Drainage	L	(—)	(31.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Water Use and Management	G	(—)	(1.5)	(0.8)	(1.5)	(—)	(3.2)	(—)	(6.0)
Canal Dredging Equipment	L/G	(—)	(—)	(26.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Food Grain/Veg. Oil Storage and Dist. Factory	L	(—)	(—)	(42.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Irrigation Equipment	L/G	(—)	(—)	(11.0)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(8.0)	(—)
Agricultural Development Systems	G	(—)	(—)	(1.2)	(3.8)	(—)	(7.9)	(—)	(—)
Poultry Improvement	G	(—)	(—)	(0.47)	(3.5)	(—)	(0.6)	(—)	(8.0)
Rice Research and Training	G	(—)	(—)	(2.37)	(1.5)	(—)	(5.9)	(—)	(12.0)
Aquaculture Development	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(3.5)	(—)	(—)	(24.0)	(—)
Major Cereals	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(30.0)	(17.0)	(—)
Small Farmer Production	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(25.0)	(—)	(—)
Agriculture Cooperative Development	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(5.0)	(—)	(—)
Small Scale Agriculture Activities	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(1.7)	(—)	(—)
Agricultural Mechanization	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(21.0)	(19.0)	(—)
Agricultural Management Development	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(5.0)	(—)
Agricultural Data Collection and Analysis	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(5.0)	(—)
Irrigation Management Systems	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(38.0)
Summary: Loan Component		44.3	31.0	79.0	—	—	—	—	—
Grant Component			1.5	4.84	13.8	105.5	78.0	64.0	

VI. SOCIAL SERVICES		L/G	FY 1975	FY 1976*	FY 1977	FY 1978	FY 1979	FY 1980	FY 1981
			12.6	7.4	17.0	17.2	33.7	112.8	165.5
Strengthen Rural Health Delivery System									
Family Planning	G	(—)	(1.8)	(—)	(1.8)	(4.2)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Integrated Social Work Training Centers	G	(—)	(—)	(4.0)	(6.0)	(6.5)	(10.0)	(18.5)	(18.5)
Urban Health Delivery	G	(—)	(—)	(1.0)	(1.5)	(1.5)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Peace Fellowships Program	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(5.0)	(20.3)	(12.0)	(12.0)
Suez Canal Univ.—Fac. of Medicine	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(30.0)	(24.0)	(24.0)
University Linkages	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(2.7)	(—)	(—)
Control of Diarrheal Diseases	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(27.5)	(—)	(—)
Basic Education	G	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)	(26.0)
PL-480 Title II ^a	G	(12.6)	(5.6)	(12.0)	(6.5)	(14.0)	(15.0)	(—)	(39.0)
TOTAL A.I.D. ASSISTANCE (Excluding PL-480 Program)		261.2	794.9	699.25	750.75	835.0 ^c	865.0 ^d	829.0	
PL-480 PROGRAM		110.7	191.7	192.7	183.0	226.1	340.0	306.0	
GRAND TOTAL U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE ^b		371.9	986.6	891.95	933.75	1,061.1	1,205.0	1,135.0	

* Includes Interim Quarter
L = Loan; G = Grant
^a Includes Estimated Ocean Freight Costs
^b Does Not Include Egyptian Pound Grants
^c Includes \$85 Million Supplemental Peace Allotment
^d Includes \$55 Million Supplemental Peace Allotment

4.4. U.S. Security Assistance to Egypt

As we have mentioned earlier, ever since the Second World War the U.S. established its security assistance in a “Cold War approach”, that is, as a tool of foreign policy meant to resist and oppose Soviet influence and win allies. Military assistance, therefore, shared much of the objectives of the economic assistance, but had more to do with heightening the U.S. national security. In fact, by arming regional friendly countries, the U.S. could confer them more responsibility for assuring stability in their respective realities. Moreover, it allowed them to be protected against invasions, or to take active part in peace-keeping, thus relieving the superpower from direct intervention.⁷¹⁰ This paradigm can be spotted also in the U.S.-Egyptian relations. Although full fledged U.S. military assistance to Egypt began after 1974-1978, which is the period this work focuses on, it will be no less interesting to see how it developed.

In actual fact, the first arms started to arrive already in 1975, at a time when Sadat had disassociated his country from the Soviet Union, and the peace process with Israel had reached a critical point. As has been said in the previous chapter, after the signing of “Sinai II” Egypt purchased six C-130 Hercules transport air planes.⁷¹¹ To this sale followed another in September 1977, consisting of additional fourteen C-130 transport aircraft, for a value of \$184.4 million, and remotely piloted drones, for \$66.5 million. As the preceding one, the deal was supposed to compensate for the Egyptian loss of Soviet military supplies as well as to reinforce Egypt’s partnership in the U.S.’ diplomatic activities in the Middle East.⁷¹² Then, in the first months of 1978, another important step was taken with the sale of fifty F-5Es fighter aircraft to Egypt, after the disputed debate that brought President Carter to link arms sales to Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia in a package deal.⁷¹³ That same year it was initiated the International Military Education and Training program (I.M.E.T.), which provided grants to Egyptian students for military tutoring and instruction from American teachers.⁷¹⁴ The I.M.E.T. grant for 1978 was of \$0.2 million, but figures went increasing during the following

⁷¹⁰ J.H. Lebovich, *op. cit.*, pp.117-118

⁷¹¹ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p.307

⁷¹² “Statement by Assistant Secretary of State Atherton on arms sale to Egypt”, September 15, 1977, at www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1977-1979/46+Statement+by+Assistant+Secretary+of+State+Ather.htm?DisplayMode=print, accessed May 10, 2012

⁷¹³ S.L. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, pp.346-349

⁷¹⁴ See www.dsca.osd.mil/home/international_military_education_training.htm, accessed May 10, 2012

years.⁷¹⁵ The real turning point in U.S. military assistance to Egypt, however, came in 1979, when the signing of the Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt took place.

Already in April 1977 Carter had suggested Sadat that “only if Egyptian-Israeli relations became strong” could his nation aspire to develop into a partner on the same level of economic and military assistance of Israel.⁷¹⁶ Following the Peace Treaty with Israel the U.S. openly declared it was ready to expand its “security relationship with Egypt with regard to the sales of military equipment and services and the financing of, at least a portion of those sales”.⁷¹⁷ As a consequence, through the Foreign Military Sales (F.M.S.) program the Camp David military aid loan was agreed, consisting of a \$1500 million credit to buy American weapons.⁷¹⁸ It is clear, therefore, that U.S. security assistance came as a reward, so that Egypt was compensated for backing the peace process, and was stimulated to continue on the same foreign policy line. Never could Egypt have received such a quantity of arms credits had it not been at peace with Israel. According to Duncan Clarke, there were “strong domestic political forces in the United States” whose primary interest in foreign policy was the safeguard of Israel’s security. They believed that military assistance to Egypt was paramount in order to ensure its cohesion to the 1979 Peace Treaty. There follows that “aid to Egypt [...] is largely derivative of aid to Israel”.⁷¹⁹ This connection was such that U.S.-Egyptian military relations were particularly subject to Israel’s influence. They were completely based on peaceful relations between the countries, since it was the “pro-Israel” lobbies and interest groups who put pressure on Congress so that a majority of members approved aid to Egypt. The Egyptians, on the contrary, lacked instruments of domestic persuasion in the U.S.. On the one hand the intrinsic connection of Israel with the U.S. security assistance to Egypt was positive, since it ensured that aid was approved by Congress for the internal dynamics just described. But on the other hand, this was considered to be an element of friction in the relationship with the U.S..⁷²⁰ From the start, in fact, the Egyptians complained about the excessive inequality in the assistance they received compared to Israel. The latter was allowed to spend military funds in its own market rather than in the

⁷¹⁵ See J.M. Sharp, “Egypt, Background and U.S. Relations”, CRS Report for Congress, May 12, 2009, p.33 at www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA501061, accessed May 10, 2012

⁷¹⁶ W.B. Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, cit., pp.8-9

⁷¹⁷ J.M. Sharp, *op. cit.*, p.6

⁷¹⁸ W.B. Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, cit., p.32 and p.76 table A-1

⁷¹⁹ D.L. Clarke, *US Security Assistance to Egypt and Israel: Politically Untouchable?*, in *Middle East Journal*, Vol.51, No.2, Spring 1997, p.202

⁷²⁰ W.B. Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, cit., pp.9-10, p.32; D.L. Clarke, *op. cit.*, p.209, p.204

U.S., something Egypt could not do. Moreover, the U.S. Department of Defense financed many defense programs of Israel; in sum, aid had far less strings attached than that directed to Egypt.⁷²¹ This has attracted criticism from many in the Arab country, who saw its sovereignty in danger.

However, it cannot be denied that U.S. security assistance was a mean of support for Sadat. It consented him to provide evidence that the separation from Moscow “would not be detrimental to Egypt’s security or to the prestige of the armed forces”, on which the regime rested.⁷²² By 1979, a series of patterns, of dynamics and dilemmas had settled in the U.S.-Egyptian relationship, which made of Egypt a landmark for the American Middle East policy.

⁷²¹ D.L. Clarke, *op. cit.*, p.201 note 5

⁷²² W.B. Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, cit., p.34

Conclusion

As far as the twentieth century is concerned, one could definitely say that the frame of reference of international relations was represented by the antagonism which affected the United States-Soviet Union's relationship.⁷²³ In the examination of the process which led to the building and consolidation of the partnership between Egypt and the United States from the 1950s to the beginning of the 1980s, and in particular in the second half of the 1970s, what emerged from this work is that a Cold War game of alliances and interests for stability in the Middle East were the guidelines along which it developed.

Initially, the two countries were in disagreement over foreign policy affairs. In the 1950s, Egypt's centrality in the Arab world was growing and its leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, needed a supplier of modern weaponry to keep the nation strong. Although Nasser declared to be "non-aligned", the conditions attached to U.S. assistance, which clashed against the determination for absolute independence of the Egyptian leader, led him to seek help from the Soviet Union. Quite evidently, he knew how to play the superpowers off against each other to his advantage. As a matter of fact, Egypt became a client state of the U.S.S.R., and the situation did not change until when, moved by the various motivations we have seen, in 1972 the new Egyptian President Sadat decided in favor of an alignment swap. From this point on, Sadat, Kissinger, and later Carter, were the relevant actors for the construction of a strategy of collaboration for stability in the Middle East, and for the security of Israel.

The first contacts between Sadat and Kissinger, as was explained in chapters two and three, were designed to make of the U.S. the only broker of an Arab-Israeli peace, after the 1973 October War. Despite the public declarations of both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. about the mutual commitment to consultation and collaboration, and not to intervene unilaterally on regional conflicts scenarios, after the failure of the Geneva Conference the negotiations between the parts were handled almost entirely by the American Secretary of State. He ensured that the Soviet Union moved increasingly away from its previously major ally in the Middle East. In actual fact, Kissinger took advantage of the climate of international détente to anchor tightly the United States to Egypt, the most powerful Arab state. Carter, too, tried to give political stability to the region defending the Arab-Israeli peace process and committing to bring it forward. Both the American policymakers made use of incentives in

⁷²³ M. Del Pero, *op. cit.*, p.380

the form of economic and military aid, which had effect on the Egyptian President Sadat. What he had in mind, in fact, was to bring Egypt back to its role of leadership in the Arab world, even if this meant putting Arab solidarity aside. In order to do this, he needed domestic stability and peace, and he also needed to improve the fate of the economy, damaged by the wars and by the policies of the former government. Thus, if Sadat was guided by a nationalistic spirit in his pursuit of a diplomatic and economic partnership with the United States, Kissinger, and Carter after him, were not driven only by a humanitarian conviction, that is, that peace should be restored in the Middle East. Both of them, and Presidents Nixon and Ford, during whose term Kissinger operated, were well aware of the pressure exerted on American domestic politics by the “pro-Israel” lobbies and by public opinion for the safeguarding of Israel. As has been repeated on other occasions, the American political system is such that the large and powerful lobbies have a remarkable influence in Washington, weighting on Congress and on the Executive. Presidents have to keep that in consideration if they aim at being re-elected. Many and diverse forces, therefore, cooperated to create connections between Egyptian and American policymakers. Yet, it is not difficult to see that such ties depended largely on government’s components. As stated by Quandt,

The relationship has been developed at the level of the governing elites [...] but the mass of Egyptians and Americans have few dealings with one another. In brief, a change of policy at the top could quickly alter the ties between the two countries, even though there would still be constraints working in both capitals against fundamental changes in the relationship.⁷²⁴

This is maybe one of the weakest points in the alliance, which makes it vulnerable. Even the fact that it was not based on deep seated convictions or cultural bonds, but rather on geopolitical interests related to the Cold War context and to peace with Israel, suggests uncertainty for future developments.

Now that the Soviet menace has faded and the two superpowers are no longer in a competition, to what extent does Egypt’s strategic importance for the United States change? How would the bilateral relationship evolve if Egypt decided to go back to a state of tension with Israel? Would economic and military assistance be cut entirely? It has been noticed that

⁷²⁴ W.B. Quandt, *The United States & Egypt*, cit., pp.2-3

the Egyptian-Israeli one is actually a “cold” peace and that there is no closeness between the two parts: “Egyptian-Israeli relations have rarely been cordial, and most segments of the Egyptian society deeply distrust Israel”.⁷²⁵

While this is not the place to answer these questions, it appears as clear, however, that the U.S.-Egyptian relationship is one which offers opportunities for a continuous analysis. This work has tried to shed some light on its roots through the examination of the existing literature and of more or less known American documents. The issues that have been highlighted make of it a relation to be kept under observation, and tell us that this partnership should not be taken for granted.

⁷²⁵ D.L. Clarke, *op. cit.*, p.204

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