

■ Camp David Accords

Date: September 17, 1978

Authors: Anwar al-Sadat and Menachem Begin (signatories)

Geographic Region: Middle East

Genre: Treaty

Summary Overview¹

In the fall of 1978, Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat and Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, with U.S. president Jimmy Carter acting as facilitator, signed a landmark peace accord that helped establish peace between Egypt and Israel. The Egypt-Israel peace framework formed one part of the agreement and was by far the most successful; the other part was a framework for resolution of the wider Arab-Israeli conflict, mainly the political and territorial issues between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs. This part of the agreement was far less successful, as it was rejected by the Palestinians, who were given no part in the negotiations, and by the United Nations, which objected to it on several grounds.

Defining Moment

When the United Nations voted in 1947 to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab territories, the action helped foster decades of distrust, political instability, violence, and war. Shortly after Israel's declaration of independence in 1948, forces from multiple neighboring states (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan) invaded the new nation. Israel was able to repel the Arab attackers before a series of localized armistices temporarily halted the violence. Egypt retained control over the Gaza Strip, a piece of land along the southern coast of Israel, and Jordan held the West Bank along Israel's eastern border with that nation. This uneasy peace held until 1967.

In 1967, tensions rose again when Egypt moved troops into the Sinai Peninsula, which borders Israel, and compelled U.N. peacekeepers to leave. Israel responded by launching a pre-emptive strike against Egypt in June. Jordan, Syria, and Iraq then attacked Israel, and over the course of six days Israeli forces decisively defeated these powers, capturing the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. In the wake of the Six-Day War, as it became known, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 242, calling for

Israel to return the territories it had occupied in exchange for the Arab nations' recognition of Israel's territorial integrity and political independence. This resolution became the foundation of future diplomatic efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Those efforts were again interrupted by war, however, when Egypt and Syria again attacked Israel and were again repelled in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Although defeated, Egyptian and Syrian forces performed better than expected in the conflict. Egyptian president Sadat opted to use his increased prestige following the conflict to try to move toward peace with Israel. Meanwhile, in 1977, Israel elected a new prime minister, Menachem Begin, who was also interested in a peace initiative. In November of 1977, Sadat became the first Arab leader to visit Israel. In the summer of 1978, Begin returned the gesture, visiting Cairo. In September of 1978, U.S. president Jimmy Carter, recognizing the opportunity that these gestures created, invited Begin and Sadat to Camp David, a presidential retreat in Maryland. Located a safe distance from the lights and publicity of Washington, D.C., Camp David would provide the three leaders with the seclusion needed for the frank exchange of ideas necessary to broker peace.

Author Biographies

Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat was born in Mit Abu al-Kawm, Egypt, on December 25, 1918. He played an active role in the fight against British dominance in Egypt, helping to depose the pro-British King Farouk in 1952. He became President Gamal Abdel Nasser's vice president in 1969, and when Nasser died the following year, Sadat became president. During his tenure, he loosened Egypt's ties to the Soviet Union and drew it closer to the United States. A strong proponent of the Middle East peace process, Sadat was assassinated in 1981 by Egyptian extremists who were opposed to his peace initiatives.

Menachem Wolfvitch Begin was born on August 16, 1913, in Brest-Litovsk in the Russian Empire (now in Belarus). Begin was a major figure in the Betar Zionist



From left to right: Menachem Begin, Jimmy Carter and Anwar Sadat in Camp David. Fitz-Patrick, Bill, photographer
- Jimmy Carter Library: Carter White House Photographs Collection, 01/20/1977 - 01/22/1981

youth movement before World War II. During the war, he joined a Soviet-backed Polish army unit that was sent to Palestine, where he was released from service and joined the fight for an independent Israel. After in-

dependence, he rose in Israeli politics, becoming chairman of the conservative Likud party in 1973. In 1977, he became prime minister, a post he held until 1983. He died on March 9, 1992.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

The Framework for Peace in the Middle East

Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, and Menachem Begin, Prime Minister of Israel, met with Jimmy Carter, President of the United States of America, at Camp David from September 5 to September 17, 1978, and have agreed on the following framework for peace in the Middle East. They invite other parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict to adhere to it.

Preamble

The search for peace in the Middle East must be guided by the following:

The agreed basis for a peaceful settlement of the conflict between Israel and its neighbors is United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, in all its parts.

After four wars during 30 years, despite intensive human efforts, the Middle East, which is the cradle of civilization and the birthplace of three great religions, does not enjoy the blessings of peace. The people of the Middle East yearn for peace so that the vast human and natural resources of the region can be turned to the pursuits of peace and so that this area can become a model for coexistence and cooperation among nations.

The historic initiative of President Sadat in visiting Jerusalem and the reception accorded to him by the parliament, government and people of Israel, and the reciprocal visit of Prime Minister Begin to Ismailia, the peace proposals made by both leaders, as well as the warm reception of these missions by the peoples of both countries, have created an unprecedented opportunity for peace which must not be lost if this generation and future generations are to be spared the tragedies of war.

The provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the other accepted norms of international law and legitimacy now provide accepted standards for the conduct of relations among all states. To achieve a relationship of peace, in the spirit of Article 2 of the United Nations Charter, future negotiations between Israel and any neighbor prepared to negotiate peace and security with it are necessary for the purpose of carrying out all the provisions and principles of Resolutions 242 and 338.

Peace requires respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force. Progress toward that goal can accelerate movement toward a new era of reconciliation in the Middle East marked by cooperation in promoting economic development, in maintaining stability and in assuring security.

Security is enhanced by a relationship of peace and by cooperation between nations which enjoy normal relations. In addition, under the terms of peace treaties, the parties can, on the basis of reciprocity, agree to special security arrangements such as demilitarized zones, limited armaments areas, early warning stations, the presence of international forces, liaison, agreed measures for monitoring and other arrangements that they agree are useful.

Framework

Taking these factors into account, the parties are determined to reach a just, comprehensive, and durable settlement of the Middle East conflict through the conclusion of peace treaties based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 in all their parts. Their purpose is to achieve peace and good neighborly relations. They recognize that for peace to

endure, it must involve all those who have been most deeply affected by the conflict. They therefore agree that this framework, as appropriate, is intended by them to constitute a basis for peace not only between Egypt and Israel, but also between Israel and each of its other neighbors which is prepared to negotiate peace with Israel on this basis. With that objective in mind, they have agreed to proceed as follows:

West Bank and Gaza

Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the representatives of the Palestinian people should participate in negotiations on the resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects. To achieve that objective, negotiations relating to the West Bank and Gaza should proceed in three stages:

Egypt and Israel agree that, in order to ensure a peaceful and orderly transfer of authority, and taking into account the security concerns of all the parties, there should be transitional arrangements for the West Bank and Gaza for a period not exceeding five years. In order to provide full autonomy to the inhabitants, under these arrangements the Israeli military government and its civilian administration will be withdrawn as soon as a self-governing authority has been freely elected by the inhabitants of these areas to replace the existing military government. To negotiate the details of a transitional arrangement, Jordan will be invited to join the negotiations on the basis of this framework. These new arrangements should give due consideration both to the principle of self-government by the inhabitants of these territories and to the legitimate security concerns of the parties involved. Egypt, Israel, and Jordan will agree on the modalities for establishing elected self-governing authority in the West Bank and Gaza. The delegations of Egypt and Jordan may include Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza or other Palestinians as mutually agreed. The parties will negotiate an agreement which will define the powers and responsibilities of the self-governing authority to be exercised in the West Bank and Gaza. A withdrawal of Israeli armed forces will take place and there will be

a redeployment of the remaining Israeli forces into specified security locations. The agreement will also include arrangements for assuring internal and external security and public order. A strong local police force will be established, which may include Jordanian citizens. In addition, Israeli and Jordanian forces will participate in joint patrols and in the manning of control posts to assure the security of the borders.

When the self-governing authority (administrative council) in the West Bank and Gaza is established and inaugurated, the transitional period of five years will begin. As soon as possible, but not later than the third year after the beginning of the transitional period, negotiations will take place to determine the final status of the West Bank and Gaza and its relationship with its neighbors and to conclude a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan by the end of the transitional period. These negotiations will be conducted among Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the elected representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. Two separate but related committees will be convened, one committee, consisting of representatives of the four parties which will negotiate and agree on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza, and its relationship with its neighbors, and the second committee, consisting of representatives of Israel and representatives of Jordan to be joined by the elected representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza, to negotiate the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan, taking into account the agreement reached in the final status of the West Bank and Gaza. The negotiations shall be based on all the provisions and principles of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242. The negotiations will resolve, among other matters, the location of the boundaries and the nature of the security arrangements. The solution from the negotiations must also recognize the legitimate right of the Palestinian peoples and their just requirements. In this way, the Palestinians will participate in the determination of their own future through:

The negotiations among Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza to agree on the final status of the

West Bank and Gaza and other outstanding issues by the end of the transitional period.

Submitting their agreements to a vote by the elected representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza.

Providing for the elected representatives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza to decide how they shall govern themselves consistent with the provisions of their agreement.

Participating as stated above in the work of the committee negotiating the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan.

All necessary measures will be taken and provisions made to assure the security of Israel and its neighbors during the transitional period and beyond. To assist in providing such security, a strong local police force will be constituted by the self-governing authority. It will be composed of inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. The police will maintain liaison on internal security matters with the designated Israeli, Jordanian, and Egyptian officers.

During the transitional period, representatives of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and the self-governing authority will constitute a continuing committee to decide by agreement on the modalities of admission of persons displaced from the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, together with necessary measures to prevent disruption and disorder. Other matters of common concern may also be dealt with by this committee. Egypt and Israel will work with each other and with other interested parties to establish agreed procedures for a prompt, just and permanent implementation of the resolution of the refugee problem.

Egypt-Israel

Egypt-Israel undertake not to resort to the threat or the use of force to settle disputes. Any disputes shall be settled by peaceful means in accordance with the provisions of Article 33 of the U.N. Charter.

In order to achieve peace between them, the parties agree to negotiate in good faith with a goal of concluding within three months from the signing of the Framework a peace treaty between them while inviting the other parties to the conflict to proceed si-

multaneously to negotiate and conclude similar peace treaties with a view the achieving a comprehensive peace in the area. The Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel will govern the peace negotiations between them. The parties will agree on the modalities and the timetable for the implementation of their obligations under the treaty.

Associated Principles

Egypt and Israel state that the principles and provisions described below should apply to peace treaties between Israel and each of its neighbors—Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Signatories shall establish among themselves relationships normal to states at peace with one another. To this end, they should undertake to abide by all the provisions of the U.N. Charter. Steps to be taken in this respect include:

- full recognition;
- abolishing economic boycotts;
- guaranteeing that under their jurisdiction the citizens of the other parties shall enjoy the protection of the due process of law.

Signatories should explore possibilities for economic development in the context of final peace treaties, with the objective of contributing to the atmosphere of peace, cooperation and friendship which is their common goal.

Claims commissions may be established for the mutual settlement of all financial claims. The United States shall be invited to participate in the talks on matters related to the modalities of the implementation of the agreements and working out the timetable for the carrying out of the obligations of the parties.

The United Nations Security Council shall be requested to endorse the peace treaties and ensure that their provisions shall not be violated. The permanent members of the Security Council shall be requested to underwrite the peace treaties and ensure respect of the provisions. They shall be requested to conform their policies and actions with the undertaking contained in this Framework.

*For the Government of Israel: Menachem Begin
For the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt:
Muhammed Anwar al-Sadat
Witnessed by: Jimmy Carter, President of the United
States of America*

Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel

In order to achieve peace between them, Israel and Egypt agree to negotiate in good faith with a goal of concluding within three months of the signing of this framework a peace treaty between them: It is agreed that:

The site of the negotiations will be under a United Nations flag at a location or locations to be mutually agreed.

All of the principles of U.N. Resolution 242 will apply in this resolution of the dispute between Israel and Egypt.

Unless otherwise mutually agreed, terms of the peace treaty will be implemented between two and three years after the peace treaty is signed.

The following matters are agreed between the parties:

the full exercise of Egyptian sovereignty up to the internationally recognized border between Egypt and mandated Palestine;

the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the Sinai;

the use of airfields left by the Israelis near al-Arish, Rafah, Ras en-Naqb, and Sharm el-Sheikh for civilian purposes only, including possible commercial use only by all nations;

the right of free passage by ships of Israel through the Gulf of Suez and the Suez Canal on the basis of the Constantinople Convention of 1888 applying to all nations; the Strait of Tiran and Gulf of Aqaba are international waterways to be open to all nations for unimpeded and nonsuspendable freedom of navigation and overflight;

the construction of a highway between the Sinai and Jordan near Eilat with guaranteed free and

peaceful passage by Egypt and Jordan; and the stationing of military forces listed below.

Stationing of Forces

No more than one division (mechanized or infantry) of Egyptian armed forces will be stationed within an area lying approximately 50 km. (30 miles) east of the Gulf of Suez and the Suez Canal. Only United Nations forces and civil police equipped with light weapons to perform normal police functions will be stationed within an area lying west of the international border and the Gulf of Aqaba, varying in width from 20 km. (12 miles) to 40 km. (24 miles).

In the area within 3 km. (1.8 miles) east of the international border there will be Israeli limited military forces not to exceed four infantry battalions and United Nations observers.

Border patrol units not to exceed three battalions will supplement the civil police in maintaining order in the area not included above.

The exact demarcation of the above areas will be as decided during the peace negotiations. Early warning stations may exist to insure compliance with the terms of the agreement.

United Nations forces will be stationed:

in part of the area in the Sinai lying within about 20 km. of the Mediterranean Sea and adjacent to the international border, and in the Sharm el-Sheikh area to insure freedom of passage through the Strait of Tiran; and these forces will not be removed unless such removal is approved by the Security Council of the United Nations with a unanimous vote of the five permanent members.

After a peace treaty is signed, and after the interim withdrawal is complete, normal relations will be established between Egypt and Israel, including full recognition, including diplomatic, economic and cultural relations; termination of economic boycotts and barriers to the free movement of goods and people; and mutual protection of citizens by the due process of law.

Interim Withdrawal

Between three months and nine months after the signing of the peace treaty, all Israeli forces will withdraw east of a line extending from a point east of El-Arish to Ras Muhammad, the exact location of this line to be determined by mutual agreement.

*For the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt:
Muhammed Anwar al-Sadat
For the Government of Israel: Menachem Begin
Witnessed by: Jimmy Carter, President of the United
States of America*

Document Analysis

The first part of the Camp David Accords is an ambitious “Framework for Peace in the Middle East.” It begins by recognizing U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 as the basis for peace negotiations, and by further acknowledging that “peace requires respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area.” This framework, it is hoped, will not just lead to peace between the signatories, Israel and Egypt, but “between Israel and each of its other neighbors which is prepared to negotiate peace with Israel on this basis.”

Following this preamble, the document attempts to address the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict: the fate of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, whose Arab inhabitants had essentially been stateless refugees ever since the establishment of Israel in 1948, and who had been living under Israeli occupation since 1967. Therefore, it is proposed that Egypt and Israel (as well as Jordan and representatives of the Palestinians themselves, although neither is a party to this agreement) work together to facilitate the granting of political autonomy to Gaza and the West Bank, over a transitional period of five years. As an independent Palestinian government is negotiated and elected, the Israeli occupation is to end, with Israeli forces withdrawn and mutual security arrangements put in place.

The second part of the agreement is a “Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel.” This treaty, with an ambitious timeline for conclusion of three months following the signing of this document, is to involve the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai and the peninsula’s return to Egyptian sovereignty. Israeli military airfields established in the Sinai are to be repurposed for civilian use, and the Suez Canal and other waterways around the

Sinai are to be open to international travel. Detailed provisions are also laid out for the stationing of military forces a safe distance from sensitive borders. The United Nations is to maintain a peacekeeping presence near some key waterways to ensure they remain open. Once all of these provisions are implemented, Egypt and Israel are to establish normal diplomatic relations, “including full recognition, including diplomatic, economic and cultural relations; termination of economic boycotts and barriers to the free movement of goods and people; and mutual protection of citizens by the due process of law.”

Essential Themes

The second part of the Camp David Accords—the part that applied exclusively to the two signatories—was carried out in full: the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty was signed the following year, 1979, again by Sadat and Begin in the presence of Carter, in Washington, D.C. Egypt was the first Arab state to conclude a peace agreement with Israel, and the treaty remains in force. In recognition of this accomplishment, Begin and Sadat were jointly awarded the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize. Carter received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002, and the Camp David Accords were listed among his accomplishments.

However, the first part of the agreement, aimed at resolving the status of the Palestinian Arabs, was roundly rejected by all the parties not present, including the Palestinians themselves and all the other Arab states. In fact, the United Nations itself rejected this portion of the agreement, as it was concluded without consulting the people it most directly affected, the Palestinians, thus violating the principle of self-determination, as well as a number of U.N. resolutions regarding the Palestinian issue. The other Arab states were outraged

that Egypt had broken the united Arab front against Israel, and in 1979 Egypt's membership in the Arab League was suspended (it was readmitted in 1989). Sadat himself paid the ultimate price at the hands of Arab extremists when he was shot to death during a military parade in 1981 by members of his own presidential guard. However, Sadat also showed that peace with Israel was possible, and despite Jordan's umbrage at being named in the Camp David Accords, that country became the second Arab state to conclude peace with Israel, in 1994. The issue of Palestinian statehood, however, remains as unresolved and fraught with violence in the twenty-first century as it was in the twentieth.

—Michael P. Auerbach, MA

Bibliography and Additional Reading

- Feron, James. "Menachem Begin, Guerilla Leader Who Became Peacemaker." *New York Times*. New York Times, 10 Mar. 1992. Web. 30 Mar. 2016.
- Friedman, Uri. "The 'Peace Process': A Short History." *Foreign Policy*. Foreign Policy, 27 Feb. 2012. Web. 30 Mar. 2016.
- Pace, Eric. "Anwar el-Sadat, the Daring Arab Pioneer of Peace with Israel." *New York Times*. New York Times, 7 Oct. 1981. Web. 30 Mar. 2016.
- "Peace Talks at Camp David, September 1978." PBS. WGBH, n.d. Web. 30 Mar. 2016.
- Pressman, Jeremy. "Explaining the Carter Administration's Israeli-Palestinian Solution." *Diplomatic History* 37.5 (2013): 1117–47. Print.