

**Homemade:**

**Domestic Bids and the Craft of Jimmy Carter's Israeli-Egyptian Diplomacy**

By

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On the basis of this thesis and of  
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## **Introduction: Realities of U.S. Foreign Policy Making**

Any careful study of policy making shows just how arbitrary the process can and may be, as policy makers' agendas frequently clash with equally powerful, competing interests over substantive issues. Studying the personalities and interests that factor into policy outcomes has often led scholars to the conclusion that there was and still is no single template for U.S. foreign policy making<sup>1</sup>. Hindsight may allow us to see policies as contained entities, unencumbered by domestic factors and disparate interests. The problem herein is limiting the focus to policy outcomes. The results of messy diplomacy will always seem more complete and sensible than the processes that bring it into being. Understanding both the diplomatic process *and* its policy outcome is necessary for any thorough assessment of American foreign policy.

The diplomatic range of vision in post-1945 foreign policy was confined to the ideological and strategic horizons of the U.S. relationship with the Soviet Union. American diplomacy in regions seemingly irrelevant to the Cold War conflict was in fact riddled with Cold War considerations. Foreign policy was crafted in increments and stages, all of it aimed at containing communism, at a definitive First World defeat of the Second World. In the mid-1940s, the United States began to place the purpose and practice of its foreign policy on a new track. At the end of the Second World War, with a war-torn Europe consumed with its own troubles of reconstruction and healing, the United States found itself the most powerful country in the world. The U.S. enjoyed an

economic boom during the war, pulling millions of Americans out of the Depression. Lawmakers did an about face and began focusing more of their energies on the domestic front of politics than on foreign policy. Within a few years, though, the ideological sparring between the U.S. and Soviet Union heated up and demanded more attention from Washington. The strategic and ideological conflicts of the Cold War would persist throughout the next four and a half decades. The anti-communist ideology behind the Cold War did limit the number of potential influences on policy; strategic East-West considerations trumped the strictly social, political, or economic concerns of the American electorate.

For decades, American diplomacy was often a function of the Cold War. The Cold War bridged the preexisting partisan gap between Republicans and Democrats and gave way to what is now called the 'Cold War consensus,' as both parties agreed upon the most important aspects of U.S. foreign policy- fighting communism. Policy preferences varied, from the liberal containment to the more hawkish rollback. But overall, the degree of unanimity among Washington's policy elites was more impressive than that of the discord. The strategic concerns of the U.S. were primary, and the consideration of other domestic interests was many times minimal. Impervious to interest groups, politicians enjoyed more elbow room with foreign policy; the Cold War made Washington's foreign policy decision makers less accountable to domestic interests in many cases, as the overall geopolitical health of the United States took the highest diplomatic priority.

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<sup>1</sup> The bureaucratic politics theory of foreign policy does allow for more complexity, but even that model is limited. Policy is supposed to spring from intergovernmental agency competition. This does not take into account public opinion, the media, lobbying or interest groups.

That said, there were instances when the Soviet threat appeared to be waning. If foreign policy targeted more ideologically neutral countries, the tight mold of Cold War *realpolitik* relaxed. Then, domestic concerns did indeed affect the outcome of foreign policy. There were a handful of such cases- when nations or regions actually did appear to be divorced from the East-West conflict. Some cases of post-1945 foreign policy prove to be the exceptions to the Cold War rule. President Jimmy Carter's diplomatic efforts with Egypt and Israel are good examples.

During the years Cold War conflict appeared in remission, the influence of domestic interests and the personalities central to the policy making process were critical in determining policy outcome. With its large immigrant population, U.S. policy does often reflect the politics of its ethnic and religious minorities. Also, so trade preferences may shape policy outcomes as each country that engages diplomatically with the United States is either a potential economic market, or already an established U.S.-trading partner,. Congress represents these preferences.

Even within Washington, governmental agencies are often at odds as to the correct prescription for U.S. engagement abroad<sup>2</sup>. Demanding 'themes' from foreign policy runs contrary to the idea that the making of foreign policy is a pluralist process, consonant with domestic policy making, in that policy is rarely one person's brainchild. Rather, it is often the result of an interfacing of divergent interests, each attempting to direct policy to their advantage.

From a distance, foreign policy making appears to be a unified, even apolitical political process. It is true that partisanship is abandoned in critical instances- notably when issues of national security are at stake. More often than not, though, the same

interests and opinions that divide Congress and the Executive branch of the government with respect to domestic policy also have a bearing on foreign policy. Though it is difficult to straitjacket U.S.-Israeli relations within an ideology, the 'bureaucratic political' model scheme does leave enough room for real complexity. The model views policy as the outcome of bureaucratic competition over relative power and influence<sup>3</sup>. Bureaucratic head-butting is not solely Congress and the President's game. There are divisions within the Executive branch, between the White House and State, and Defense Departments. The political divisions are evident when examining the Johnson and Carter administrations, and those between<sup>4</sup>. One particularly divisive issue has repeatedly been U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. 'The State Department has often been thought of as a bastion of pro-Arab, anti-Israeli sentiments, especially in contrast to Congress and public opinion'<sup>5</sup>. With a limited amount of power in Washington, federal bureaucratic agencies jockey for control of foreign policy. For instance, regarding Israel and the Middle East the Defense Department often fully supports Israel's conduct because it prizes the nation as being the one, U.S. strategic stronghold in the region. Israel is the satellite for the Middle East. The State Department usually opts for, not surprisingly, a more diplomatic treatment of the region, engendering a balanced approach to Arab-Israeli relations. Finally, the President has to keep in mind the one unforgiving reality of domestic politics: reelection. This may tip his favor towards Israel.

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<sup>2</sup> The classic example here is of the State and Defense Departments

<sup>3</sup> James M. McCormick. 'America's Traditions in Foreign Policy', pp. 1-31. New York: Peacock Publishers, Inc. 1998.

<sup>4</sup> William Quandt. *Decade of Decision: American Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1976*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

The goal here is to examine how, and to what extent, clashing domestic and intergovernmental interests affected Carter's peace initiatives in the Middle East. Carter's policy making regarding the Middle East fits a pluralist model of politics. Interests collided- top advisors of the Carter Administration, powerful members of congressional oversight committees (such as the Senate International Finance and Foreign Relations Committees), the Departments of State and Defense, and outside commercial and religious interest groups- and helped shape the outcome of Camp David.

What theorists of political science have recently dubbed as the 'two-level game,' is a reality of foreign policy making that has been around since the very beginning of formal diplomacy in the modern world: foreign policy is affected, even determined by domestic politics<sup>9</sup>. With little opposition, domestic lobbies may wield considerable influence over Washington policy makers. For instance, Miami's exile Cuban lobby has garnered the support of the anachronistic, congressional hawks in pursuit of stringent, anti-Castro American foreign policy. The market potential of Cuba has long been thought of as negligible, and so business elites have not been particularly vocal about an open U.S.-Cuban trade relationship and political rapport. With no real pro-Cuban lobby in the U.S., diplomatic relations with Cuba have continued to be preempted by minority domestic interests, long after the relaxation of Cold War diplomatic strictures. Recently, agricultural groups began to show interest in the Cuban market. Shortly thereafter, U.S.-Cuban relations began showing signs of improvement. In the absence of salient strategic or economic factors, foreign policy may be determined largely by smaller domestic interest groups.

Diplomatic relations with the Middle East make a fascinating study. Until the mid-1970s, U.S. and Soviet Cold War posturing throughout the region determined Cold War policies towards Arab nations. More than ideological sympathies, political connections and military sales tied nations' allegiances to one of the two sparring superpowers. The Soviet Union was soon booted from Egypt and subsequently lost its hold on other nations as well. The U.S. has long regarded the region strategically, as the oil-exporting nations of the Middle East provide a considerable amount of United States energy imports. In the early 1970s, oil-related U.S. industries reaped the benefits of burgeoning Middle East markets, awash in petrodollars, with a dramatic hike in American exports to the region. The dramatic turnaround came just a month after the 1973 Yom Kippur War with Arab oil boycott. The ensuing, four hundred percent hikes in fuel prices spawned what came to be known as the Energy Crisis, creating an inflationary tailspin that coupled shocks to U.S. production, and consequently to employment rates. The Energy Crisis, deemed 'the moral equivalent of war' by 1976 presidential candidate Jimmy Carter, forced American leadership to reassess its policy in the Middle East. Carter's approach to the Middle East is worthy of careful examination because it illuminates the intricacy of diplomacy: unconditional support for Israel in the wake of an Arab-Israeli war was counterproductive to the strategic and economic welfare of the United States. Habituated foreign policy toward the Middle East would have to be tempered, possibly reassessed, to fit the needs of the decade.

A constant moral support for Israel- a domestically-rooted phenomenon- seemed to precluded a balanced approach to the region, one encompassing a broader U.S.

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<sup>6</sup> Samuel Huntington. The main function of the 'two-level' game approach is pointing out that a politician's bottom line is reelection. This theory sufficiently covers the legislative and executive branch influences on



national interest. As Zbigniew Brzezinski, future National Security Advisor to President Carter, remarked:

‘We were trying to achieve a comprehensive solution which would be compatible with our vital interests. These interests included the preservation of Israel; however, it’s our wider interests and our strategic reading of the situation that ought to be the point of departure for shaping our policies’<sup>7</sup>.

The series of U.S.-Arab and U.S.-Israeli interactions in the 1960s and early 1970s are critical for understanding the concerns and desires of the nations that later came to the negotiating table at Camp David. Also, the history is necessary for understanding why the compelling conflicts in the Middle East were, for the United States, to move to the forefront of Carter’s diplomatic agenda. President Carter entered into office in January 1977, and brought with him democratic convictions about the conduct of American foreign policy. He can be seen not only as an apostle of Wilsonian internationalism, endorsing self-determination and democratization abroad, but as the forerunner of post-Cold War, foreign policy ideals. Later in the 1990s, with residual Cold War era concerns washed away with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was able to pursue diplomacy geared towards market reform and democratization abroad.

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policy, but its focus on electoral politics by nature fails to take interest groups into account.

<sup>7</sup> Exit Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, p. 10. Jimmy Carter Library.

## Chapter 1: A Living History and an Election

'It's (U.S. relative decline and strategic over-extension) existence was made apparent to many foreign policy elites during the 1970s by the elusiveness of victory in Vietnam, the growth of Soviet military power, the weakness of the dollar, and the rise of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)<sup>8</sup>.

Between the 1948 creation of Israel and the 1977 Carter Administration Middle East nations were either shuffling territories, alternating sovereigns, or at war. Cartographers will find the region elusive. There really is no such thing as a map of the Middle East: borders have proven to be mutable and territory interchangeable. The area most susceptible to border skirmishes has without a doubt been the outer rim of Israel, where Syria, Jordan, and Egypt share its borders.

Coincidental with the creation of the Israeli state by the United Nations in 1948 was the rapid decolonization of many countries in the region. By 1955, all countries had received their independence from European colonial rule.<sup>9</sup> Accompanying decolonization was a slow but steady rise in Arab nationalism, which found its driving engine in Cairo, under Egypt's president Gamel Abdel Nasser. General Nasser worked with neighboring Arab states Jordan and Syria to stir up support for his pan-Arabist policies. President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles were drawn into Nasser's politics by the Suez Canal issue, which came to a head in 1956 with the Egyptian general's seizure and nationalization of the important waterway from Egypt's previous colonial government, Great Britain<sup>10</sup>. The armed conflict that arose brought in numerous players:

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<sup>8</sup> David Skidmore. 'Carter and the Failure of Foreign Policy Reform'. *Political Science Quarterly*. Volume 108, Number 4. 1993-94. (p 704)

<sup>9</sup> Egypt was the last to receive independence, in 1955.

<sup>10</sup> United States and European oil imports were transported through the Canal.

Great Britain and France allied with Israel, Egypt's adversary to the west, and Eisenhower knew that if pushed Egypt would turn to the Soviet Union for assistance. Through a series of threats to Great Britain's Prime Minister Anthony Eden<sup>11</sup>, Eisenhower succeeded in getting the British-French-Israeli forces to retreat from the Suez area, just avoiding Khrushchev's involvement. Nasser proclaimed a victory<sup>12</sup>. The Egyptian president did in fact receive aid from and often communicate with Moscow. Even though Nasser was carting Arab nationalism, the United States saw Egypt's financial links to the Soviet Union as threatening. Forever thinking one step ahead, the administration pondered the likelihood of Egypt becoming a communist accessory. Eisenhower knew that there was no real communist strategem at work in the Middle East. Nevertheless, due to the president's concerns a permissive Congress passed the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957, which granted the executive the power to use military force at his discretion to help nations resist 'any country controlled by international communism'.<sup>13</sup>

The United States did see a pattern forming in the Middle East. The toppling of the Iraqi government by a pro-Nasser regime began to show a fine mimicry in Lebanon. Fervent nationalism of the kind that Nasser espoused was just as dangerous as communism: U.S. businesses abroad could be directly threatened, should governments decide to expropriate and nationalize American private property and production. The Eisenhower Doctrine came just in time for the 1958 U.S. intervention in Lebanon, an operation targeted at preventing another regime from being toppled by Nasser supporters.

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<sup>11</sup> The president's threats included cutting off oil to Great Britain and ruining the British currency. Walter LaFeber. *The American Age: US Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad: 1750 to the Present*. New York W.W. Norton & Company, 1994. (559)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

The U.S. intervention in Lebanon was a success at preempting an overthrow, but there would be an anti-American backlash throughout the Arab world because of it.

JFK tried to quell the growing anti-American sentiment in the Middle East, so Egypt (and others) would not turn to the Soviets for aid. At the same time, the president appreciated the security outpost that Israel provided for the U.S. He did not want to diminish the U.S.-Israel relationship. Nor did he want to alienate domestic Jewish supporters by pursuing an obvious even-handed approach to the region. The U.S. was an unwavering supporter of Israel. Relations with the rest of the Arab world were slightly improving, and the oil-producing nations in the region remained dependable in providing the United States with its petroleum requests. In the late 1960s, the Arab world seemed divided to the United States. Unified economic organizations like OPEC<sup>14</sup> and political organizations like the Arab League and PLO<sup>15</sup> would make the region itself a formidable diplomatic presence, one to which the United States would have to respond. But the United States would only learn this after a series of surprises and setbacks. Conveniently for Kennedy and Johnson, there existed other foreign policy problems demanding attention from the White House. More critical issues- mainly the war in Vietnam- pushed the Middle East largely out of sight. In fact, there really was no pressing strategic reason for U.S. involvement in the region

The 1967 War, often called the Six Day War<sup>16</sup>, was a critical turning point for both the intra-regional dynamic of the Middle East and the United States diplomatic position in the area. In six days, the Israeli army succeeded in securing the four

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp. 563-566.

<sup>14</sup> Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

<sup>15</sup> Palestinian Liberation Organization

territories it had set out to take: Syria's Golan Heights, Jordan's West Bank, Egypt's Sinai peninsula, and the Gaza Strip. Any seizing of territory is an act of belligerence, but given the proximity of the four countries, all sharing borders, the annexed territories were also incredibly important security zones<sup>17</sup>. When the war was 'over' the United Nations issued a report that detailed the template for peacemaking that would be used in all future negotiations between Israel and the Arab world. Resolution 242, sometimes called the 'territory for peace' settlement, was in its most simple reading an international suggestion that Israel withdrawal from occupied territories, and that in the Arab world recognize the state of Israel<sup>18</sup>. The principle of Resolution 242 was clear, but a lack of details made the guidelines foggy, leaving ample room for interpretation. The withdrawal was, according to the report, not a prerequisite for Arab recognition. The deliberate deletion of the full withdrawal requirement would, as the Russian delegate to the United Nations observed, leave the possibility of partial Israeli control of the occupied territories. U.S. delegation leader Arthur Goldberg stated after the issuance that 'the notable omissions- which were not accidental- in regard to the withdrawal are the words 'the' or 'all' and 'June 5, 1967 lines'...the resolution speaks of withdrawal from the occupied territories without defining the extent of the withdrawal'<sup>19</sup>. Aside from the various interpretations of the withdrawal, the 'land for peace' idea would be what U.S. diplomats would urge countries to tacitly

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<sup>16</sup> Most people refer to it as the Six Day war because of its incredibly short length. Fighting did cease in under a week, and Israel had by that point secured the territories it had set out to take.

<sup>17</sup> When dealing with intense conflict abroad, the United States often forgets the natural strategic advantage the country enjoys because of its geography. A country bordered by two oceans and two 'friendly' countries does not have the predisposition to conflict that so many other countries of the world pay for interminably.

<sup>18</sup> Israel was from its formation a country that the Arab world refused to recognize. This goes back to the initial refusal to accept the UN's taking of the area that would become the Jewish homeland.

<sup>19</sup> William Quandt. *Decade of Decision: American Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1976*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

adopt. Peacemaking was a multi-centered process: there was more than one 'fundamental issue' that needed to be resolved. Like the volatile Palestinian question, the territory issue often dominated talks and stoked emotions.

The Johnson Administration, distracted by Vietnam, did not initially respond to either the 1967 war or Resolution 242. President Lyndon Johnson faced a reassessment of U.S. policy towards Israel. The United States had made its position clear from the very beginning days of Jewish statehood: it supported Israel and cared about its security and well-being. After weighing interests and options, Johnson responded to situation of the 1967 war with announcing unequivocal support for Israel<sup>20</sup>. Israel implored Johnson to issue a statement clarifying that he would view an attack on Israel as an attack on the United States<sup>21</sup>, but Johnson refused. After meeting with top officials in his Cabinet, Johnson wrote Israeli Foreign Minister Eban a letter emphasizing that the United States position would take a more neutral role regarding 1967, consistent with the United Nations. The letter, written by Eugene Rostow, ended with this statement:

'Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go alone. We cannot imagine that it will make this decision'.

In the early 1970s, President Richard Nixon began mending the long soured U.S. relations with China and the Soviet Union. The burgeoning number of treaties and negotiations with the two communist nations exceeding those of any other presidency in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>22</sup>. As tenuous agreements over missile shields and weapons restraint programs bridged the two continents, the U.S. and Soviet predilection for proxy wars and

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 51.

interference lessened. In 1972, new President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt informed Moscow and Egypt-based Soviet officials that they were to leave his country. Egypt was disallowing Cold War rivalry to permeate the region. But only a year later Egypt turned to the Soviets for help in the 1973 October War<sup>23</sup>, which was launched as a joint offensive by Egypt and Syria on the Jewish holy Day of Atonement. The two belligerent nations were backed by nine other Arab nations and by the Soviet Union. The United States tacitly supported Israel. Suddenly, OPEC members placed an embargo on oil exports to the United States, Portugal, and Holland because of their support for Israel. This appeared to be a reversal of détente<sup>24</sup>. The impact was to cause a shortage of petroleum in the United States and a quadrupling of oil prices<sup>25</sup>. The October War marked the beginning of oil-as-weapon diplomacy between the United States and Arab world<sup>26</sup>. 1973 is the year that the Arab states showed the United States that they had not been bluffing about raising prices in opposition to the U.S. support for Israel. (13)

Oil prices rose when production cuts were made and oil supplies declined. Aside from the obvious blow to the average American consumer as prices would rise along with a decline in supply, the new boycott also affected businesses that relied heavily on Middle East for petroleum. At this point, Arab lobbyists united with U.S. business<sup>27</sup> and certain factions of the State Department to make the case that the United States needed to become more conciliatory toward the Arab nations and less partial to Israel. Their

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<sup>22</sup> LaFeber, 653.

<sup>23</sup> Also called the Yom Kippur War and Ramadan War

<sup>24</sup> LaFeber, 658.

<sup>25</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith*. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1982. (248)

<sup>26</sup> In 1971, U.S. oil production leveled. At the same time, oil-producing Arab states were unifying to set stricter production quotas and price controls. Effectively, the nations formed the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) set regional economic policy that would cut production (supply) to increase profits (demand)(13). Prices began to rise; petrodollars flooded the market.

<sup>27</sup> At this point, the businesses involved were in the oil industry themselves; the United States ha8\*\*\*

argument for a more equitable approach to the Middle East was that Americans on the whole were suffering unnecessary economic hardships because of the government's stalwart defense of Israel.

The oil embargo brought the Middle East into the limelight, as it directly hit Americans. The Arab League member nations'<sup>28</sup> newfound oil wealth lent itself to the flexing of political muscle. On the flipside of the equation, the United States was realizing the extent to which economic dependence was a direct threat to its own strength. Carter would recount in his memoirs that even in 1977, because of its fuel dependence, the United States had become 'more vulnerable to future attempts at blackmail- with our own security directly threatened'<sup>29</sup>. President Carter's enthusiasm for resolving conflict was reinforced with the need to stabilize the U.S. economy, which was still recovering from the oil embargo of late-1973, early-1974, and the shocks that followed in suit.

American diplomacy in the Middle East traditionally pursued a less ambitious, partial approach to resolving problems. But by the end of 1976 there was 'considerable evidence that the incremental strategy had achieved all that it could'<sup>30</sup>. Two attempts at piecemeal diplomacy had failed to make any positive impact. The Rogers Plan suggested Israel's ceding pre-1967 territories back to Egypt in exchange for use of the Suez and an end to hostilities between the two nations. The patchwork plan failed due to Egypt's and Israel's intransigence on the issue<sup>31</sup>. Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State under Presidents Nixon and Ford, fostered the Sinai Agreement, attempting to stabilize Egypt-Israel relations by creating a buffer between the two. Israel withdrew fully from the Suez,

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<sup>28</sup> Arab league

<sup>29</sup> Carter, 278.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> William Rogers, who authored the plan, was the first Secretary of State under Nixon



but the agreement made no reference to the West Bank, Jordan, status of Jerusalem, or Palestinian refugee problem<sup>32</sup>. U.S. involvement with Israel and its neighbors, especially after 1967, is important for understanding and appreciating Carter's later diplomatic efforts with Israel and Egypt. As with any region divided along ethnic or religious or racial lines, diplomacy in the Middle East has never been divorced from recent history. The Camp David negotiations and all of President Jimmy Carter's conversations with Arab leaders preceding them were saturated with the living history of the region, of which there was clearly more than one version.

Both Israel and the Arab nations felt that they were being treated unfairly by the United States. Carter was arguably the first president to give the Middle East a place on the 'highest priority' policy shortlist<sup>33</sup>. And he was the first to try to attack the problems of the region at their root. He knew that any semblance of peacemaking- peacemaking with staying power- would have to come from a deep understanding of what that 'peace' meant to the different parties involved.

Candidate Jimmy Carter's model of foreign policy departed significantly from the Cold War paradigm that had guided statesmen for the three previous decades<sup>34</sup>. Carter saw a decline in U.S. power in the early to mid-1970s. the most glaring confirmation of this descent was the war in Vietnam, in which the U.S. had been humiliated by a nation of guerrilla soldiers. The morale was low. People at home and abroad questioned the alleged superpower status of America, and the public felt incredible anger at what it saw as a morally irresponsible Washington, which sacrificed the lives of tens or thousands of

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<sup>32</sup> Charles A. Kupchan. 'American Globalism in the Middle East: The Roots of Regional Security Policy'. *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 103, Number 4. 1988.

<sup>33</sup> Memo, from Eisenstat, Lipschuts, Ginsburg to Carter,

young Americans all for silly domino theories. Furthermore, the deleterious effects of Watergate reverberated throughout the nation, spawning a popular cynicism toward the government. Americans were developing an aversion to power-politics, as both Vietnam and Watergate both ostensibly spiraled out of control because of self-interested politicking.

Jimmy Carter noted the public's antipathy toward Washington, especially when discussing foreign policy. He espoused a return to liberal internationalism.<sup>35</sup> Under this ideology, the U.S. would rely less upon 'brute power and more upon diplomacy geared toward exploiting the existence of shared interests with other states'<sup>36</sup>. Carter's outlook on foreign policy was neo-Wilsonian. He called for a restoration of the rule of law in international affairs and self-determination for all people. The U.S. should be, he maintained, a proactive promoter of human rights abroad. Making tracks away from a traditional multilateral approach to these issues, Carter pushed for what seemed to be an American unilateral messianism. Though the United States should be active abroad, Carter held that military power should be used with discretion. The diplomatic agenda should include a continuation of détente and SALT talks, with added pressure on nuclear disarmament. Finally, the United States should try to curtail the global swelling of the arms trade<sup>37</sup>. Détente and the progressing relationship with China and the Soviet Union gave the (false) impression that the Cold War was fading, and Carter wanted to steer American diplomacy onto a new course.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 705.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Foreign policy was not the central focus of the 1976 election. It was the economy. 1976 was plagued with recession and ominous glimmers of inflation<sup>38</sup>. Energy policy may not have been on many minds, but the recession that rested atop the debate agenda was in fact engendered by the energy problems the U.S. faced. Since the 1950s, consumption of energy had steadily increased, as prices dropped and energy became very affordable]. The U.S. imported about 44% of its oil, almost half of that coming from OPEC<sup>39</sup>.

After the October War, OPEC instated punitive, economic measures on nations that either excused or exonerated Israel's strategic positioning. Prices jumped from \$3.00 to 5.11/ barrel. In addition, monthly 5% dips in production would persist, should Western nations maintain support for Israel. On October 18, 1973, President Nixon disregarded Arab warnings and requested a 2.2. billion dollar aid package for Israel, maimed in the wake of the Yom Kippur offensive. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia promptly cut off all OPEC exports to the United States and the exports to other Western nations by 25%<sup>40</sup>. The full-scale OPEC boycott of 1973 sent economic shocks through the United States, leaving no one- neither consumers nor industrial producers- unscathed. Between October 1, 1973 and January 1, 1974, oil prices increased four hundred percent<sup>41</sup>. In the ensuing

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<sup>37</sup> Lloyd Bitzer and Theodore Reuter. *Carter vs. Ford*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980. Transcript of the Second Presidential Debate, 11.

<sup>38</sup> John Barrow. *An Era of Limits: Jimmy Carter and the Quest for a National Energy Policy*.

<sup>39</sup> G. John Ikenberry. The Irony of Strength: Comparative Responses to the Oil Shocks in the 1970s.' *International Organization*. Volume 40, Issue 1 (Winter, 1986), pp. 105-137.

<sup>40</sup> Barrow. pp. 10-12.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 10-13 (priced moved from 3.00 to 11.56/ barrel).

period, industrial output decreased significantly<sup>42</sup>. The Dow Jones industrials showed a 21.6% decline in late 1973. With that came job loss, higher prices, and a loss of consumer confidence in the economy. Then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger stated that the boycott

‘cost the U.S. 500,000 jobs, more than 10 billion dollars in national production, and rampant inflation’<sup>43</sup>

The first televised debate of the 1976 campaign was held in Philadelphia on September 23 and focused on these economic issues. The debate gave many Americans their first chance to observe the Governor of Georgia . As many voters had complained of not receiving any clear policy schemes from him up to that point<sup>44</sup>, it gave Carter the opportunity to display his understanding of the complex domestic and economic issues the nation faced.

The themes of the second presidential debate, held in San Francisco on October 6<sup>th</sup> were defense and foreign policy. The first question was Carter’s. Max Frankel of the *New York Times*, one of the questioners, summed up what appeared to be the Ford Administration’s impressive foreign policy record then asked what about that record Carter thought was so dubious. Frankel’s shortlist included the nascent arms control negotiations with Russia, the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with China, the arrangement of disengagement in the Middle East, and a ‘regained influence’ over Arab

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<sup>42</sup> Barrow notes the 11% decline in output in the auto industry, coupled with thousands of layoffs and plant closings in companies across the board. Also, new businesses were being built at a rate 20% slower than before the boycott.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, pp. 12-13. OPEC finally lifted the embargo in March of 1974.

<sup>44</sup> Transcript of the first debate; Bitzer, 254.

countries without abandoning the U.S. commitment to Israel<sup>45</sup>. Carter transcended the terms of the debate and addressed foreign policy almost as an abstraction:

‘This Republican administration’s been almost all style and spectacle, and not substance... We’ve lost in our foreign policy the character of the American people... We’ve had a chance to become, contrary to our beliefs and principles, the arms merchant of the whole world’<sup>46</sup>.

Carter maintained that ‘Ford’s foreign policy has strained relations between the United States and our natural allies’<sup>47</sup>. One tenet of realist ideology - the prescribed approach of both the Nixon and Ford administrations- was that foreign policy should not be about a constant nurturing of U.S. relations with her allies. The brainchild behind this policy making paradigm, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger<sup>48</sup>, saw natural allies as just that: organic relationships autonomous of U.S. maintenance. Diplomacy should be condensed and targeted toward nations that would help facilitate a more strategically even balance of power. Europe, the continent of our most natural allies had always and would continue to maintain its own strategic balance. The United States should involve itself more appropriately with countries like China and the Soviet Union, to ease Cold War tensions and secure a diplomatically open future with once-adversaries of the United States.

Carter’s outlook differed greatly. From the outset of his campaign, he assumed that the parameters of United States involvement abroad should go beyond what was purely self-interested. The Democratic candidate attacked the Ford Administration for its

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<sup>45</sup> Transcript of the second debate: Bitzer, 290.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Kissinger was Secretary of State under presidents Nixon and Ford.

less than noble aspirations in foreign policy<sup>49</sup>. The conduct of foreign policy should be based on the constituent ideals of American democracy. Liberty, participation in government, the freedoms from (government control of the private sector, unnecessary taxation) and freedoms of (speech, assembly) should be championed abroad. The issue of human rights frequently emerged in the 1976 presidential debates<sup>50</sup>.

In his debate rhetoric, Carter demonstrated he was well-informed about the energy situation and the problems it posed for American consumers, American business, and America's political position abroad. He noted in the first debate that since 1974, U.S. oil imports jumped from 25% to 44%. When one questioner solicited Carter's intentions toward energy policy, he responded by claiming that he would take 'mandatory conservation measures' and 'encourage the people to voluntarily conserve'<sup>51</sup>.

Carter enjoyed a natural advantage over incumbent Ford because he had no ownership of the policies he spoke of. His rhetoric was not anchored in the realities of his own policies. Adopting a more hawkish tone, Carter pointed to America's 'loss of leadership,' and 'abandonment of allies' stressing that, abroad, 'we are not strong anymore. We are not respected'<sup>52</sup>. Regarding détente, Carter criticized the Ford Administration for facilitating negotiations in which the United States was 'out-traded in almost every instance'<sup>53</sup>. Here, the example of the Soviet Union 'out-trading' the United States, is the only semi-concrete example Carter gives for his case of the Nixon and Ford

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<sup>49</sup> Bitzer writes that 'The issue of human rights at home and abroad, as well as high moral purpose in foreign affairs, was attractive at face value...Unable to argue against the moral aspects of the issue, Ford could only defend himself against charges that his administration had not advanced this noble cause'.

<sup>50</sup> Bitzer, 11.

<sup>51</sup> Bitzer, transcript of first presidential debate

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 291. 'The Soviet Union knows what (it) wants. We have not known what we wanted. And we've been out-traded in almost every instance'. Bitzer.

failures at foreign policy. Calls for a more transparently selfless policy imbued Carter's responses in the second presidential debate with hard-to-argue idealism, rigorous moralism, and a dense litany for American involvement for human rights. It was the very nature of Carter's convictions and their appeal to the American sense of exceptionalism that made his stance on U.S. foreign policy so unassailable.

For a short period of the second debate, the topic broached the Middle East. Carter stated that the U.S. needed to better its relations with Israel.

'[in 1975, after the Yom Kippur War] we almost brought Israel to their knees by the so-called reassessment of our relationship to Israel. We, in effect tried to make Israel the scapegoat for the problems in the Middle East... There ought to be a clear, unequivocal commitment, without change, to Israel'<sup>54</sup>.

Interestingly, the U.S. relationship with the Arab world was discussed more thoroughly in the first debate, which was formatted for discussion of domestic issues and policy. Oil and energy took up a healthy portion of the dialogue. Invariably, a discussion of the main suppliers of U.S. energy led into a discussion of relevant diplomacy.

Questioner: on your appeal for a greater measure of American idealism in foreign affairs, Foreign affairs come home to the American public pretty much in such issues as oil embargoes and grain sales... would you be willing to risk an oil embargo in order to promote human rights in Iran and Saudi Arabia, withhold arms for the same purpose...?

Carter: Iran is not an Arab country. But if Saudi Arabia should declare an oil embargo against us, then I would consider that an economic declaration of war, And I would make sure the Saudis understood this ahead of time, so there would be no doubt in their mind. I think under those circumstances, they would refrain from bringing us to our knees<sup>55</sup>.

This was, despite Carter's early, post-Cold War paradigm, a hard-line view of the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia. Most likely, the sentiment was a reflection of the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 304

stories currently saturating the business sections of the nation's leading newspapers. The *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post* had all been assiduously following the developments in the Arab boycotting of American businesses of late. Arab states were beginning to implement more diligently their long-standing 'secondary boycotts,' of countries also trading with Israel. The crackdown entailed a blockade of certain American-made goods from Arab markets. A minority of businesses were, to prevent such a blockade of their goods, complying with Arab measures to cut Israel out of their trading loop. Subsequent losses for the majority of other, inflexible companies made for an increasingly disgruntled American business community. Meanwhile, Congress was responding to the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) with re-energized 'anti-boycott' legislation that would fully prevent U.S. companies from compliance with Arab trade measures. Saudi Arabia, arguably the Arab nation most friendly to the United States, was creating a political migraine by lobbing constant threats at Washington, promising to push another spike in oil prices should the U.S. enact these tough, new anti-boycott measures.

To Carter, the Cold War did appear to be winding down. That ostensible end of an era is precisely what gave Carter the elbowroom he needed for a more liberal, internationalist, globally-engaged diplomacy. His campaign rhetoric was brilliant primarily because Carter's statements about human rights and American idealism were essentially inviolate to any rebuttals or rejoinders from Ford. Carter was also appealing to the public's innate American exceptionalism. Finally, by making the case for a more self-effacing foreign policy, Carter was tapping into the desire Americans carried for

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 280.



their government to stop letting less than critical issues draw the nation into bloody conflict.

His sensitivity to the shift in the public's attitude toward government allied with his strong appeal to American minority groups (notably Blacks and Jews) won Carter his presidency. He believed that many of the traditional rationales that had guided U.S. foreign policy for over a generation were now outmoded and inappropriate for dealing with a world that was now moving past the Cold War<sup>56</sup>. The new administration's more liberal approach to foreign affairs would appear incoherent and idealistic to some. Republicans, though still the congressional minority, gained seats in the 1976 election<sup>57</sup>. The 96<sup>th</sup> Congress entering alongside the new president would effectively block many of Carter's policy initiatives on both domestic and foreign fronts. 'Despite the idealistic rhetoric in which Carter chose to wrap them', almost all of the new administration's initial policies represented long advocated by liberal foreign policy specialists 'on purely pragmatic grounds'<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> David Skidmore. 'Carter and the Failure of Foreign Policy Reform.' *Political Science Quarterly*. Volume 108, Number 4. (1993).

<sup>57</sup> Burton I. Kaufman. *The Presidency of James Earl Carter*. University Press of Kansas, Kansas City, 1993.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 701-702

## Chapter 2: A Room with a Better View President Carter's Clearer View of the Domestic Landscape

### *Facing the Energy Crisis*

Jimmy Carter entered office with little experience in overseas problems, but diplomacy was not the main concern in early 1977<sup>59</sup>. The salient political problems were inherently domestic. Specifically, it was the United States economy that was in distress. The economic slowdown brought with it the societal symptoms familiar to most recession-type eras: a higher unemployment rate, sluggish economic growth, and decreased consumption. Another symptom was price inflation, caused primarily by world market oil prices. The Arab oil boycott officially ended in 1974, but its aftershocks were still being felt in 1977, and price increases did persist<sup>60</sup>. Oil exporters' production cuts and price hikes were felt strongly in all sectors of the U.S. economy. This was due, as Carter mentioned in the first presidential debate, an American oil supply that was growing more dependent on foreign oil imports<sup>61</sup>. In less than two decades, U.S. dependence on foreign oil had nearly doubled.

The oil question contributed to the feeling that the U.S. was on economic tenterhooks because of its heavy dependence on oil, and the Middle East was regionally

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<sup>59</sup> LaFeber. 682

<sup>60</sup> G. John Ikenberry. 'The Irony of Strength: Comparative Responses to the Oil Shocks in the 1970s.' *International Organization*, Volume 40, Issue 1 (Winter, 1986) pp.110-115. For the period between 1973 and 1979, oil prices, per barrel rose 500%

the largest oil exporter. The oil boycott had shown the extent to which American businesses and consumers depended on the Middle East for delivering the great amount of energy the U.S. economy required for normal operation. Stuart Eizenstat, chief of Carter's domestic policy staff, made the link between the higher oil prices and the malaise that both American consumers and producers were feeling.

' It's what we use to heat our homes, to fuel power plants for the generation of electricity...It's the most basic commodity you can get. When you have those sorts of price increases they're going to have a direct impact'<sup>62</sup>.

This reality- that because of its dependence on oil imports the U.S. was subject to price changes at any given moment-- is what brought foreign policy into domestic the domestic sphere for the public. Given the oil-producing, Arab nations' predilection for basing production and pricing on the political climate of the day, the relationship between the United States and the Arab Middle East had to be reinforced and regularized.

National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski stated that the United States

'could not be dependent on the supply of oil from countries some of whom, not all, but some of whom are not this country's friend and who were trying to get everything they could get out of it'<sup>63</sup>.

Americans were sensitive to the fact that an unstable Middle East meant an unstable energy market<sup>64</sup>. Pricing was a reflected the political milieu of the Arab world, and when tensions arose between the Arabs and Israel- expressly shown in the repercussions of the 1967 Israel offensive and 1973 Saudi-Egyptian retaliation- the United States found itself directly affected. The unconditional and axiomatic American

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Exit Interview with Eizenstat, pp 7-8. Jimmy Carter Library

<sup>63</sup> Exit Interview with Brzezinski, pp/9-11. Jimmy Carter Library

support for Israel, alongside its tacit acceptance of Israel's often aggressive conduct of foreign policy, placed the U.S. in a bad light to the Arabs. U.S. complacency toward Israel's regional disquiet was met with an Arab economic stick. The incredible American demand for oil was a source, the oil-producers knew, of weakness that could out of necessity force the United States into a political corner.

Carter tackled the energy problem on both domestic and diplomatic fronts. He worked with his domestic policy staff to create a national energy proposal. On April 18, 1977, two days before he presented his proposal to Congress, Carter's 'Energy Problem' speech was broadcast from the White House<sup>65</sup>. He began by imploring the American public to 'control our future instead of letting the future control us' by 'conservation and the renewed use of coal and to permanent renewable energy sources like solar power'<sup>66</sup>. Carter's energy plan consisted of what he called 'ten fundamental principles'. Among them was the call to reduce 'vulnerability to potentially devastating embargoes,' by way of reducing consumption patterns, making the most of coal, and developing a strategic petroleum reserve<sup>67</sup>. Carter's mention in the national address of this vulnerability to embargoes underscores the seriousness with which the new Administration viewed its role in the sacking this energy crisis, the 'moral equivalent of war,'. Carter wrote a great deal about his concerns over what might arise from the Arab states' leverage over the

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<sup>64</sup> William Quandt. *Peacemaking and Politics: Camp David*. Washington: Brookings Institution, 1986.

<sup>65</sup> 'The Energy Problem', Address to the Nation. April 18, 1977. Pp. 654-662

*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*. Jimmy Carter. United States Government Printing Office. Washington: 1977, 1978. Book I: January 20- June 24

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

American economy, <sup>68</sup>specifically mentioning potential bribery and political weakening of the United States <sup>69</sup>.

The security question energy dependency poses here shows just how closely American business interests and consumer welfare were (and still are) linked with national security<sup>70</sup>. If the United States relied on the Arabs for the basic commodity of oil, then its bargaining power and international political clout would diminish.

President Carter met with Congress two days after his national energy address. His National Energy Plan held the primary means of solving the problem to be reducing the levels of waste and inefficiency in American production and consumption of oil. In the short run, Carter posited a reduction of 'dependence on foreign oil by limiting supply disruptions'. In the medium and long run, respectively, the president wanted to 'weather the eventual decline in availability of world oil supplies caused by capacity limitations, and to develop renewable and essentially inexhaustible sources of energy' to sustain economic growth<sup>71</sup>. Most of Carter's initiatives here were based on conservation and the development of new means of energy production being the most important ways to combat the energy crisis. Accordingly, the majority of the speech detailed specific measures the government might take to assist energy conservation and the innovation of alternative energy sources. His proposal and speeches were consonant with Carter's campaign rhetoric concerning the energy crisis. Interestingly, Carter was focusing here almost completely on alleviating the energy problem by tackling the *demand* end of the equation. That is, because he saw the world's oil reserves on a fast track towards

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<sup>68</sup> Carter, 260.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

depletion, Carter assumed that the best way to fix America's energy problem was to curb its demand for oil<sup>72</sup>. In the months following his National Energy Plan presentation, Carter began to see how the problem could be attacked on the supply side of the equation: by ameliorating weathered U.S.-Arab relations.

At this point in his presidency Carter was beginning to see the manifold connections between foreign and domestic policy. The Middle East was the region of the world getting all of the attention as of late, partially due to OPEC's monopoly of the world's petroleum and newfound wealth. As Carter knew, there were definitive American interests concerning the Middle East that were wholly distinct from the energy interests of the nation. Those interests held by the millions of Americans concerned the security of Israel. The Carter Administration had to somehow equalize divergent interests and formulate a new approach for diplomacy in the Middle East. Brzezinski explained that foreign policy needed to be reassessed to fit American 'vital interests'.

'We were trying to achieve a comprehensive solution which would be compatible with our vital interests. These interests included the preservation of Israel; however, it's our wider interests and our strategic reading of the situation that ought to be the point of departure for shaping our policies'<sup>73</sup>. (10, Exit Interviews)

The energy problem presupposed the imperatives of improved relations with the Arab world and Middle East regional stability. The American public's longstanding sympathy for the state of Israel, though, would make these imperatives more politically difficult to achieve than expected.

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<sup>70</sup> OPEC countries may use oil price adjustments as leverage for diplomatic ends, or they may altogether undercut bureaucratic and regulating middlemen and deal directly with US businessmen to explicitly cut out Israeli-US commerce in exchange for higher volume trading with Arab countries.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> It is true that world demand for crude oil reached a crest after the Iranian revolution, and that the increase could have led to the more vulnerable position of consumers on the whole. And the world's oil was being consumed rapidly, but would not exhausted as soon as Carter had projected.

When Carter campaigned for the presidency, he presented the energy problem as principally a domestic problem. He looked at American oil demand and consumption rates as the largest portion of the energy problem, and saw conservation and alternative energy sources as the solution to the crisis amounting from spiked energy prices and the causally related, diminishing supply of OPEC oil to the world market<sup>74</sup>. He believed that American consumption patterns would have to change and conservation measures met, but Carter was aware that the two alone, nor any tapping into auxiliary energy reserves, would mitigate the U.S. dependency on the OPEC oil giants<sup>75</sup>. So the energy problem really extended to Carter's foreign policy milieu and subsequent objectives. The United States would have to improve its position regarding the oil-producing nations of the Middle East. The confluence of interests that both shaped and hampered Carter's position on the topic of energy policy would also be present in Carter's foreign policy. Most vigilant would be the principle, disparate interests that Americans held in the Middle East.

*Boycotting: Where Energy and Diplomacy Met*

Foreign policy had to protect the United States economy and, to a lesser degree, business interests abroad. U.S. exports to the Arab world had been bringing ever-increasing revenue streams to U.S. companies. The antipathy that the oil-producing

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<sup>73</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski. *Power and Principle*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983.

<sup>74</sup> To raise oil revenues, OPEC members would cut oil production to a fraction of potential production capacity, which would- because the cartel reigned over the lion's share of world oil reserves- lead to increasing energy prices and higher subsequent profits for oil-producing nations.

nations expressed toward U.S. anti-boycott legislation in the previous years was threatening the much-prized, Arab consumer markets. The Arab primary and secondary boycotts were nothing new, they had been instated upon Israel's 1948 declaration of statehood. The primary boycott barred any trade between Arab League members and Israel<sup>76</sup>. The secondary boycott was what involved the United States. It barred trade between League members and any other nations that traded with Israel. In addition, it required all trading companies to answer a lengthy questionnaire from the boycott office. The questionnaires included a detailed reporting the racial, religious, and ethnic backgrounds of both the employees and owners of foreign companies.

The Export Administration Act of 1969 required U.S. companies to notify the Commerce Department each time they were asked to comply with foreign boycott measures<sup>77</sup>. Technically, companies were not prohibited from going along with it. The Act was set to expire in September of 1976, and so there was a race throughout the fall of that year to get provisions and amendments attached to the law to guide the conduct of American firms regarding all foreign boycotts. The 1973-74 oil boycott is what caused the first real focus on all of the legislation. Huge companies like Ford, Exxon, or GM were being shut out of the Middle Eastern market<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>75</sup> Ikenberry. 6.

<sup>76</sup> Memo, from Shapiro to Eisenstat, WHCF, Jimmy Carter Library

<sup>77</sup> Export Administration Act, 1969. 'it is the policy of the United States to oppose restrictive trade practices or boycotts fostered or imposed by foreign countries against other countries friendly to the United States'.

<sup>78</sup> Arab import law was incredibly specific about what was a violation of the code and what was acceptable. It was possible for an American car company to be blacklisted if, for example, their tires were manufactured by Firestone, a company that traded with Israel. Likewise, the Arab trade rules might order, for example, General Motors to ship cars without tires (as tires were manufactured by the blacklisted Firestone). This effectively forced U.S. firms into unforeseen observance of the boycott.



The Saudis promised to place an oil embargo on the United States if the anti-boycott legislation passed. Certain House Representatives<sup>79</sup> added that if the Saudi government enacted an oil embargo against the United States, the U.S. would halt arms sales to the Saudis<sup>80</sup>. In the spirit of an election year, Presidential candidate Jimmy Carter had in 1976 criticized the Ford Administration's moral bankruptcy in failing to enact anti-boycott legislation and for being complacent about the entire matter<sup>81</sup>. Similarly, the House criticized the Commerce department (sec. Commerce Eliot Richardson) for 'implicitly condoning activity' that undermined the U.S.-Israeli relationship<sup>82</sup>. When running for office, Carter registered his unequivocal support for Israel repeatedly.

The new executive branch endorsed the 'principles' of tougher anti-boycott legislation. Cyrus Vance, Carter's new Secretary of State, announced in May that the State Department would be sending draft legislation of its own to Congress to be reviewed. He requested members of the Senate Banking subcommittee defer passage on any pending anti-boycott bills<sup>83</sup> and review the Administration's submission. The Carter Administration was attempting to follow through with Carter's campaign trail promises of vigorous support for anti-boycott measures.

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<sup>79</sup> Representative Jonathan Bingham and Benjamin Rosenthal also both purported that the boycott itself was ineffective.

<sup>80</sup> After the 1973 'October' or 'Yom Kippur' War, the Saudis began buying large amounts of sophisticated weaponry from the United States. These sales were also heavily contested by certain members of Congress. In early 1976, Congress tried to block the sale of 650 Maverick missiles (a 30-million dollar deal) to Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee rescinded its proposal after Kissinger stated that a block on arms sales would undermine the U.S. position in the Middle East. Michael Klare. *American Arms Supermarket*, Ch. 6.

<sup>81</sup> Bitzer, transcript of the second presidential debate.

<sup>82</sup> *New York Times*, 1/1/76, Charles Morh.

<sup>83</sup> Vance referred to the Stevenson bill of 1976 and Proxmire-Harrison bill of 1977.

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance emphasized that legislation could, and should, address the secondary boycotting of some U.S. firms by others, but he emphasized that the Administration should not attempt to rewrite Arab foreign policies toward Israel.

The potential loss of revenues from exports to the region, including government weapon sales, was coupled with the possibility of more American job loss. Priority was still placed on the big brother role of the U.S. towards Israel. But Carter began to try to reconcile the moral stand of the U.S. that called for the protection Israeli state with the huge potential economic losses that would result from a unilaterally pro-Israel, anti-boycott position of the United States. That would appear to the Arab nations, quite understandably, to be part of an attempt by the U.S. to flout their foreign policy. The Arab boycott contributed to the change in U.S. diplomatic efforts in the Middle East. The boycott forced the United States to reassess its position in terms of setting the political agenda, since its economic agenda was contingent upon systematic approval or rejection of trade deals by the Arab states. The United States has long been a fan of using its economic leverage to push countries toward accepting its preferred trade policies<sup>84</sup>. But the problems posed by the Arab boycott that allowed U.S. companies to, as many people believed, undermine official national policy were also part of the admixture of events in the 1970s contributing to a skillful evolution of foreign policy toward the Middle East with a new, involved role as mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

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<sup>84</sup> Economic sanctions have been lauded as being the touchstone of a more civilized, businesslike diplomacy between nations, of which the United States proves to be the exemplar. Between 1914 and 1990, there have been 116 cases of imposed sanctions by various countries. Over two-thirds failed to attain the political objectives of the restrictions.

## *Neo-Diplomacy*

“...Moral and religious beliefs made my commitment to the security of Israel unshakable..., but now I had been elected President and needed a broader perspective. For the well-being of my own country, I wanted the Middle East region stable and at peace; In its ability to accomplish these purposes, Israel was a strategic asset to the United States. I had no strong feelings about the Arab countries. I had never visited one and knew no Arab leaders”<sup>85</sup>.

In his memoirs, Carter leads his discussion of the boycott directly into his desire to take a more active role as mediator in the Middle East. The president subtly began to shift the U.S. attitude towards the Middle East to a more balanced mode. In 1977, the U.S. enjoyed moderate relations with Middle Eastern countries, notably with Israel, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia<sup>86</sup>, but the new President had not, as of January, met with any Middle Eastern diplomats or heads of state. Carter came into office with the Middle East ‘question’ at the top of his priority list. Many of Carter’s advisors and fellow Washington Democrats thought that trying to find a long-term solution to the problems of the region would prove futile. Carter was well warned: the chances of actually achieving a peace settlement with staying power was slim.

Considerably one of his most successful foreign policy achievements was the brokering of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, nations still technically at war. Carter pursued a dual role of vigilance and arbitration over the Israeli-Arab territorial disputes. In 1977, Carter initiated correspondence with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat. The correspondence was over the possibility of some peace talks, held in the U.S., would deal specifically with both the territorial and Palestinian questions still unresolved in the region. Carter’s

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<sup>85</sup> Carter, 248.

humanitarianism was an essential part of his rhetoric and, one could argue, the spirit of his foreign policy. Harold Saunders, former member of the NSC staff and one of Carter's foreign policy aides, writes that Carter saw 'the Arab-Israeli peace process as a series of negotiations embedded in a larger political process'<sup>87</sup>. Saunders also recounts Carter's style of approach to the Middle East

'I would say that he saw the conflict more as a human rights problem than as a human or political problem. The interesting point is that Jimmy Carter came to the presidency, almost uniquely among post-Cold War presidents, knowing that there were two sides to the conflict'<sup>88</sup>.

Despite his 'Lone Ranger' campaign slights against the former Secretary of State, Carter sought an early meeting with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to discuss the Middle East. Both men agreed that the best way, procedurally, to approach peace negotiations would be through the already established UN Resolutions 242 and 338<sup>89</sup>. Carter also agreed with Kissinger that Egypt was the linchpin of Arab support<sup>90</sup>. It was at the time the largest and one of the most powerful countries in the Arab world. An Egyptian-Israeli peace would be a major setback to radical anti-Israel politics.

Regarding their respective ideologies on foreign policy, the two men could not have been further apart. Substantively, Carter wanted a comprehensive peace settlement between all nations in the Middle East (and the PLO). Kissinger saw U.S. diplomatic relations with the Middle East within a balance-of-power, Cold War framework: situational diplomacy that reflected the U.S.- Soviet Union balance of power of the moment. The former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State did not advocate

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<sup>86</sup> Quandt, 33.

<sup>87</sup> Harold Saunders. In *Jimmy Carter: Foreign Policy and Post-Presidential Years*. Pp. 165-67.

<sup>88</sup> Saunders, 164-166.

<sup>89</sup> Resolution 338 determined that the government ruling over the West Bank and Gaza Strip should be one popularly elected by all residents of the two territories. Since the 1967 War, the areas fell under Israeli military rule.

comprehensive settlements. Rather, he perfected what was called 'shuttle diplomacy': he was an arbiter between nations of the Middle East, 'shuttling' from one capital to the next to facilitate incremental negotiating processes<sup>91</sup>. Kissinger thought that achieving comprehensive peace settlement between Israel and her Arab neighbors was dubious. Instead of working for one single settlement, Nixon's former Secretary of State preferred to on one issue at a time. Carter believed, on the other hand, that a full and complete peace, fostered with mutual understanding among negotiators, would be the most effective- indeed, the only means for attaining lasting peace.

Carter came up with a list of objectives for the Middle East: a broad peace including free trade and open borders; Israel's withdrawal from occupied territory; recognition of a Palestinian 'entity' (not necessarily an independent nation)<sup>92,93</sup>. There were not many in 1977 who believed that an American president would strive for such elusive goals as a comprehensive peace. The hurdles in place for Carter's Israel-Egypt peace project were not negligible.

'Perhaps more than any other issue, the Arab-Israeli conflict takes its toll on a standing president. Domestic politics quickly becomes intertwined with strategic analysis. Presidents rarely tackle Middle East issues with much enthusiasm, knowing they will invariably be controversial, and often intractable as well<sup>94</sup>'.

Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Ford had systematically avoided active involvement in Middle East disputes until crises holding strategic significance erupted.

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<sup>90</sup> Quandt, 338.

<sup>91</sup> Quandt

<sup>92</sup> Carter, 291.

<sup>93</sup> On the issue of occupation, Carter was guided not so much by his own moralism but rather by international law. He wrote that the United States stance had always been that settlements established on lands occupied by military force were in direct violation of international law. He added that peace would never work if Israeli leaders continued their encouragement of settlement in Arab neighborhoods ('sending a signal of their apparent intentions to make the military occupation permanent').

Carter was more ambitious. Interestingly, a realignment of domestic interest groups would facilitate Carter's goals and allow for a more amiable U.S.-Arab relationship. Carter would ultimately meet success with Israel and Egypt at Camp David. Success was due in part to an American constituency's –fundamentally producers and consumers- acceptance of Carter's new approach to the Middle East, desiring a foreign policy that would observe the economic interests of the country.

### *Testing the Waters*

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance flew to the capitals of several Arab states and to Israel in late February, 1977, on his first diplomatic mission to the Middle East. Vance was to assess for Carter the relative attitudes of the major players in the area- King Hussein of Jordan, King Assad of Syria, Prince Falud of Saudi Arabia, President Sadat of Egypt, and Prime Minister Rabin of Israel. Vance was not surprised by anything he heard over the course of his trip. The Arab leaders had, as expected, clearly articulated they disapproved of a separate peace between Israel and Egypt, implying that the Arab League or a similar delegation of Arab states should negotiate as a whole and approach peace with Israel multilaterally. However, as discussions shifted to the prospects for a regional defusion of tension, Vance saw the unanimity in opposition to an Israeli-Egyptian peace disintegrate<sup>95</sup>.

A month later, Carter's received Egyptian President Sadat at the White House. Sadat was uneasy about his first meeting with the president. He feared Carter would not

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<sup>94</sup> Quandt. *Camp David*  
(Quandt served as special advisor to President Carter on issues relating to the Middle East).

<sup>95</sup> Cyrus Vance. *Hard Choices*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.

seek out the comprehensive peace settlement that he had proposed<sup>96</sup>. Sadat had seen that the Nixon Administration's diplomatic efforts in the region. The inch by inch policymaking, had failed at settling some of the most important conflicts in the region: namely, those of the four main disputed territories and their numerous claimants<sup>97</sup>. Of central importance to Sadat was the unresolved issue of the Israeli military occupation of the Sinai, a large northeastern section of the Egyptian state. Previous to the 1967 war, the Sinai had been one of Egypt's strongest military and strategic outposts, as the land was also the natural buffer between the Egyptian and Israeli national borders<sup>98</sup>. Responding to Sadat's concern over the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Carter gave his assurance that the other territories would be resolved eventually, and that Egypt should only focus on what it could do unilaterally<sup>99</sup>.

One of the first suggestions Sadat made was that 'peace in the Middle East be made under American auspices,' displaying his readiness to trust the Carter Administration in the role of fair peacemaker<sup>100</sup>. That Sadat was willing to fully entrust Egypt's diplomatic interests to the President is significant. Sadat was walking against the current of Egypt's historical stream of conflict with Israel. From the outset, the Egyptians knew that they would be forced to build full diplomatic relations with Israel if they desired the total return of the Sinai. No American president had ever addressed an

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<sup>96</sup> Herman F. Eilts, in *Jimmy Carter: Foreign Policy and Post-Presidential Years*. Eds. Herbert D. Rosenbaum and Alexej Ugrinsky. Greenwood Press: Westport. 1994. Pp.150-151.

<sup>97</sup> Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights, West Bank, Gaza Strip

<sup>98</sup> Anderson

<sup>99</sup> With Sadat's decision to 'accept the split' of issues upon Carter's request, came the terminal, political estrangement that the President faced vis-à-vis his fellow Egyptian delegates, and on a larger scale, some of his most important domestic supporters. Eilts.

<sup>100</sup> Richard A. Thornton. *The Carter Years: Toward a New Global Order*. Washington Institute Press, Paragon House, New York. 1991. (142)

Arab leader about the diplomatic recognition of Israel<sup>101</sup>. Sadat offered up the possibility of a formal rapprochement with Israel in, perhaps, five years time. Carter started, 'Five years, no. We can't wait that long. The two things must happen at the same time'<sup>102</sup>.

To America's surprise, Israel's Labour Party suffered its first loss since 1948 with the election of Menachem Begin as the new Prime Minister in April, 1977. The Carter Administration's initial reaction to Begin's election was positive<sup>103</sup>. Begin was a member of the more hard-lined Likud party; he would ironically be capable of reaching a more comprehensive peace for Israel<sup>104</sup>. Also, Carter and his closest advisors hoped that Begin might mobilize more support from the Jewish American community, which was feeling increasingly dishonored by what it took to be Carter's abandonment of their main interest: Israeli security<sup>105</sup>.

The Israeli government under Prime Minister Yhitzak Rabin had felt no need to move on any of its foreign policies or practices in the region, especially since Israel had many times over been promised unconditional support from the United States<sup>106</sup>. But Menachem Begin increased the possibility of peace between Israel and Egypt. Begin was familiar with Carter's position on the terms of a possible peace agreement with Egypt. When Carter met with Begin and his foreign minister in June<sup>107</sup>, he expressed his doubts about Israel's desire for peace, and that Carter believed that Israel was putting obstacles in the way with its actions toward Lebanon and its continuous support for settlements in

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<sup>101</sup> Hermann Eilts, *Jimmy Carter: Foreign Policy and Post-Presidential Years*.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Carter, *Keeping Faith*

<sup>104</sup> Brezinski

<sup>105</sup> Brzezinski, 96

<sup>106</sup> Thornton

<sup>107</sup> Dayan, 98.



occupied territories<sup>108</sup>. The men met and discussed Carter's 'five draft principles' for the peace. Begin was receptive to the first three<sup>109, 110</sup>. When the two men met privately after dinner though, Begin told Carter that Israel was prepared to follow Washington's instruction on the withdrawal from certain occupied territories. Thrilled with Begin's cooperation, Carter presumed that the Prime Minister was pronouncing his openness to discussing all points that fit the parameters of Carter's peace.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> full normalization with Egypt, a comprehensive settlement, and adherence to U.N. Resolutions 242 and 383. The final two principles that Carter earnestly proposed- withdrawal from the three occupied fronts and the need for a Palestinian homeland- Begin instantly repudiated

<sup>110</sup> Thornton, 142.

### Chapter 3: The Upshot, 1978

'I did not want to see Soviet influence expanded in the area. In its abilities to help accomplish these purposes, Israel was a strategic asset the US'<sup>111</sup>.

'It was fairly obvious that the key to ant future military threats against Israel was the Egyptians who could provide the most formidable invading force and who had always been in the forefront of the previous battles. They would be crucial to any future peace settlement'<sup>112</sup>.

Strategic and domestic interests spawned a reassessment of US relations with the Middle East in the late 1970s; they are apparent in Carter's efforts at stabilizing the relationship between Egypt and Israel. During his first year in office, Carter became increasingly aware that the Cold War had indeed not ended. In 1976, Carter had called for U.S. policies that stressed human rights, environmental, and development issues, and not simply be anti-Soviet<sup>113</sup>. Within twenty-four months, his own policy carried Cold War concerns<sup>114</sup>.

Brzezinski sent the President a confidential memo just before the Camp David meetings began. Carter's National Security Advisor detailed the strategic importance of improved U.S. relations with the Arab Middle East. It also illuminates President Carter's role as shrewd negotiator.

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<sup>111</sup> Carter. *Keeping Faith*, 275.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> LaFeber, 683.

<sup>114</sup> LaFeber, 683.

‘You will have to convince both leaders, but especially Begin, that failure at Camp David will have directly adverse consequences for our bilateral relations and in terms of the Soviet influence in the region’<sup>115</sup>.

Brzezinski apparently understood the domestic political backlash that Carter faced in pursuing a more friendly relationship with Arab countries. He suggested a candid appeal to the public that never materialized.

‘Go to the American people with a full explanation of US national interests in the Middle East (strategic relations with the Soviets, economic interests, oil, cooperation with moderate regimes)’<sup>116</sup>.

In a long, outlined memo to the President, Carter’s top advisors mapped out what they saw to be the policy priorities for 1978. There were three sections: ‘Must Win Highest Priority,’ ‘High Priority,’ and ‘Strong Presidential Interest’. Economic and Trade Policy (including East-West Trade)<sup>117</sup>. Carter’s decision on the most important issues was clear by his response to the memos, and the Middle East negotiations clearly were taking precedent. In the margins of each of the three sections, the President checked the areas that he agreed were critical. In the ‘Must Win’ category, there were about ten areas listed, and those checked in addition were: energy legislation; economic policy; Middle East negotiations; Panama treaty; SALT/CTB<sup>118</sup>. On the memo entitled ‘High Priority, Presidential,’ twelve additional issues were listed. Carter placed additional check marks by ‘Arms Sales,’ ‘Human Rights- Diplomatic,’ ‘Nuclear Non-proliferation,’ and

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<sup>115</sup> Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, 11/11/77. Subject Files- Confidential, WHCF, Jimmy Carter Library

<sup>116</sup> Inid.

<sup>117</sup> Memo, Eisenstat to Carter, 1/7/78. Subject Files- Econ./Trade Policy. WHCF. Box TA- 6, Jimmy Carter Library

<sup>118</sup> Memo, from Vance, Lipschutz to Carter, 1/9/78 listing of 1978 objectives

‘International’<sup>119</sup>. A number of factors affected the Carter Administration’s dogged approach to initiating peace in the Middle East. Carter’s moral, humanitarian mission was drawn to preserving Israeli security; the hard economic realities the U.S. faced gave added weight to Carter’s cause. A peaceful Middle East would help prevent the types of oil market fluctuations the U.S. had endured throughout the decade, mainly punitive and frequently a function of volatile politics.

### Pluralism at Work: Selling Foreign Policy at Home

Carter issued his 1978 Economic Report the first week of January. The report was a long outline of all economy-related realities and issues and objectives for the coming year. At its outset, the report asserted that the United States needed to focus on rising inflation and growing unemployment. Pivotal to the report was the idea that the best way to combat these troubles was to increase overall production and trade<sup>120</sup>. Boosting production in an economy that was not producing to full capacity would cause subsequent increases in employment and help to curb inflation<sup>121</sup>. The Report stated that the United States should aim to ‘move steadily toward a high-employment economy’ and set a goal (from 1978-1981) of a 4 ½ to 5 % increase in real output... and reduce unemployment by about ½ % a year’. And the private sector was the vehicle for economic turnaround, as the report saw it.

The report also addressed issues of globalization, world trade, and the mutuality of markets:

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> ‘We have inherited from the past an inflation rate that is stuck in the 6 to 6 ½% range. It must be brought down. We must also guard against a renewed outbreak of inflation as our economy recovers’. P. 10 of report.

<sup>121</sup> Memo, Eisenstat (comments) to Carter, ‘Economic Report of the President’.. 1/28/1978. WHCF Jimmy Carter Library

‘Nations have become more interdependent. If we take actions that benefit other nations, we will eventually reap the benefits ourselves. We cannot maintain a position as a world leader unless we act commensurately in every major field. If we take actions that harm others, they will surely retaliate’.

No doubt this was partially in reference to the oil/energy problem, itself a product of American’s delicate diplomatic relations with oil-producing, Middle Eastern nations. The mention of the ‘increased interdependence’ here underscores the Carter Administrations consciousness of U.S. economic fragility. A large aid package to Jordan was being discussed in Congress simultaneous to the publication of Carter’s report. Reaching out and aiding countries in the Middle East that asked for U.S. help was, according to the Carter Administration, both a way to strengthen U.S.- Middle East economic ties. In 1978, under the initiatives of the Carter Administration, the United States gave unprecedented amounts of loans and grants to oil-producing nations<sup>122</sup>.

Regarding the boycott issue, the new regulations were finally made public on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1978. *The Washington Post* had already contacted several large supplier companies<sup>123</sup> that traded with the Middle East. Executives reported that they had already lost business, but that it was mainly from the political heat the anti-boycott issue had stirred up, not from any specific violations that had occurred. The president of the National Supply Company, a division of Armco Steel Co., that made oil and drilling valves and equipment for Middle East oil companies announced that he had lost one large sale. A Houston construction firm lost a deal as well. An executive at Hughes Tool Co., a supplier of drilling bits, stated that in some cases Arab governments would modify their regulations to accommodate new U.S. directives. He added, though, that this would be

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid

most likely to happen only when the Arab world could not turn to other nations to fill their orders or meet U.S. prices<sup>124</sup>. Meanwhile, the Carter Administration engaged the Middle East diplomatically, hoping to this time yield results.

### *Camp David*

The White House diligently prepared for Camp David. Carter tried to get both Egyptian and Israeli leaders to focus on the most important aspects of peace, rather than be caught up in semantics or details. He wanted a broad, comprehensive peace to be the shared objective. Along with the Sinai, Egypt wanted to include a discussion of territorial issues somewhat peripheral to the Egypt-Israel relationship, such as the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Egyptian goal was to reach a settlement over all three territories at once. Both Israel and the U.S. hoped that Egypt would focus on the Sinai; full withdrawal from the Sinai alone would be a feat. Meanwhile, Carter's aides compiled briefing books for the President, which ended up as volumes of information and policy suggestions. Aides developed a plan for the President regarding what they saw as necessary objectives for Camp David<sup>125</sup><sup>126</sup>. When Carter asked his advisors what they thought the more important aspect of the talks would be, they all stressed the linkage issue as being of central importance (the West Bank and Gaza Strip negotiations taking place alongside those of the Sinai). Carter told them bluntly that they were missing the

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<sup>123</sup> Companies that made much of the machinery the Arab oil companies used in excavating

<sup>124</sup> Washington Post, 1/28/78

<sup>125</sup> Quandt, Saunders, and Atherton

<sup>126</sup> *Jimmy Carter: Foreign Policy and Post-Presidential Years*. Saunders, 165.

bigger purpose of the negotiations, that these issues were not as pressing as they thought<sup>127</sup>.

For the two weeks leading up to the signing of the Accords, Carter performed his own shuttle diplomacy, moving back and forth between the Egyptian and Israeli delegations<sup>128</sup>. There were a few trilateral meetings the first week at Camp David; most were ceaseless negotiations between Carter and Sadat or Carter and Begin. The talks between the Israelis and Egyptians were conflicted by Egypt's desire for only partially normalized, diplomatic relations with Israel in exchange for a full Israeli abandonment of the Sinai peninsula, and Israel's counteroffer of partial withdrawal in exchange for full normalization of relations. After meeting incessantly with Carter on the issue, Sadat finally proffered a deal: if a full Israeli evacuation of the Sinai was completed within nine months of signing the treaty, Sadat would send Egyptian ambassadors to Jerusalem<sup>129</sup>. Egyptian Prime Minister Fahmy left the talks mid-session, making clear his belief that Sadat was betraying Egyptian interests by offering Israel this diplomatic carrot.

Begin was still hard-pressed to budge on the total removal of Israel's defenses from the Sinai. Many military and strategic camps had been placed in the Sinai in the preceding ten years. Moshe Dayan, Begin's foreign minister, threatened to walk out when Begin's recalcitrance stunted the talks. The major contention at the talks was not

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid. 'You've got it all wrong. all of you. You're trying to make something very big out of something relatively simple. Let me tell you what's going to happen at Camp David. I've 'I invited Sadat and Begin here to help overcome the real problem, and that is the fact that they don't trust one another, and they don't see the good points in each other's position. And by getting them to Camp David, away from the press and out of the glare of publicity, and away from their own political constituencies, I think that I can bring them to understand each other's positions better. My intention is...to try to work through the misunderstandings, and within a few days, we will reach agreement on broad principles'.

<sup>128</sup> The Delegations consisted of about ten major players from each country.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid: Saunders. discussion of Camp David. Pp. 164-168

between Sadat and Begin, but rather between Begin and Carter. It involved the settlement issue<sup>130</sup>. Carter maintained that Begin had promised to freeze all of the settlements until all of the (Palestinian) autonomy talks were completed. Begin swore that was not the case, and that he had offered a three-month freeze, nothing more.

When all was said and done, Camp David proved to be a success by the mere fact that Begin and Sadat actually reached an agreement. The accords were a framework for negotiating future peace treaties, a necessary replacement to the vague and outdated U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338. The accords did not address everything Carter and Sadat had desired (i.e. territorial questions remained largely untouched), but a groundbreaking peace was achieved nonetheless. Israel formally let go of the Sinai peninsula and withdrew from it fully. Egypt, in return, became the first Arab country to recognize Israel. And Carter made promises of economic and military aid to the countries as a parting gift. The Camp David accords were secured by Carter's promises to dramatically increase assistance (under the new International Security Assistance Act) to, among other nations of the Middle East, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In another preparatory memo sent to President Carter, Brzezinski stressed that Egypt and Israel should both be very aware of what they had to gain from signing the accords.

'Both Sadat and Begin can be assured that progress toward peace will mean a strong relationship with the United States, including in the economic and security areas, and enhanced ability to control development in the region that will serve our mutual interests'<sup>131</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> The settlements were villages the Israeli government had helped set up in the wake of the 1967 war in the annexed territories.

<sup>131</sup> Memo, Brzezinski to Carter, 11/77. Subject File – Confidential. WHCF, Jimmy Carter Library



It was in each party's best interest to arrive at peace; security positions in the Middle East would be stronger, including that of the United States. Finally, offering one more arm-bending tactic to use on Prime Minister Begin, Brzezinski suggested Carter reiterate

'the scale of U.S. aid to Israel (\$10 billion since 1973, or nearly \$4000 for each Israeli citizen)<sup>132</sup>.

Carter had enjoyed an autonomous position as peacemaker until this point, but congressional approval of the arms sales and economic aid was now necessary. The door of pluralist politicking swung wide open, and manifold, competing domestic interests determined the outcome of Carter's Camp David. The promises of U.S. arms sales and military aid would bring Carter's foreign policy into the center of a domestic debate. Not far from Camp David, Washington officials had themselves been focusing on domestic issues: the state of the economy, the energy situation, and U.S. export policy. These issues were tied to the stability of the Middle East and its regard for the United States. Saudi Arabia, for example, warned that failure to achieve the objectives of Camp David would result in higher oil prices for the United States<sup>133</sup>. Congressional leverage rests in its reign over all budgetary matters. On matters such as financial aid packages, treaties, loans, and arms sales, Congress could award or refuse presidential directives. Without Congressional approval of his jet package, Carter would have been left high and dry at Camp David with nothing to offer his guests. In the middle of reviewing the International Security Act, Congress was deciding which countries would be sold arms in 1978.. Secretary of State Vance had briefings with Congress and tried to persuade members to continue aid to Syria and sell the Saudis the F-15s they had requested. A

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

memo sent to the President on January 14, 1978<sup>134</sup> said that the 'report was mixed' but that they would continue calling 'key members' over the weekend to 'explain the current state of the Middle East negotiations',<sup>135</sup>.

Critics of Carter's 'jet package' to the Middle East said the sale would undermine the President's initiatives in the region and create an arms race. It would also threaten Israel's security<sup>136</sup>. It would be an abortive act that would 'sabotage Carter's efforts to negotiate global restraint o conventional arms transfers'<sup>137</sup>. Decisions on arms transfers are the exclusive prerogative of the Secretary of State, acting on behalf of the President. In rebuttal, Vance, Carter, and other congressional liasons for the president stated that the sales would be in full accord with article 4 of the Arms Control Export Act: they would only be used for defensive purposes. More important, the sales would add to U.S. security in the region by establishing closer military ties to the Saudi and Egyptian governments.<sup>138</sup> U.S. was swapping its oil dependency for Arab reliance on defense sales.

Was Carter buying the peace with taxpayer dollars?<sup>139</sup> Part of Carter's rhetoric, indeed on his list of actual initiatives, was his disapproval of what he called 'unrestrained sales of conventional weaponry around the world'<sup>140</sup>. He believed that arms sales acted as a deterrent to achieving peace abroad. As the United States was the largest seller and distributor of conventional weapons, the President emphasized the need to set precedent

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<sup>133</sup> Quandt. *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*.

<sup>134</sup> Memo from Moore to Carter, 1/14/78. The memo mentions some of these key members as Senators Church, McGovern, Bayh, Eagleton, and Griffin. Also noted was the potential for conflict if 'interested lobbies' became vocal over the arms sales issue.

<sup>135</sup> 1/14/78 White House Central Files. Memo from Vance to Carter re: Vance meeting with Senate Foreign Relations.

<sup>136</sup> Michael Klare. *American Arms Supermarket*. Pp. 52-55.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Sheldon, 40. "The Camp David accords cost taxpayers 17.5 billion dollars"

<sup>140</sup> Carter

in arms reductions. There was a contradiction between Carter's practice and preaching: In August, the Carter approved the International Security Assistance Act, which included a small provision allowing the President to rubber stamp sales if he saw them fit. And for the most part, his attempts at arms control and a more limited weapons trade were abortive<sup>141</sup>. After demonizing the previous Republican administrations for making the United States the world's 'arms merchant', Carter went on to effectively seal the Israeli-Egyptian peace accords with promised (and delivered) military sales<sup>142</sup> to both countries as well as Saudi Arabia. The 'jet package' that made its way to the Middle East was renewable, on an annual basis, provided all equipment was used for defensive purposes only. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Israel all agreed to exhibit 'the appropriate level of control'<sup>143</sup> necessary for nations increasing their arsenals in such a combustible region. When Carter left office in 1981, regular military sales from the U.S. to the Middle East had more than quadrupled and showed no sign of tapering off<sup>144</sup>.

With Camp David, Egypt would become the second largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid, loans, and conventional weapons<sup>145</sup>. Upon looking at the record of 1978 U.S. arms exports and aid to the rest of the world, an incredible increase in sales to the Middle East is apparent. The amount did not dwindle. Saudi Arabia alone enjoyed a quadrupling of U.S. arms imports<sup>146</sup>. Carter's crusade to bring peace to the area would meet with success due to these sales, and this groundbreaking display of incredible U.S. involvement in the Middle East was itself ironic: peace was being bought with weapons.

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<sup>141</sup> Joanna Spear. *Carter and Arms Sales: Implementing the Carter Administration's Arms Transfer Restraint Policy*. London: Macmillan, 1995.

<sup>142</sup> List sales and aid here (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel)

<sup>143</sup> *Christian Science Monitor*. Aug., 1977

<sup>144</sup> Spear

<sup>145</sup> FAS Arms Sales Monitoring Project. 'Egypt'.

Carter's detractors deemed his approach to an Israeli-Egyptian peace as too even-handed, adding that he was rescinding the U.S. role of protecting Israeli security by pressuring both Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to move toward a workable peace. Criticism peaked in May, 1978, when Carter received congressional approval for the sale of 2.5 billion dollars worth of jets and weapons to Israel, another 3.5 billion in sales to Saudi Arabia, and a little over half a billion in sales to Egypt. The Camp David accords that would be finalized in September of the same year germinated from those sales. Camp David was arguably the first real step towards any lasting peace in the Middle East. Indeed, before President Carter's initiatives for peace, Israel enjoyed no diplomatic recognition by neighboring Arab states. The peace with Egypt would clear the way for further diplomatic recognition of Israel and Israel's gradual ceding back of annexed land belonging to Syria and Jordan, the two other nations that bordered the country.

The nature of policy making in the United States, involving Congress, interest groups- not to mention the sometimes unyielding demands of other nations on the U.S.- no doubt compelled the president to speak in the Washington vernacular and to work within the preexisting bureaucracy. It was precisely the clashing of these interests in Washington that allowed Carter's plan for peace to be realized. Looking at foreign policy as the product of one 'rational actor,' like a foreign minister or president, determining alone the best path for his country is unrealistic. Foreign policy is no different from domestic policy in that there is, for every policy, a multiplicity of players and interests, each preferring a policy outcome that would better their own political position or cause.

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<sup>146</sup> Michael Klare. *American Arms Supermarket*

Despite the considerable energy and security interests in the Middle East and apparent gains from a more even approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, America has supported Israel politically, militarily, and economically more than any other nation in the Middle East<sup>147</sup>. Traditionally, the interests of the Jewish American constituency have been exceptional; there has been no countervailing, pro-Arab influence of equal measure. And U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has reflected this. But the pluralist model of politics is alive and well in the United States, especially in the case of foreign policy, and it was precisely this model that facilitated Carter's peacemaking between Egypt and Israel.

A separate Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty was signed six months later on March 26, 1979, officially ended the technical state of war between the two countries and replaced it with peace. Article II of the treaty<sup>148</sup> not demarcated borders for the disputed territories; it also specified limits to their militarization. For instance, in the Egyptian-controlled 'Zone A' there would be 'one mechanized infantry division' and it would consist of elements such as 'one armed brigade, seven anti-aircraft artillery battalions, up to 230 tanks, up to 22,000 personnel'<sup>149</sup>. Whereas the Camp David Accords were designed with elasticity and generality in mind, the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty was painstakingly detailed. A large portion of written agreement contained the 'Principles of Withdrawal,' including phases and subphases of the promised Israeli retreat from the Sinai and a corresponding timetable<sup>150</sup>. United Nations troops would be deployed to the border areas as well to oversee the withdrawal.

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<sup>148</sup> Article II: Determination of Final Lines and Zones, pp.5-6. Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty. 1979

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty. 1979.

There were two concomitant stories that come to an end in 1978 involving the Middle East. The first story is that of Carter's diplomatic triumph regarding the Middle East, the story of reduced conflict on the path to peace. The second concerned the domestic front, requiring from the president a balancing act of sorts, weighing in variable interests and sculpting policy to meet the interests of as many as possible. Camp David contributes to an understanding of the processes of foreign policy making in the U.S. and the extent to which domestic politics play a part in that process.

## Conclusion: Carter's Craft

The White House was euphoric when President Carter appeared before Congress to announce the successful conclusion of the historic Camp David accords. In the weeks following Camp David, it seemed as if the Administration had been born again<sup>151</sup>. There is no shortage among Camp David's critics. They are quick to point out that

'both sides had compromised. Egypt dropped its insistence on stationing personnel in the Gaza Strip, the Camp David negotiations were vague. They were based almost as much on faith as on a hard assessment of Mideast policy. And that, by papering over the differences between Egypt and Israel, they set up a diplomatic mine field'<sup>152</sup>.

More generally, Carter's detractors have emphasized the President's failure at achieving his campaign goals. His record did not deviate from the previous Republican administrations as much as he had hoped.

Defense spending rose, 'SALT II was shelved; arms sales climbed; expensive new strategic systems were approved; rapid deployment forces designed for Third World duty were readied; plans to withdraw U.S. troops from South Korea ; were dropped; recognition of radical states such as Vietnam; preventative diplomacy was dormant; détente was abandoned, and containment was back'.

Certain aspects of Camp David and early Carter foreign, economic, and energy policy did seem to contradict Carter's humanitarianism. A promise of U.S. weapons sales to

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<sup>151</sup> Burton I. Kaufman. *The Presidency of James Earl Carter*. University Press of Kansas. Kansas City, 1993.

Egypt and Saudi Arabia persuaded both sides to finally agree and sign the accords at Camp David. Outspoken throughout the first year of his presidency about the need to reduce U.S. conventional arms sales abroad, Carter unarguably recanted in 1978, increasing U.S. arms exports substantially. But this needs to be looked at in the context of Carter's overall goals. Peace was the ultimate goal, and Carter had originally thought that a reduction on U.S. arms exports would make the prospects for peace better. He just realized that to reach comprehensive peace settlements, especially in the Middle East, he would have to maneuver down a winding political path, and that apparent inconsistencies in foreign policy were not things to necessarily be avoided. The geography of the Middle East is such that almost every dispute lies with border issues and territorial questions<sup>153</sup>. A comprehensive framework for peace should prevent nations from securing these borders and territories. For regions of disputed sovereignty, like Jerusalem or the West Bank, heavily militarized borders will inevitably lead to conflict, as multiple nations may at once lay claim to an area. But the byproduct of Camp David and the ensuing peace between Israel and Egypt was a clear boundary between the two nations. The disputed territory (the Sinai peninsula) was set to be ceded back to Egypt over the course of the following five years<sup>154</sup>. Egypt and Israel petitioned for military sales and aid from the U.S. for strictly defensive reasons. Indeed, when the United States government made the sale, they elicited promises from client nations that neither the jet packages nor the conventional arms would be used in any type of offensives.

We still cannot be too conclusive about what Camp David really meant to Egypt and Israel. What can be discussed are the domestic factors that brought about the

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>153</sup> Anderson. *The Middle East: Geography and Geopolitics*



negotiations in early 1978. Carter's moralism and humanitarianism have frequently been mentioned as causes for his foreign policy initiatives in the Middle East. It is true that these endowed traits fed his indefatigable drive to make Camp David a reality. One of President Carter's most impressive and lasting legacies will prove to be the diplomatic faculty he exhibited through his sponsorship of the 1978 Camp David Accords. With the help of domestic interests- the growing number of Americans who wished for more peaceful, cooperative and diplomatic U.S. conduct, coupled with the economic imperatives that the U.S. faced at the time (e.g. increasing production, securing affordable energy)- Carter was able to make his vision for Middle East peace a reality. For the first time, an Arab nation would formally recognize the state of Israel, giving the gift of sizable, regional gains in security for Egypt and its longtime nemesis to the west.

An understanding the events, concerns, and personalities that shaped the outcome of Camp David, one of the most successful diplomatic endeavors involving the Middle East, paints a clear picture of the pluralist model for foreign policy making in the United States. President Jimmy Carter proved that peace was viable in one of the most combustible regions in the world. He came into office with a vision for a U.S. role in reducing conflict abroad. Bombarded with the fractious politics of Washington, Carter attempted to steer a peace between Israel and Egypt. While keeping vital national interests in mind- like stabilizing the U.S. relationship with the oil-producing, Arab world- he succeeded. The Camp David Accords and subsequent Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty (1979) were the result of a lengthy process of conflict and bargaining not just between states, but within them.

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<sup>154</sup> Camp David Accords

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