ABSTRACT

SCHULTHEISS, THOMAS EDWARD. Jimmy Carter's Geneva Peace Conference; Doomed or Defeated? (Under the direction of Dr. Nancy Mitchell).

This study focuses on the efforts of President Jimmy Carter and his administration in 1977 to convene a comprehensive Middle East peace conference in Geneva. Carter had advocated a Geneva peace conference as a presidential candidate in 1976, and his promise to actively seek peace between Israel and its neighbors won him support from the American Jewish community; support that had a role in Carter's electoral victory. Carter made the Middle East an important priority for his administration in the first year of his presidency. But after Menachem Begin was elected Prime Minister of Israel in May 1977, the progress toward comprehensive peace negotiations stopped. Initially, the Carter administration did not recognize Begin's unwillingness to take part in comprehensive negotiations and continued its efforts to convene the Geneva conference. As Carter struggled to keep the peace process alive, his diplomatic efforts were not always received in the manner that he expected. In October 1977, this led to the controversies surrounding the US-Soviet Communiqué and US-Israel Statement. Begin used the uproar caused by these documents to cause a crisis in the peace process that prompted Egypt's President Anwar Sadat to make a historic trip to Jerusalem. After Sadat's visit, he was condemned by Syria, the PLO, Libya, and the Soviet Union, and Carter was compelled to support bilateral peace negotiations between Israel and Egypt.

Using documents from the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, memoirs, the press, and the works of academics like Kenneth Stein and William Quandt, this thesis adds to the current scholarship by specifically focusing on the diplomacy of 1977. By limiting the scope
of the study, it is apparent that, although it would have been difficult for the Carter administration to successfully convene a Geneva peace conference in 1977, it was possible. However, Carter and his advisors misunderstood the politics of the Middle East and the influence that Carter could exert over Middle Eastern leaders and America's foreign policy. This allowed the Carter administration to be outmaneuvered by the opponents of comprehensive negotiations.
Jimmy Carter's Geneva Peace Conference; Doomed or Defeated?

by

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BIOGRAPHY

Thomas Schultheiss graduated from Wake Forest University in 1995 with a B.A. in History and received his M.A. in History from North Carolina State University in 2014. He also studied Arabic at the Arabic Language Institute, part of the American University in Cairo. A former soldier, Thomas' research interests include: diplomatic history, the history of the modern Middle East, and military history.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

After Jimmy Carter was elected the thirty-ninth President of the United States in 1976, the Middle Eastern policies and goals pursued by his administration underwent numerous changes, shifts, and adjustments. The alterations that occurred throughout 1977 and 1978 eventually lead to the Camp David Accords of 1978 and the Sinai Peace Agreement of 1979. This policy evolution is important to understand because as Carter had to react to the changing politics of the Middle East, his peace initiatives narrowed from seeking a comprehensive peace treaty involving all of the participants in the Arab-Israeli conflict to the more limited Camp David Accords. Carter's staunch advocacy of a comprehensive peace treaty throughout 1977 kept the peace process alive in spite of the many obstacles it encountered.

When Carter was inaugurated, American policy in the Middle East had centered on the same key points since the Truman Presidency: “independence and security for Israel, access to oil, and containment of Soviet influence.” In the interim, there had been four major wars between Israel and its Arab neighbors each one more destructive than the last. During the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Israel occupied the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Syria and Egypt failed to recapture their lost territory during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

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Furthermore, the 1973 War brought the Soviet Union and the United States to their highest levels of nuclear alert since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Carter had a very real concern that the next war could be catastrophic not just for the belligerents states but for the entire world. Additionally, the issues that had led to the 1973 War had not been settled and another war seemed inevitable without some sort of resolution of the Arab-Israeli problem.

The 1973 War spurred the members of OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to place an oil embargo on the United States. This caused oil prices to soar, forced gas rationing in the United States, and contributed to a drastic rise in inflation—nearly 12% in 1974, almost quadruple that of 1972. The Arab OPEC embargo had ended by the time that Carter came to office, but ensuring the security of America's oil supply was paramount to the energy policies that Carter hoped to enact as president. It would greatly increase the stability of America's access to oil if Carter could end the Middle East's decades long turmoil.

Nevertheless, there was disagreement among American politicians about the appropriate goals for America’s foreign policies towards the Middle East. Henry Kissinger characterized the policies of the Nixon and Ford administrations “not [as] a starry-eyed quest for cooperation for its own sake but a method for conducting the geopolitical competition.” After the 1973 War, an international peace conference under the co-sponsorship of the

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United States and the Soviet Union had been convened in Geneva, but it was immediately been abandoned. Kissinger, under Nixon and Ford, then used America's strong influence to move "the Soviet Union to the fringes of Middle East diplomacy." He created a policy that worked to prevent another war in the Middle East but did not focus on the resolution of the many difficult political problems causing the conflict. This could come later. In the meantime, step-by-step negotiations without a great deal of publicity offered the highest chance of success. Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy resulted in the successes of the American brokered 1974 Cease Fire Agreement and the Sinai II Disengagement Treaty of 1975. During the 1976 Presidential campaign, the Ford administration stepped back from further engagement in the Middle East peace process.

However, prominent Democrats believed that the situation in the Middle East required the government to adopt a far more active role in the peace process. They recognized that "the United States has a strong interest in the security, independence, and well-being of Israel and the Arab states… [which would] remain in jeopardy until a durable settlement [was] concluded." They believed that only a comprehensive peace treaty that addressed all of the many contentious issues in the Arab-Israeli conflict would prove 'durable,' and further, that the United States should provide any assistance necessary for the successful negotiation of such a settlement.

5 Kissinger, Diplomacy, 738.
7 Brookings, 9.
However, each participant in the Middle East peace process had its own unique motivations for seeking peace and different conceptions of what form a suitable peace treaty would take. For example, Israel wanted the peace negotiations to result in the full normalization of international relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and for the negotiations to take place bilaterally between Israel and each Arab state. But the Arabs only wanted to end the state of belligerency. Additionally, although much was made of the negotiating strength of a unified Arab bloc, the reality was far from simple. It is true that all of the Arab states demanded a complete Israeli withdrawal from the territory it had occupied during the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 and the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, which Israel refused. But the complex intra-Arab political situation meant that Arab unity was only a veneer.

The Arab-Israeli peace process has been well studied by scholars. Nevertheless, the significance of the events of 1977 has been largely overlooked by historians. Carter's first year in office has not been the primary focus of study, but instead is quickly dismissed in favor of detailed analysis of the Camp David process of 1978 and 1979. Kenneth Stein provides an excellent analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the aftermath of the 1973 War in his work, Heroic Diplomacy. But Stein focuses his narrative on Kissinger's years. When he looks at how Carter changed American policy in 1977, he treats his efforts as a doomed attempt to get away from the bilateral negotiations favored by Kissinger. Stein concludes that the importance of Carter's attempts to convene comprehensive peace negotiations at

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Geneva was that they failed, leading to the Camp David negotiations the following year. These negotiations resulted in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty that then became the template for bilateral negotiations between Israel and Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon.

Other historians also address Carter's first year in office in the context of the Camp David negotiations. Perhaps the best example of this is *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* by William Quandt. Quandt analyses a period that begins in early 1977 and ends in 1979 and does a superb job charting Carter's first attempt at a comprehensive peace, the events that led to American policy changes, and the extremely complicated and difficult diplomacy that surrounded it. Quandt concludes that the act of negotiating can, by itself, create a new political and diplomatic reality, and that this new situation can lead to opportunities that would be otherwise unavailable. In this view, the successes and failures of Carter's first year are important because they changed the diplomatic landscape. The Carter administration then used the lessons it had learned to successfully maneuver Egypt and Israel into Camp David and the subsequent negotiations to an agreement in 1979. In this interpretation, 1977 is merely a prologue to Camp David.

However, more international actors were involved in the diplomacy of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1977 than in 1978, when the emphasis shifted to the Camp David negotiations. Therefore, this study focuses primarily on the events of 1977, and this thesis is based on the conclusion that the diplomacy of the Carter administration in 1977 is important enough to deserve analysis in its own right and not as the culmination or beginning of other periods. The first chapter explains how the Middle East became important to Carter and why

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he decided to support comprehensive peace negotiations at Geneva. Chapters Two and Three analyze the manner his administration attempted to resolve the many obstacles that stood in the way of convening the Geneva conference. The last chapter deals with the events of October through December 1977, and addresses the manner in which Carter's Geneva initiative was defeated by its opponents and the ramifications this had for the United States' Middle Eastern policy. This thesis draws heavily on the scholarship of Stein and Quandt in addition to Yoram Meital's *Egypt's Struggle For Peace*, Ilan Peleg's *Begin's Foreign Policy 1977-1983*, Sadat and Begin; the Domestic Politics of Peacemaking* by Melvin Friedlander, "To the Ends of the Earth" Sadat's Jerusalem Initiative* by Martin Indyk, and Colin Shindler's *Israel, Likud, and the Zionist Dream*.10

None of these works emphasizes the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1977; therefore original research plays an important role in this thesis. Not all primary documents from this period have been declassified. Most from the State Department are unavailable. Nevertheless, the documents at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library in Atlanta were invaluable. They are largely from the National Security Council, and the under-representation of State Department sources may slant this interpretation. This thesis also relies on articles from several press outlets including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, and *The New York Jewish Week*. Additionally, memoirs and diaries were important;

the ways in which Jimmy Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Cyrus Vance, Anwar Sadat, Yitzak Rabin, Moshe Dayan, and Ismail Fahmy each chose to craft their narratives of this period provide insights that shed some light on the gaps in the documentary evidence.

The Arab-Israeli conflict was important to Jimmy Carter for electoral, economic, diplomatic, and religious regions, and he decided that convening comprehensive peace negotiations was the best method for securing America's international interests in the region. Carter's support of Israel and his plan for comprehensive Middle East peace negotiations helped him win the Presidency in 1976, and he made the Arab-Israeli conflict an important priority early in his term. Throughout 1977, his administration worked hard to convene comprehensive negotiations at a Geneva conference, but at the end of the year decided to make bilateral negotiations between Israel and Egypt the priority. This thesis focuses specifically on the political and diplomatic events of 1977, and shows that this year is more than a doomed sidestep amongst a series of successful bilateral negotiations. Carter's attempts to convene the Geneva conference did not just keep the peace process active until the diplomatic situation changed and became conducive for Camp David. It would have been difficult for the Carter administration to successfully convene a Geneva peace conference in 1977, but it was possible. However, Carter and his advisors misunderstood the politics of the Middle East and the influence that Carter could exert over Middle Eastern leaders and America's foreign policy. This allowed the Carter administration to be outmaneuvered by the opponents of comprehensive negotiations. Nevertheless, Carter's efforts did keep the peace process alive and without the work of his government, it is
unlikely that the Camp David Accords could have been negotiated. To determine why
Carter's Middle Eastern policies were forced to change requires readdressing the significance
of the events of that year.
CHAPTER 1

In the 1976 Presidential Election, the electorate paid more attention to domestic concerns than to the foreign policies of the candidates.\textsuperscript{11} But, in addition to his domestic initiatives, Jimmy Carter also "ran for and entered the White House intending to alter substantially the foreign policies of his Republican predecessors Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford."\textsuperscript{12} Carter wanted to strengthen the international alliances that had suffered under Nixon and Ford, reexamine the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States to ensure that America was benefiting equally from détente, and—utilizing a more multilateral approach to diplomacy—support human rights issues throughout the world.

However, Carter still recognized the benefits that came from the efforts of his Republican predecessors. Henry Kissinger had brokered the Sinai Interim Agreement (Sinai II) between Egypt and Israel in 1975, which strengthened the UN sponsored cease fire that had ended the 1973 War. This made another war between Israel and Egypt less likely in the immediate future, but Sinai II did not address the larger issues that threatened the stability of the entire region. And after Sinai II was signed, the Ford administration had stopped any further attempts to resolve the numerous problems simmering in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{13} Carter believed that a comprehensive solution to these issues was necessary and that such a solution might be possible under his leadership. While Carter’s Middle East policies were not the


\textsuperscript{13} Quandt, \textit{Camp David}, 33.
major focus point during the campaign, the policies advocated by the Carter administration in February 1977 were first formed during the campaign. Additionally, they were important in gaining the support of American Jewish voters which would prove crucial in Carter's close electoral victory.

Jimmy Carter’s interest in the Middle East began during his childhood and was related to his strong Christian faith. The degree that Christianity influenced Carter's beliefs and behavior has been well publicized; Carter himself discussed his religion in forums as varied as before an audience of distinguished lawyers and politicians at the University of Georgia's Law Day to the pages of *Playboy* Magazine.  

The personal role that Carter would adopt in the Middle East peace process can also be seen as a continuation of the lessons he had learned from his parents as a child growing up in rural Georgia, and then implemented throughout his adult life. In his book, *An Hour before Daylight*, Carter discusses his childhood, and he describes how his parents were often sought out to help resolve conflicts because of their ability to cross the cultural and social divides between white and black Georgians. Carter discovered early in his life that people can overcome social, political, and cultural barriers if they communicate honestly and they truly desire a solution; and he arrived at that conclusion, in part, because of the examples of trust and respect shared by the Carter family and their neighbors, white and black.  

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The idea that a trusted intermediary can generate progress in an otherwise stalemated situation is would not be remarkable except that, as an adult, Jimmy Carter would repeatedly go out of his way to put himself in the position of trusted mediator. For example, as governor of Georgia, Carter interceded in the legal proceedings of one of the cooks (an inmate of the correctional system) in the Governor's Mansion. As a result of Governor Carter's efforts, a way was soon found that allowed the cook (who had remained in custody because of a legal technicality) to fulfill all of the conditions of her sentence, and she was released.\textsuperscript{16} Later, as President, Carter would have another inmate paroled to the White House and Carter himself became her parole officer.\textsuperscript{17}

When, as a young man, Carter considered the Middle East, he thought of Palestine—which to him meant the Holy Land—the land in which the events of the Bible took place. It was, he believed, where "the patriarch Abraham fathered the Arabs and the Jews," King David ruled the land of Israel, and "Jesus brought his revolutionary message."\textsuperscript{18} As an adult, Carter's conception of the Middle East was still based on this earlier understanding, but it was broadened by a visit to Israel in May 1973.

While participating in a trade delegation to Europe as governor of Georgia, Carter, his wife Rosalynn, and a small staff took a short vacation in Israel as the guests of Israeli General Yitzak Rabin. In both \textit{Keeping Faith} and \textit{The Blood of Abraham}, Carter states that this visit (only a few months before Israel was invaded by Egypt and Syria, beginning the

\textsuperscript{17} Jimmy Carter, \textit{White House Diary} (New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010), 25.
\textsuperscript{18} Jimmy Carter, \textit{The Blood of Abraham}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2007), 4.
1973 War) proved pivotal in cementing his strong interest in Israel, the Middle East, and the problems plaguing the region.\(^\text{19}\) Although much of his time in Israel was spent in Jerusalem, Carter spent several days touring the kibbutzim and the cities and towns outside of Jerusalem, in addition to visiting military sites. He left with a new understanding of Israel’s vulnerability and the precariousness of its situation—despite the overwhelming superiority of its military. Carter later wrote that it was during this trip to Israel that he became committed to ensuring that Israel could defend itself against its Arab neighbors.\(^\text{20}\)

But as the governor of Georgia, Carter had few opportunities to show his support for Israel. One exception was his proclamation of May 7, 1973 in honor of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Israel’s Independence. Carter extolled Israel as a “little bastion of democracy and freedom,” that had “opened its doors to the persecuted and displaced Jews of many lands to absorb them into the land of their Forefathers.” He “urge[d] all citizens of Georgia to further their knowledge of the Holy Land of the Bible, the Land of Israel.”\(^\text{21}\) Shortly after this proclamation, the Israeli Ambassador to the United States presented Carter with the Eleanor Roosevelt-Israel Humanities Award which honored those “who have demonstrated a sincere interest in human beings.”\(^\text{22}\)

When Jimmy Carter decided to run for president, he was unknown in the national political arena. Hamilton Jordan and Gerald Rafshoon, two Georgian Democratic political


\(^{21}\) Israel Independence Day Proclamation, Middle East 2/74-5/76 Folder, Plains Collection, 1976 Presidential Issues-Stuart Eizenstat memos, Jimmy Carter Library.

strategists, developed a plan for what would become Carter's presidential campaign.\textsuperscript{23} Rafshoon had been Carter’s media advisor in both of his campaigns for governor, and he suggested that because Carter was "not as well known [nationally] as many other big-name politicians… [the] first phase of any Carter campaign should be to formulate a heavyweight program and project a heavyweight image."\textsuperscript{24} Jordan, a longtime Carter aide and advisor, agreed, stating in a memo dated November 4, 1972, that Carter should cultivate “regional and national political editors and columnists” and begin “speaking out on the pertinent issues of the day.”\textsuperscript{25} In order to do this successfully, he also advised that Carter hire a speechwriter and “learn to speak from [a] prepared text.”\textsuperscript{26}

Additionally, Jordan’s memo listed the "tasks for the next six months,” which included: “Meet with [former Secretary of State and fellow Georgian] Dean Rusk. Ask him to assume responsibility for educating you on foreign affairs and to develop a continuing program which would include regular briefings, a reading list and the establishment of a formal task force.”\textsuperscript{27}

Carter followed the template enumerated in Hamilton Jordan’s 1972 memo by addressing various associations, giving print and television interviews, and continuing to meet an assortment of important international leaders. He joined the Trilateral Commission, and during a speech to the Commission in Tokyo in 1975, impressed Zbigniew Brzezinski, a professor at Columbia University, foreign policy expert, and one of the founders of the

\textsuperscript{24} Gerald Rafshoon, “Memo to Hamilton Jordan, 1972,” quoted in Schram, 52
\textsuperscript{26} Jordan memo, Schram, 56.
\textsuperscript{27} Jordan memo, Schram, 56.
Commission. The two men spoke after the conference, and Brzezinski soon became an important foreign policy advisor to Carter.28

Brzezinski was a vocal advocate of American support and leadership in negotiating a comprehensive Middle East peace plan that would address all of the divisive issues plaguing the region.29 He had participated in the study done by the Brookings Institution in 1975 that concluded:

the United States has a strong moral, political, and economic interest in a stable peace in the Middle East…the basic elements of the Arab-Israeli dispute are substantially untouched…. rising tensions in the area will generate increased risk of violence…. the best way to address these issues is by the pursuit of a comprehensive settlement.30

The Brookings Institution's Report went on to say that any settlement needed to include certain specific elements in order to be lasting. Among these were a commitment of all parties to "respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the others," an Israeli withdrawal to the June 5, 1967 borders with only negotiated modifications, an end to "such hostile actions against Israel as armed incursions, blockades, boycotts, and propaganda attacks" as well as the establishment of normal relations between the Arabs and Israel, and a "provision for Palestinian self-determination."31 As president, Carter would press for a peace agreement that included the elements recommended by this Brookings Report.

30 Brookings, 1.
31 Brookings, 1-3.
In 1975, Carter made good use of his opportunities to increase the public’s awareness of his politics by delivering well publicized speeches on America’s foreign policy. During these addresses, Carter attacked the foreign policies of President Ford, and especially the role of Henry Kissinger in the Nixon and Ford administrations. Though Kissinger had had several foreign policy successes as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State, he was associated in the minds of many Americans with the secretive and often illegal activities of the Nixon administration. Consequently, Carter attacked Ford’s foreign policies by criticizing Kissinger and his methods. He tread lightly; Ford’s foreign policy record might be vulnerable, but Carter had little foreign policy experience at all. So when Carter answered a foreign policy question after a speech at Johns Hopkins University in 1975, he focused on Kissinger’s behavior as Secretary of State.

Carter concluded that Kissinger, “depends too much on secrecy…. [and] sometimes goes to extremes and fails to tell even official inquisitors about the full aspects of [American] foreign policy commitments.”

Carter then linked Kissinger’s flaws with Ford’s presidential leadership by adding that Kissinger:

had placed on his shoulders more responsibility than ought to be on the shoulders of any Secretary of State; because for all practical purposes the last 2 or perhaps 3 years he…had to act as both President and Secretary of State in foreign affairs. He’s had to devise in his own mind what our foreign policy ought to be, either correctly or incorrectly. He…had to negotiate with foreign governments a mutual understanding about their foreign policy, and then he…had to effectuate it.

33 Ibid., 57.
Instead of relying on the Secretary of State to secretly craft American foreign policy based on “involve[ment] in the internal affairs of foreign countries,” Carter said that he believed, “that if [America] could restore its basic character, as a nation, to exemplify…the character of the American people, then [America] could again retain a position as the leader in the community of nations with the respect and appreciation of other countries.”

The other point where Carter felt that Ford’s Middle Eastern policies were vulnerable was Ford’s handling of what Carter termed, “the humiliating Arab oil embargo.” In an address to the Washington Press Club in July 1975, Carter boldly declared that “The political leadership of this country has failed to fulfill its responsibilities to the American people” with regard to America’s energy policy. Carter castigated the Ford administration for failing to decrease America’s dependence on oil imports. He asserted that the United States had “bowed quietly and subserviently to the Arab nations who tried to blackmail our great country just a few months [earlier].” He then accused the Ford administration of “lull[ing] the American] people into a false sense of continued trust in inept and timid leaders…[who were] now prepared to continue this obeisance as a permanent and increasingly mandatory national posture.”

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36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
Carter wanted to restructure America's energy policy to move the United States “boldly toward a goal of reasonable national energy self-sufficiency.”\textsuperscript{39} This included the expansion of domestic coal and natural gas production, increased development of alternative energy sources like nuclear and solar power, and stricter energy conservation measures. However, Carter also declared that he would view an attempt by any nation or group of nations to enforce an oil embargo against the United States as an act of economic warfare, and he would respond aggressively with economic and trade sanctions.\textsuperscript{40} The Arab OPEC embargo had cost the United States 500,000 jobs and $10 billion in lost production, and experts believed that another similar embargo would have even greater consequences.\textsuperscript{41} Throughout his campaign, Carter was clear about his desire to maintain America's friendship with any Middle Eastern nation that demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with the United States. He stressed that he would not preemptively use military force to ensure the flow of oil imports, but he also declared that any future OPEC embargo would immediately result in the prohibition of the sale of all types of goods to the participants—"no weapons, no nothing."\textsuperscript{42}

During the 1976 presidential campaign Carter and his staff did not feel that they could successfully engage Ford on his Middle Eastern record \textit{in toto}.\textsuperscript{43} However, as he had already

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\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 75-6.


\textsuperscript{43} Stueck, 246.
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made clear in his statements of 1975, Carter did believe that Ford’s Middle Eastern policies were vulnerable on two specific points: Kissinger's secretive style and the Ford administration’s response to the OPEC oil embargo. These points, in addition to assuring continued American support for Israel, would be central to Carter’s Middle Eastern policies during the 1976 presidential campaign.

In the December 1974 formal announcement of his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for president, Carter discussed how America had “set a standard within the community of nations of courage, compassion, integrity, and dedication to basic human rights and freedoms.” He claimed that America’s foreign policies had shifted away from that standard, and that, as president, he would ensure that America’s policies adhered to the beliefs that made America special. Carter did acknowledge that:

> The time for American intervention in all the problems of the world is over. But we cannot retreat into isolationism. Ties of friendship and cooperation with our friends and neighbors must be strengthened. Our common interests must be understood and pursued. The integrity of Israel must be preserved. Highly personalized and narrowly focused diplomatic efforts, although sometimes successful, should be balanced with a more wide-ranging implementation of foreign policy by competent foreign service officers.  

This statement of purpose illustrated the basic principles to which Carter’s foreign policies would adhere. It made clear his support of Israel, and included a subtle thrust at President Ford’s reliance on Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in foreign policy matters and at Kissinger’s highly secretive negotiating style.

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In addition to Brzezinski, Carter depended on Stuart Eizenstat, his Issues and Policy Director, to provide counsel. The understated lawyer, who turned down a partnership in a law firm to work on the Carter campaign, was “responsible for helping formulate the Governor’s stands on all issues.” By July 1976, as the Democratic Convention opened, Eizenstat had created a staff that (despite its small size of only about a dozen individuals) had produced policy papers based on the insights of over 250 experts on topics as disparate as abortion, nuclear disarmament, and peace in the Middle East.

Eizenstat was a crucial link between the Jewish community and the Carter campaign. By 1976, the American Jewish community was a well established component of the Democratic Party, comprised of "informed and frequent voters" who donated generously to political campaigns. Carter was a political outsider, little known to most American Jews. In March 1976, before the Florida primary, Eizenstat issued two memos, one to Carter and the other to several of Carter's advisors, outlining the position of Jewish voters in Florida. Carter, Eizenstat believed, should vociferously publicize his strong pro-Israeli opinions, because at the time, Carter was not seen as a committed supporter of Israel. As Eizenstat

46 Stuart Eizenstat, quoted in Stroud, 212.
47 Stroud, 212-6.
stated, "a Presidential campaign is not the time for diplomacy and an 'even-handed' policy towards Israel. Israel is the key for Jewish voters."\textsuperscript{49}

Eizenstat's role in developing Carter's Middle Eastern policies was vital. In addition to learning from policy experts like Brzezinski and Senator J. W. Fulbright (D-AZ), the Chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Carter relied on Eizenstat's connections with the American Jewish community to shape his strategies. Carter's Middle Eastern policies did not undergo much change during his presidential campaign; they were adjusted as Carter spoke on new issues, fine-tuning his message as he stressed different elements of his positions. For example, one aide, Bill Wise, argued persuasively that though Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union "may seem tangential. It is not. It impacts on the raison d'être of Israel and on her future."\textsuperscript{50}

Wise had been the press secretary for Indiana Senator Birch Bayh, one of Carter's early opponents for the Democratic nomination, and had later joined the Carter campaign preparing a position paper on Israel that suggested several strategies to win the Jewish vote which Eizenstat incorporated into subsequent campaign statements.\textsuperscript{51} Wise believed that international anti-Semitism was growing worldwide, as evidenced by the UN Resolution equating Zionism with racism, Ugandan leader General Amin's dedication of the Adolph Hitler Memorial Park, and remarks by the Brazilian President calling Brazilian Jews

\textsuperscript{51} Schram, 30-1.
'unpatriotic' for supporting Israel.\textsuperscript{52} Israel had been established to provide Jews from all over the world a haven from persecution, and the Soviet refusal to allow Soviet Jews to immigrate to Israel was an issue that was highly important to Jews everywhere, including the United States.

During the early Democratic primaries, Washington Senator Henry 'Scoop' Jackson, who was also running for president, was considered by many to have the political support of most American Jews. Wise disagreed. He believed that if Jackson was challenged on multiple issues, much of the Jewish electorate could be persuaded to vote for Carter.\textsuperscript{53} Wise advised Eizenstat that "the Jewish vote is attainable with the right message and the right organization," so the Carter campaign should put "before Jewish groups a full platform of ideas."\textsuperscript{54} Wise suggested that Carter be vocal about his belief:

in Israel's right to exist, on [his] insistence that UN Resolutions 242 and 338 be enforced in the settlement of the Mid-east stalemate, that all nations uphold the int'l conventions on human rights thus giving Jews in foreign lands the right to emigrate to Israel if they so wish, and that PLO terrorism cannot be condoned.\textsuperscript{55}

Wise agreed with the Brookings Institute that any solution to the Middle East's problems must include a settlement of the Palestinian situation, but he seemed to underestimate the difficulty of finding such a settlement. Almost casually, Wise said that "the only stumbling blocks to be erased are the creation of some legitimate representation for


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 34, 30.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 30.
the P'tinian people and a guaranteed pledge of non-aggression by all parties concerned." A year later, when President Carter attempted to find ways to implement those policies, he frequently seemed surprised by Israel's hesitancy and occasional obstreperousness.

Astonishing many political observers, Carter won eight of the first ten Democratic primaries and positioned himself as the presumptive Democratic candidate for president. Democrats (including many Jews) rallied to the Carter campaign, and Carter began to increase his efforts to win the support of Jewish leaders. In early May 1976, Carter met with former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir in the Waldorf Towers. Although Meir did not make any statement concerning the meeting, the Carter camp publicized it, and Carter referred to Meir as “an old friend” in the newspaper coverage of his visit.

Carter also worked hard to overcome the worries of many American Jews raised by his evangelical Christianity. During a luncheon in San Diego with Robert J. Lipshutz, Carter's campaign treasurer and a Jew, local Jewish leaders "expressed fears that Carter's fundamentalist Southern Baptist beliefs might cause him to be unsympathetic towards Jews and Jewish causes." Political experts likened concerns about Carter's Baptist faith to a similar worry about John F. Kennedy's Catholicism during his 1960 Presidential campaign, and like Kennedy, Carter addressed the issue directly. Speaking before an audience of

58 Schram, 156-7.
Jewish community leaders in Los Angeles, Carter reassured them that "We share a common background and a common belief...There is no conflict between us," and asked that they learn about his faith before making judgments.60

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, the national director of inter-religious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, discussed Carter's faith in a memorandum to more than 800 Jewish leaders across the country titled "Carter, Evangelism, and Jews." Because Carter had been so vocal in declaring the importance of his evangelical faith, Tannenbaum recognized that it was understandable for American Jews to wonder if he "would help resurrect a mentality of second-class political status for non-evangelicals?" But Tanenbaum then warned that "It is no more accurate or responsible to lump together all evangelicals into one group than it is to generalize about 'the Jews' or 'the Catholics.'"62

Carter continued to attract Jewish support as more Jewish leaders began to publicly endorse his candidacy. By the end of May, New York's first Jewish Mayor, Abraham Beame, had given Carter his endorsement, as had former Brandeis University President Morris B. Abram. Peter Strauss, a radio station president who had held important positions in the presidential campaign of Lyndon Johnson and the senatorial campaign of Robert Kennedy and had previously supported Hubert Humphrey also endorsed Carter, stating that he was "satisfied, as a Jew and as a Democrat that he would be a damned good President."63

63 Ibid.
In June 1976, Carter used a speech in New Jersey as an opportunity to elaborate his policies on Middle Eastern issues and to reiterate his commitment to Israel; to explain his attitudes toward the problems plaguing the region. He began this statement to a primarily Jewish audience of local political, community, and religious leaders in Elizabethtown, New Jersey by mentioning his lifelong affinity for the land and people of Israel which began with its Biblical importance. Carter then said that only “a just and lasting settlement” for all parties would bring about an end to the warfare and terrorism which had threatened all sides. Carter also explained that “the American people as well as the people of Israel and the Arab States look to the United States government to help lead the way.” Carter repeatedly made clear that his first priority, his “constant and unswerving goal must be the survival of Israel as a Jewish state.” This was “a moral imperative.”

During his Elizabethtown speech, Carter also explained his commitment to bringing about face-to-face negotiations between the Israelis and the Arabs. He believed that, with the trust of both sides, the American government could act as a mediator during peace negotiations and provide the motivation for a comprehensive settlement guided by UN Resolution 242. Carter outlined the points he believed this settlement had to include to have any chance of success. These were, “first of all the recognition of Israel…; second, diplomatic relations with Israel; third, a peace treaty with Israel; fourth, open frontiers by

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Israel’s neighbors; last, an end to embargo and to official hostile propaganda against the State of Israel.”

Carter stood by his commitment to seek resolutions of international human rights issues, however, by calling for a just settlement of the problem of Palestinian refugees. He reminded his audience that UN 242 called for "withdrawal of Israel’s armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict," although what constituted a sufficient withdrawal had not been specified and consequently the final borders could be adjusted with the approval of the involved states. But he also acknowledged that the Palestinian people had rights that “must be recognized in any settlement.” Carter’s comments on the Palestinians during a speech reaffirming the strength of both America’s and his personal support of Israel might reflect the degree of influence the Brookings Report had on forming his Middle Eastern policies. Carter advocated a comprehensive peace treaty, and his Elizabethtown speech reflected this goal.

However, as the presidential campaign progressed and the electoral importance of the Jewish vote increased, Carter’s statements on the Middle East put less stress on the needs of the Palestinians. Even during the Elizabethtown address, Carter tried to reassure Jewish voters by declaring that the “[f]inal borders between Israel and her neighbors should be determined in direct negotiations between the parties, and they should not be imposed from

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outside.” He also warned that terrorism would not be rewarded, so any group who used terrorism as a political tool (i.e. the PLO) would have no role in the peace process. In ending his address, Carter tied his policies toward Israel and the Middle East into a general theme of his campaign, the need for bipartisan support for an American foreign policy influenced by open and informed public debate of the issues; a foreign policy that was based “on truth, justice, equality and a true representation of [the American] moral character and the compassion of [the American] people.”

By this point in the campaign, the Carter campaign was looking beyond the Democratic Convention, and the Elizabethtown speech was an attempt to garner support before the upcoming contest with President Ford. Carter understood that Israel's welfare was the paramount foreign policy concern of many American Jews, and he courted their approval with the pro-Israeli statements with which he began his address.

Additionally, the comprehensive treaty that Carter outlined included elements that American Jews favored such as the normalization of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors and the end of Arab-Israeli belligerence. However, Carter also advocated policies that were not supported by the majority of American Jews: the need for Israel to withdraw from most of the territories occupied during the 1967 War and the establishment of a Palestinian entity. Yet these statements were largely ignored in the press coverage of Carter's speech as political observers focused primarily on Carter's attempts at increasing his Jewish

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support. During the campaign, Carter would not retreat from these unpopular views, but by November he had ceased to publicize them.

As the Democratic National Convention neared, the foreign policy messages coming from Carter remained faithful to the ideas of his early campaign. In the platform proposals that Carter presented in June 1976 he focused primarily on domestic issues; however, the proposals mentioned that the United States "cannot and should not try to intervene militarily in the internal affairs of other countries unless [its] own security is endangered," nor should it seek unilateral solutions to international crises. They lamented the “unnecessary secrecy [that] surrounds the inner workings of our own government.” The platform deemed the Middle East “a key testing area for our capacity to construct a more cooperative international system.” It added that this system would be based on “a clear and absolute American commitment to ensure Israel’s security and survival as a Jewish State,” and would “never attempt to impose a settlement in Israel, nor…force Israel to make territorial concessions which are detrimental to her security.”

Carter also reaffirmed his belief that the solution to the Middle East crises lay in direct negotiations between the Arabs and the Israelis, and he asserted that the United States

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72 Ibid.
74 Ibid., 247-8.
“should make multilateral diplomacy a major part of our efforts.”75 During an appearance on "Meet the Press," just days before the Democratic National Convention, Carter again repeated his intention to treat another oil embargo (which he termed blackmail) as "a declaration of economic war," and he would respond with a counter-embargo that would include “any food, weapons, spare parts for weapons, oil drilling rigs, oil pipes, or anything.”76

During his speech accepting the Democratic Party’s nomination for President, Carter announced that “It is time for America to move and to speak not with boasting and belligerence but with a quiet strength, to depend in world affairs not merely on the size of an arsenal but on the nobility of ideas.” He cautioned that:

The foremost responsibility of any President, above all else, is to guarantee the security of our nation—a guarantee of freedom from the threat of successful attack or blackmail, and the ability with our allies to maintain peace.

But peace is not the mere absence of war. Peace is action to stamp out international terrorism. Peace is the unceasing effort to preserve human rights.77

In the weeks after the convention, Carter and his advisors met in Plains, Georgia for a series of policy meetings on defense, economic, foreign, and domestic issues. After meeting with his “foreign policy advisory group,” Carter reaffirmed that his statement on the Middle East given in Elizabethtown “was an adequate expression of my concern [about the Middle

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East] at this point,” and “emphasizing the fact that…[w]e have to have a consistent, unshakable, unchanging commitment of support for Israel, and with that understanding and acceptance within the Israeli nation that we can have a good hope for peace in the Middle East. 78

During the general election campaign, Carter continued to try to attract Jewish votes. In early September, he spoke before the B’nai B’rith, a Jewish fraternal organization and an important member of AIPAC, the powerful pro-Israel lobby. Carter focused on his opposition to the Arab boycotts of businesses with Jewish or Israeli ties and the Soviet Union's slow implementation of its agreement to allow the emigration of Jews living in the Soviet Bloc. Carter also asserted that the United States "should use our influence to increase freedom in those countries that depend on us for their very survival." He continued, stating that:

    Denials of human rights occur in many places and many ways…
    I do not say to you that these are simple issues…
    But the present administration has been so obsessed with balance of power politics that it has often ignored basic American values and a proper concern for human rights. The leaders of this administration have rationalized that there is little room for morality in foreign affairs, and that we must put self-interest above principle.
    I disagree strongly. 79

Carter had frequently spoken of the importance he placed on supporting international human rights causes and had discussed the human rights crisis facing the Palestinians during his

Elizabethtown speech. But while addressing an audience of influential American Jews at B'nai B'rith as Election Day neared he made no mention of the Palestinians or their rights.

The next night, President Ford addressed the B'nai B'rith, declaring that America's ties with Israel "have never been closer or stronger." Ford claimed that, in the preceding two years, the "United States has helped bring about a momentum towards peace that has no parallel in Middle East history...[and] the forces of moderation—leaders who were willing to commit themselves to the peace process—were strengthened." He stressed the importance of the Sinai Agreement and he promised to continue working to force the Soviet Union to allow Jews to emigrate, having already "raised [the issue] personally with General Secretary Brezhnev." The B'nai B'rith audience responded to Ford's statements positively—Ford's speech received far more enthusiastic applause than had Carter's the night before.

But enthusiastic applause does not always correspond to equally fervent support; the tone of the coverage of the campaign in the Jewish press was distinctly pro-Carter. The Carter campaign's attempts to attract Jewish voters and its frequent attacks on Ford's Middle

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81 Ibid., 813.
82 Ibid., 815.
Eastern policies bore fruit, and he gained endorsements from Jewish leaders. \(^{85}\) Few Jews voted for Republican candidates; from 1932 to 1976 the Republican Party earned an average of 28\% of the Jewish vote. \(^{86}\) But the Jewish vote could be crucial in winning "key northern urban states," like New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. \(^{87}\) Carter had lost the New York primary to Senator Jackson, so gaining popularity with Jewish voters was important. \(^{88}\)

In late September, Carter continued strengthening his connections with the American Jewish community by answering questions sent to him by Jewish organizations. The Jewish Trade Association (JTA) gave both Carter and Ford a list of questions that its members felt were important. These covered topics as disparate as the candidates' attitudes toward economic and military aid for Israel and their stances on busing and affirmative action.

Carter took advantage of the JTA's questions to reiterate his support for Israel. He firmly assured the JTA of his continued support of Israel, in addition to his pledge not to use aid "in a carrot and stick fashion." \(^{89}\) Carter went on to say that, "Israel must feel secure in the support it expects from America in order to take the necessary risks for peace." \(^{90}\)

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\(^{87}\) Lazarowitz, 115.


\(^{90}\) Ibid., 1.
With regard to Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy, Carter stated that although Sinai II could form the basis of a meaningful, lasting peace, any future negotiations under Carter's leadership would be different. He believed that the United States should not apply "overt pressure" on Israel to make concessions because that would only strengthen the Arab belief that "intransigence [would] ultimately produce American pressure for Israeli retreats to which the Arabs need not reciprocate."\(^{91}\)

In an answer to a letter from the Boston Jewish Community Council (JCC), Carter stated that he would not expect Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights or Old Jerusalem, and that any changes in the current borders should be negotiated in a face-to-face meeting among all of those concerned. He also reiterated his belief that the PLO should not be included in any negotiations while it refused to recognize Israel's right to exist and advocated the use of terrorism. This letter spawned articles in the Boston Globe as well as the Jewish Advocate of Boston, garnering publicity for Carter's policies and building broad-based support in the Jewish communities.\(^{92}\) Carter's repeated pledge of support for Israel assuaged the anxieties of Jewish voters who initially had been "apprehensive about Carter's conspicuous Christianity."\(^{93}\)

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On October 6, the second presidential debate gave Carter another opportunity to increase his support amongst the Jewish community. After the first debate (which had focused on domestic issues) was considered a tie or a Ford victory, the second debate (on foreign policy) became more important to the Carter campaign.\textsuperscript{94} The major story after the second debate was President Ford’s comment that, “There is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe,”\textsuperscript{95} and his subsequent failure to correct the gaffe.

The Middle East was discussed often during the debate, and the tone was adversarial. From the first question, Carter aggressively attacked Ford’s foreign policy record, and Ford defended himself equally as forcefully. The Ford administration, Carter accused, was “almost all style and spectacular, and not substance.”\textsuperscript{96} Carter continued: “We’ve lost, in our foreign policy, the character of the American people. We’ve ignored or excluded the American people and the Congress from participation in the shaping of our foreign policy. It’s been one of secrecy and exclusion.”\textsuperscript{97}

However, Ford did not let Carter’s attacks go unanswered. He quickly began to list the many issues where his administration had had success. One of these areas, Ford claimed, was the Middle East:

\begin{displayquote}
[M]aybe 2 years ago—the Soviet Union looked like they had continued strength in the Middle East. Today, according to Prime Minister Rabin, the Soviet Union is weaker in the Middle East than they have been in many, many years. The facts are the Soviet Union relationship with Egypt is at a low level;
\end{displayquote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{94} Schram, 314-5.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\end{flushright}

Ford also used the Middle East to counter Carter’s claim that the Republican administration was too secretive. Ford reminded the audience that when he had submitted the Sinai II agreement to Congress, he had also “submitted every single document that was applicable to [it.]”\footnote{Gerald Ford, “The Second Presidential Debate, San Francisco, CA, October 6, 1976,” in The Presidential Campaign 1976 Volume Three, The Debates (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1978), 98.} Additionally, Ford claimed that “because Arab nations and the Israelis trust the United States, we were able to take the lead in the Sinai II agreement,” and that under his continued governance, America would continue to “have the leadership role in moving toward a comprehensive settlement of the Middle Eastern problems.”\footnote{Ibid., 111.}

As the debate continued, the two candidates argued over other foreign policy issues, including arms shipments to the Middle East and Ford’s response to the Arab boycott of American companies that did business with Israel or had Jews in leadership positions.\footnote{The Arab League had instituted a boycott against Israel after 1948; the primary boycott prohibited direct trade between Arab League member states and Israel while the secondary boycott prohibited foreign companies that did business in Israel from also doing business in Arab League states. Congress had made it illegal for American companies to cooperate with the boycott in 1976, but the enforcement of the statute had been weak.}\footnote{Ibid., 111.} However, despite the belief by foreign policy experts that Ford had largely “handled himself well in defending America’s foreign policy[,]…the Eastern Europe comments [about Poland]
proved a political blunder.\textsuperscript{102} The Carter campaign left the second debate with Carter’s popularity increasing and Ford's popularity decreasing.

In the month before Election Day, Carter continued to increase his attractiveness to the Jewish community at the expense of President Ford. During the primaries, Carter had been the least popular Democratic candidate to Jewish voters.\textsuperscript{103} In the national election, it would have been unprecedented for Ford to win a majority of the Jewish vote, but he could have taken enough votes away from Carter to be significant in the final electoral count.\textsuperscript{104} But Carter's efforts and Ford's missteps combined to damage Ford's standing with Jewish voters.

One issue that arose immediately after the second debate was the Ford administration's handling of proposed anti-boycott legislation. Arab countries were refusing to trade with Israel and had enacted a secondary boycott by forcing American companies "sign binding agreements not to do business with Israel as a prerequisite to making a deal in an Arab country."\textsuperscript{105}

In response, the United States Congress passed anti-boycott legislation that affected the tax status of companies who complied with the Arab trade embargo and was actively considering passing the more forceful Export Administration Act. During the second presidential debate, Ford had said that:

\textsuperscript{102} Schram, 318.
\textsuperscript{103} Alan M. Fisher, "Realignment of the Jewish Vote?" \textit{Political Science Quarterly} 94, no. 1 (Spring, 1979): 107-9.
\textsuperscript{105} Carter, \textit{Keeping Faith}, 278.
I signed a tax bill that included an amendment that would prevent companies in the United States from taking a tax deduction if they have in any way whatsoever, cooperated with the Arab boycott.

And last week, when we were trying to get the Export Administration Act through the Congress—necessary legislation—my administration went to Capitol Hill and tried to convince the House and the Senate that we should have an amendment on that legislation which would take strong and effective action against those who participate or cooperate with the Arab boycott.106

This was not true. Connecticut's Democratic Senator Abraham Ribicoff had authored the amendment referred to by Ford, and after the debate Senator Ribicoff stated that he was "amazed at the misrepresentation of the Administration's position."107 Ribicoff further declared that "the truth is that the President's entire Administration fought to kill the anti-boycott section in the tax bill. The State Department, the Treasury Department and other Administration spokesmen lobbied intensively against [its] inclusion."108 Furthermore, after the debate, Congressional Democrats drew attention to the fact that it had been the threat of a filibuster by Republican Senator, John G. Tower, the ranking Republican on the Senate Banking Committee, which had ensured that the Export Administration Act had not passed.109

The apparent disingenuousness in Ford's statements was detailed in the Jewish press. The Jewish Week reported that "A basic difference of opinion has developed between the Ford Administration and the Jewish community, or at least a substantial part of it, over the

108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
Arab boycott of Americans doing business with Israel."\textsuperscript{110} The \textit{Jewish Telegraphic Agency} quoted statements by Seymour Graubard, the national chairman of the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League that Ford's comments were "not in accord with the facts" as "Administration spokesmen have consistently opposed adoption of effective anti-boycott legislation."\textsuperscript{111} Those articles juxtaposed Ford's claims with Carter's anti-boycott statements and detailed the praise that Carter's police had elicited from Jewish leaders.\textsuperscript{112}

Another issue where Ford disappointed Jewish voters was the sale of Maverick missiles to Saudi Arabia. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee had voted in September 1976 to block the sale, but Vice President Nelson Rockefeller informed the Committee chair, Democratic Senator John Sparkman of Alabama, that the Ford administration was worried about the "tremendous power that country [Saudi Arabia] exercises over oil."\textsuperscript{113} Eventually, the administration succeeded in persuading two Senators to change their initial opposition, and the administration proceeded with the sale of 650 Maverick missiles to Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{114} This alarmed supporters of Israel, not only because it meant that one of its enemies would have a new sophisticated weapon, but also because it seemed to presage an ominous tilt toward the oil rich Arabs.

\textsuperscript{111} "Jewish Groups Comment on Debate," \textit{Jewish Telegraphic Agency}, October 8, 1976.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
By the end of October, Ford and Carter were separated only by a single percentage point in Gallup's polls of likely voters. Consequently, the importance of Jewish voters (many of whom lived in "key northern urban states") increased, and Carter's strategies to court Jewish votes proved crucial. Democratic strategists like William Du Chessi, the AFL-CIO Committee for Political Education's representative to the Carter campaign, stated that "We need a heavy Jewish vote," and noted that the Jewish vote could be crucial in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida, and California. Two important members of the Carter campaign, Ed Sanders (who had resigned as AIPAC's chair to join Carter's staff) and Steven Lowell (a former chair of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry), had announced in September that they hoped to win 85% of the Jewish vote like Hubert Humphrey had in his 1968 presidential bid. But as the election neared, the degree of Carter's Jewish support was still uncertain.

Carter's attempt to attract Jewish votes was aided by a statement made by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George S. Brown. Brown had told an Israeli journalist in April that Israel was a military burden to the United States. But though the interview had taken place in April, the article was not published until October, when it created another crisis for Ford to mitigate. Although Ford's Secretary of Defense, Donald

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116 Lazarowitz, 115.
118 “2 Key Jewish Leaders in Carter Mondale Campaign Set Goal to Get 85% of the Jewish Vote," Jewish Telegraphic Agency, September 29, 1976.
Rumsfeld called the statement "inelegant," the General was not reprimanded. This was unpopular with Jewish Americans, many of whom were calling for Brown's dismissal.\(^{119}\)

Nor was the Ford administration's popularity with Jewish voters helped by a survey of the leaders of Arab-American organizations conducted by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. According to an article published a week before the election, Ford had the support of the majority of Arab American voters, and was thought to be most likely to resist Israeli influence and find a fair solution to "the injustices there."\(^{120}\)

Carter would ultimately win the election by a narrow margin, and the Jewish vote proved pivotal in states like Pennsylvania, New York, and Ohio.\(^{121}\) If Carter had lost just 10,000 votes cast by Ohio's Jewish community he would have lost the election, as he would have if he had split the Jewish vote in New York instead of winning by a large margin.\(^{122}\) Nationally, Carter received about 75% of the Jewish vote, less than the goal of 85% set by his staff but more than the 65% that George McGovern received four years earlier.\(^{123}\)

After Carter won the election he began to assemble his Cabinet. Cyrus Vance was an important member of the Carter team, and according to Carter's memoir, became the closest


\(^{123}\) Richard Yaffe, "Carter Aides Credit Key States Largely to Big Jewish Vote," *The New York Jewish Week*, November 13, 1976; Lazarowitz, 117.
to the President on a personal level. He was a lawyer and had been Secretary of the Army under President Kennedy and Deputy Secretary of Defense under President Johnson. Carter picked advisors who he thought would work well with his leadership style—a style rooted in his detail-oriented background as an engineer. Vance, as Secretary of State, would provide the Carter administration with a link to the political mainstream. He was "representative of the establishment" especially in foreign policy matters; he had served as President Johnson's deputy chief negotiator during the Paris peace talks with North Vietnam, in addition to his time in the Departments of the Army and Defense. Vance was popular with Washington's Democratic political insiders, and he shared Carter's idealism.

In the fall of 1976, Vance prepared a memo summarizing “if not all the trees in the foreign affairs forest, at least the clumps of trees.” This, of course, included the Middle East. Vance said that although the Middle East would “require prompt attention,” negotiations between the Arabs and Israelis were “on the back burner.” Consequently, Carter should:

- not take any strong initiative in the first several months, which should be devoted to quiet diplomacy directed to building a base for resumption of serious settlement discussions. Ultimately, … [a] settlement would involve the Arabs’ agreeing to normalization of relations with Israel in exchange for return of most of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967… In reaching such an agreement, the US should enlist, at an appropriate time, the aid of the Soviet Union.

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126 McLellan, 25-6.
128 Vance, 448.
This memo is important because it outlined the strategy that Carter would follow in seeking Middle East peace in 1977. This strategy, which included many elements of the Brookings Report, would take US foreign policies in a very different direction from those of Ford and Kissinger. Kissinger had worked hard to eliminate Soviet influence in the Middle East, and had achieved considerable success through his step-by-step policy of bilateral negotiations using the United States as an intermediary.129 During the campaign, Carter had promised to seek a comprehensive Middle Eastern peace treaty that addressed the unresolved issues of the 1967 and 1973 Wars. The Soviet Union had been involved in these conflicts and was a co-sponsor of the Geneva peace conference that had convened after the 1973 War. Vance believed the Soviet Union should be involved in any new peace negotiations. Additionally, he thought that the Soviet Union could pressure its Arab allies like Syria to cooperate.

After Vance agreed to become the Secretary of State, Carter chose Zbigniew Brzezinski as National Security Advisor. Although Brzezinski, a self-described "activist," had been one of candidate Carter’s principle foreign policy advisors, some of those close to him were concerned that he might be, as Carter himself admitted, "aggressive and ambitious, and that on controversial subjects he might be inclined to speak out too forcefully…[as well as not being] adequately deferential to a secretary of state."

However, because Carter planned on firmly directing foreign policy from the White House, he wanted an advisor who was “not handicapped by the inertia of a tenured bureaucracy or the responsibility for implementing policies after they were evolved.”130

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129 Stein, 182-3.
130 Carter, Keeping Faith, 51-53. 
Brzezinski had been an important contributor to the Brookings Report, and agreed with Carter that a comprehensive Middle Eastern peace treaty should be a priority. Along with Vice President Mondale and at times Defense Secretary Harold Brown, this made up the team of senior officials who would assist President Carter in formulating his Middle Eastern policy.

Other important staff members who would play key roles in the creation of the Carter administration's peace initiatives were William Quandt and Alfred "Roy" Atherton. Quandt, the Middle East Director for the NSC had worked with Brzezinski on the Brookings Report, while Atherton had been Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asia under Kissinger, and remained in that position under Carter. They would all be busy.

Even though the 1976 election focused more on domestic concerns than foreign issues, the discussion of the Middle East was important during the campaign for two reasons: first, the Jewish vote provided the margin of victory in some states; second, it laid the groundwork for Carter's important peace initiatives in 1977. When Carter took office in January 1977, the Middle East peace process would become one of the most pressing topics for the new administration. Israeli government officials had not publicly supported either Ford or Carter, but once Carter entered the White House and formulated a Middle East policy, they would redouble their efforts to influence American politics. Carter, likewise, would try to hang onto his Jewish support.

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131 Friedlander, 29.
CHAPTER TWO

After President Carter took office in January 1977, one of the first decisions he had to make was whether to make Middle East peace negotiations a priority for his first year as President. Both Vance and Brzezinski counseled moving forward with new peace initiatives, and the president agreed.\textsuperscript{133} Successful peace negotiations between Israel and the Arabs would benefit Carter in many ways. He would earn favor with Jewish voters, reduce tensions in the Middle East lessening the likelihood of a war that could cause a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, and resolve the human rights crisis of the Palestinians.

But perhaps most importantly to Carter, an American sponsored peace treaty would facilitate his energy policies. One of the many issues on which Carter had campaigned was preventing another disastrous Arab oil embargo by reducing America's dependence on foreign oil. He also promised to secure the goodwill of the Arab members of OPEC by finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli imbroglio.

Indeed, in December 1976, Saudi Arabia proved its willingness to cooperate with the United States with an announcement that it would supply the United States with oil at a more favorable price than the other Arab OPEC states.\textsuperscript{134} Carter entered office determined to find a way to "solidify Washington's relations with the Arab and Third worlds in general and with Saudi Arabia and Syria in particular."\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{133} Vance, 164-6; Brzezinski, 85-7.
\textsuperscript{135} Indyk, 12-3.
Beginning with a meeting of the Policy Review Committee on February 4, 1977 a series of meetings and discussions were held to decide on American policy toward the Middle East including whether to pursue a policy of step-by-step bilateral negotiations, building on the Sinai I and II treaties negotiated by Henry Kissinger or to attempt to reach a comprehensive treaty to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This choice would illustrate whether Carter intended to alter the methods by which the United States pursued its Middle Eastern objectives. Under Presidents Nixon and Ford, Henry Kissinger had negotiated treaties that were limited in their scope, and had effectively shut out the Soviet Union from the peace process. This was the step-by-step approach. Carter viewed the Arab-Israeli conflict as the key to achieving his Middle Eastern objectives. Consequently, his administration favored the negotiation of a comprehensive peace treaty that would involve all of the participants in the conflict.\textsuperscript{136} The step-by-step negotiations of the Republican administrations were indelibly linked with Henry Kissinger in the minds of the Arabs and Israelis, and by 1977 seemed to have reached the limit of their effectiveness. Carter had castigated Kissinger's secretive negotiations during the presidential campaign, and wanted to pursue a different style of foreign policy.

But if the Carter administration decided to seek a comprehensive peace treaty they would face several challenges. When it was adopted on October 22, 1973, United Nations Resolution 338 had directed the cease-fire that ended the 1973 War. It also included a provision that called for a peace conference to be held in Geneva, Switzerland under the

\textsuperscript{136} Harvey Sicherman, “American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” \textit{Orbis} 55, no. 3 (Summer, 2011): 438-9.
sponsorship of the United States and the Soviet Union to negotiate a comprehensive peace treaty. This Geneva Conference opened in December, 1973 but because Syria did not send a delegation, it quickly adjourned. Carter decided that new comprehensive negotiations would occur in the context of this Geneva peace conference.

This meant that the Soviet Union, as co-chair of Geneva, would be involved in the peace process. Another difficulty that Geneva would bring was the issue of the Palestinians. The original conference had been a meeting of foreign ministers, with no separate representation for Palestinians. But in 1974, the Arab League had decided that the PLO was the only organization authorized to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians. Israel refused to meet with any representative of the PLO while it refused to recognize Israel's right to exist, so if Carter wanted to hold a Geneva conference, his administration would have to find a way for Palestinians to be represented that would be acceptable to all of the participants.

The PRC meeting on February 4, 1977 focused on three issues: aid to Israel, anti-boycott legislation, and the peace process. On the first point, the PRC concluded that Israel did not have an urgent need for an increase to the level of military aid set by the Ford administration; that Israel was stronger than it had been since 1973 and could handle any potential threat using the current levels of military aid.137

Consequently, the PRC decided to recommend that Congress maintain the Ford administration's level of military assistance to Israel at $1 billion, but increase Israel's economic aid by $285 million bringing the total aid package to $1.785 billion. This would

137 Memorandum, Jeanne W. Davis to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Summary of Conclusions of PRC Meeting on Middle East," 2/4/77, Meetings: PRC 2 2/4/77 Folder, Brzezinski Collection, Subject File-Meetings (Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski) through Meetings (PRC 55), Box 24, Jimmy Carter Library, 7.
provide some compensation to Israel for the cancellation of the proposed co-production of
the XF-17 fighter and America's refusal to allow the Israeli Kfir fighter aircraft to be
exported to Ecuador, but not inflame Arab opinion and thereby threaten the proposed peace
negotiations. 138

With regard to anti-boycott legislation being proposed by the American Congress, the
PRC recommended that Carter delay making a decision until after Vance returned from his
scheduled trip to the Middle East to meet with Arab and Israeli leaders. In the meantime, the
administration would privately meet with members of Congress to determine if greater
efforts to enforce the legislation passed during the Ford administration might preclude the
necessity of passing new legislation that might anger Arab leaders and cause their
intransigence during upcoming peace negotiations. 139

Finally, the PRC turned to the issue of Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. During the
presidential campaign, Carter had repeatedly stated his preference for a comprehensive peace
agreement that would involve all of the states involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict (as well as
the Palestinians), but the PRC also considered continuing Kissinger's step-by-step approach.
The discussion began with information from the CIA which provided context for the
alternatives open to Carter. According to the CIA, the Egyptians, Saudis, and Syrians "all
want to appear to be constructive and are pressing the PLO to adopt a moderate position." 140
And the Arabs would probably attend a Geneva conference even without the participation of

138 Memorandum, Jeanne W. Davis to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Summary of Conclusions of PRC Meeting on
Middle East," 2/4/77, Meetings: PRC 2 2/4/77 Folder, Brzezinski Collection, Subject File-Meetings
(Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski) through Meetings (PRC 55), Box 24, Jimmy Carter Library, 5.
139 Ibid., 8.
140 Ibid., 11.
the PLO, provided that the Arabs and Palestinians could reach some sort of agreement beforehand.\footnote{Memorandum, Jeanne W. Davis to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Summary of Conclusions of PRC Meeting on Middle East," 2/4/77, Meetings: PRC 2 2/4/77 Folder, Brzezinski Collection, Subject File-Meetings (Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski) through Meetings (PRC 55), Box 24, Jimmy Carter Library, 11-2.}

Additionally, the political situation in Egypt was becoming critical. The CIA had concluded a study that determined Egypt would not be capable to go to war with Israel during 1977, and, more importantly, that Egypt's President Anwar Sadat was in trouble. According to the intelligence estimate, "Sadat's position has seriously deteriorated…and he needs to take some move to recoup his prestige. His ties with the West are being questioned…[and] Sadat's future depends on what the US does."\footnote{Ibid., 12.} Finally, the Soviets were also monitoring the situation closely and would not preclude the possibility of attending a conference in Geneva if they could appear to be "the Arab champion."\footnote{Ibid.}

Brzezinski favored the United States adopting an "active role" in the peace process, stating that "the situation is more propitious than it has been in the past 23 years."\footnote{Ibid.} But he believed that before a Geneva conference could be convened, it was necessary to hold meetings with Middle Eastern leaders to clarify several issues such as what the Arabs meant by "peace" and "to get across the notion of separating secure defense lines from recognized borders."\footnote{Ibid., 12-3.} Brzezinski recognized that the Arabs would not accept substantial changes to
their 1967 borders, but that to guarantee Israel's security, "special security lines or [demilitarized] zones" would probably have to be established. ¹⁴⁶

Vance agreed that his trip to the region should be used for both substantive and procedural issues as well as clarifying many "generalities on both sides." ¹⁴⁷ Vance also stated that he believed "the time was shorter than some others do. It will be very difficult to put off Geneva beyond September." ¹⁴⁸ He believed that if the negotiations were delayed any longer the multitude of interrelated issues would complicate the situation beyond hope of a resolution.

The PRC concluded that the limited goals that could be obtained by shuttle diplomacy were no longer sufficient. A comprehensive agreement between Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Israel and perhaps involving Saudi Arabia was the optimal goal. It would mean that Israel had both peace and diplomatic recognition from all of the neighboring states with which it had fought, and (if Saudi Arabia was included) the richest state in the region and the center of Muslim culture worldwide. However, if it proved impossible to reach a comprehensive treaty, other partial settlements still remained as fall back positions. On the basis of these findings, Carter sent Secretary Vance to the Middle East to meet with Arab and Israeli leaders and start building “a consensus that with active US leadership, the common goal would be a new Geneva conference in the second half of 1977”. ¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Brzezinski, 87.
¹⁴⁸ Ibid.
¹⁴⁹ Vance, 166-7.
During the next several months, Carter, Vance, Brzezinski, and their staffs would try to work out the procedural and substantive issues surrounding a Geneva Conference. How would the Arabs and Israelis negotiate—in bilateral working groups or a unified Arab delegation? Would the actual conference simply be a forum to sign pre-agreed upon treaties or would substantive negotiations also occur? How would the Palestinians be included?

Additionally, President Carter would meet the Middle Eastern leaders during this period. Carter had decided in February to use these meetings as another opportunity (in addition to Vance's February trip) for discussing the different demands and positions of each of the region's leaders.150

The first Middle Eastern leader whom Carter met was the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on March 7, 1977. The meeting did not go well. The Israeli Labor Party had been losing popularity with Israel's electorate for several years following the surprise of the 1973 War and had also begun to fragment internally with Shimon Peres and Yigal Allon emerging to challenge Rabin's leadership.

Additionally, in 1976 Rabin's government had been shaken by several charges of corruption which culminated in the conviction of one party official and the suicide of the Minister of Housing. Because of these political scandals, new elections were scheduled for May 1977, elections that concerned Rabin more than did Carter's peace initiatives.151 American political observers expected Rabin and his Labor Party to win (Israel had been

151 Stein, 186-8.
governed by a Labor Prime Minister since its independence), and they hoped that the election would give his government a new political mandate, making it strong enough to make the compromises necessary for progress in peace negotiations.152

When Rabin made his trip to meet President Carter in early March 1977, however, he was not in "a position to undertake far-reaching policy decisions so close to election time."153 The Carter administration recognized this, but did not understand how just how shaky the Labor Party's domestic support was.

The meeting between the two leaders seemed to begin well. Carter restated his commitment to Israel and its security, and he promised that there would be no solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute imposed on Israel. Carter then asked for Rabin's opinion on whether 1977 was an appropriate time for a concerted effort to reconvene the Geneva Conference and how Palestinian participation should be handled. Rabin answered that the time was suitable for trying to come to a peace agreement, although what the Arabs considered peace differed greatly from what the Israelis required. The Arabs were willing to end the state of war between Israel and the Arab states, but did not want open borders, diplomatic relations, or cultural exchange. Rabin stated that Israel would not agree to any peace agreement that did not include the end of the state of war and "the building of concrete relations that establish new realities for everyday life."154

Carter also wanted to know if Israel would accept a settlement that would be implemented in stages. Rabin agreed that (as long as the principles of the agreement satisfied

152 Quandt, *Camp David*, 36.
154 Rabin, 293.
Israel's requirements) the implementation could be by stages, but the question worried him. Although he answered Carter's questions politely, Rabin did not favor a comprehensive treaty. The Israeli Prime Minister did not want to negotiate with all of the Arab states simultaneously. He preferred instead direct bilateral negotiations with each Arab state that would lead to separate treaties. Neither was he interested in making statements that could be later used against him during the Israeli elections.  

At the time of his visit, Rabin still hoped for a political resurgence that would culminate in his reelection as Prime Minister. Consequently, he had positioned himself as the moderate alternative to the challenger from the left of the Labor Party, Yiguel Allon, who favored a West Bank and Gaza under Palestinian self-rule associated with Jordan and under an Israeli military administration, and to his challenger from the right of the party, Simon Peres, who advocated increased Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and absolutely no negotiations with the PLO. Carter, however, pressed Rabin for specific recommendations and suggestions, making it difficult for him to maintain a vague middle-of-the-road position, and Rabin was non-committal. Regardless of what Rabin would have been willing to agree to after the elections were over, during his talks with Carter, he refused to get involved in specific details of a peace plan. Carter understood that Rabin was struggling under the pressures of a political campaign, but still interpreted Rabin's hesitancy as evasiveness. After the meetings, Carter wrote in his diary:

I found [Rabin] very timid, very stubborn, and also somewhat ill at ease… I asked him to tell me what Israel wanted me to do when I met with the Arab

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155 Stein, 188.
156 Friedlander, 28.
leaders and if there were something specific, for instance, that I could propose to Sadat. He didn’t unbend at all, nor did he respond…[I] am looking forward to seeing if [the Arab leaders] are more flexible than Rabin.  

Shortly after his visit, Rabin's hopes for another term as Prime Minister were ended when his wife was convicted of currency violations. The Carter administration still believed that the Labor Party would win the upcoming Israeli elections, but it also realized that until the installation of a new Israeli government, the American efforts should focus on the Arab states.

During a press conference on March 9, 1977 Carter made several statements concerning the borders of Israel that could result from a peace settlement that caused an immediate uproar in Israel. Carter referred to the important distinction between "defense lines" and "legal borders;" that it might be necessary to extend "Israeli defense capability beyond the permanent and recognized borders." He also stated that peace between Israel and its neighbors would require a "substantial withdrawal" of Israeli forces back to its pre-1967 borders with only "minor adjustments." However, he hastened to add that any borders would be determined by negotiations between the region's governments. But despite Carter's clarification, Israelis interpreted Carter's comment as representing a new American policy. UN 242 required that Israel withdraw from occupied territory in exchange for peace, but the degree of withdrawal was not clear in the resolution. It seemed to Israelis that the new (and still largely unknown) American president was committing the United States to a policy that

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157 Carter, Keeping Faith, 280.
advocated a complete Israeli withdrawal from the territory it had occupied in 1967.

Although the furor that Carter's press conference caused in Israel eventually subsided, Israelis were concerned with the statements coming from the White House.  

Then on March 16, Carter went further in summarizing his hopes for the Middle East during a statement at a town hall meeting in Massachusetts. Carter elaborated on the principles he had first discussed in his press conference a week earlier saying that the first requirement for peace was that the Arabs recognize Israel’s right to exist. This would include borders that were open “to travel, to tourism, to cultural exchange, [and] to trade.” The second necessity was the resolution through negotiations of the dispute surrounding what the appropriate borders of Israel were to be. The Arabs wanted Israel to withdraw completely from all territory occupied in 1967, while the Israelis wanted to adjust those borders.

Finally, there had to be a just resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem but the Palestinians first needed to end their calls for the destruction of Israel. (The Carter administration often would use the phrases Palestinian and PLO interchangeably.) However, Carter also recognized that "a homeland" must be "provided for the Palestinian refugees who have suffered for many, many years." The use of the word homeland went further than any previous US administration and greatly worried Israelis and many American Jewish and non-Jewish Zionists while encouraging the Arabs. At the end of his reply, the president

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160 "President Carter’s Response to a Question on the Middle East at the Clinton, Massachusetts Townhall Meeting- March 16, 1977” Brzezinski Collection, Box 13, Jimmy Carter Library.
described his view of the United States’ role as one of “a catalyst to bring about [the Arabs' and Israelis’] ability to negotiate successfully with one another.” Additionally, he stated that the goal of his administration was to “get all of [the] parties to agree to come together at Geneva…[and that if the parties agreed] to sit down and start talking and negotiating, that [there was] an excellent chance to achieve peace.”

Carter’s statements caused an immediate uproar as both Arabs and Israelis objected to elements of Carter's speeches. Israel claimed that security concerns necessitated that it retain a significant amount of the territory it had occupied since the 1967 War, and Israeli Prime Minister Rabin quickly rejected the idea of returning to the pre-1967 borders even with slight modifications. Political observers initially interpreted Carter's reference to a Palestinian homeland as an endorsement of a Palestinian state, which outraged Israelis and American Zionists. Israel's raison d'être was as the Jewish homeland, and Carter's use of the same word in conjunction with the Palestinians seemed to imply that there should be an analogous Palestinian state.

Brzezinski, however, was able to clarify the situation by assuring the Israeli ambassador Simcha Dinitz that the reference to a homeland "had no special political connotation." The Arabs were pleased by Carter's insistence on a resolution of the plight of Palestinian refugees but upset by Brzezinski's backpedaling in the wake of Jewish alarm.

161 “President Carter’s Response to a Question on the Middle East at the Clinton, Massachusetts Townhall Meeting- March 16, 1977” Brzezinski Collection, Box 13, Jimmy Carter Library.
Furthermore, Egyptian President Sadat refused to consider anything other than a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. In a March 12 address to the Palestine National Congress, Sadat promised "that we will not cede a single inch of Arab land and that our national territory is not open to bargaining."\(^{164}\) And finally, the Arabs were concerned that the "defense lines" that Carter mentioned could mean a continued Israeli presence in the occupied territories even after Israel's official withdrawal to its "legal borders."\(^{165}\)

The next Middle Eastern leader to meet with President Carter was Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat. This visit was very different from that of Rabin. Whatever Rabin and Carter lacked in personal chemistry was more than present between Carter and Sadat. Vance wrote of Sadat:

> He was wise and visionary, bold and courageous, yet at the same time, private and sensitive. Above all, he valued loyalty and friendship. Once his trust was gained, he would stand with you unfailingly.\(^{166}\)

Sadat's government was in trouble, and he desperately needed progress in the peace process. Although strategically important as a result of its location at the junction of Africa and Asia, Egypt has relatively limited natural resources. Consequently, Egyptian leaders have been forced to rely on external patronage to supplement Egypt's modest domestic production. Sadat's predecessor, Gamal Abd al-Nasser had attempted to play the Soviet Union and the United States against each other by not committing to either side. However,

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\(^{166}\) Vance, 174.
this policy failed and Nasser found himself dependent solely on Soviet assistance.\textsuperscript{167} When Sadat came to power in 1970 he began to move Egypt away from the Soviet sphere of influence and toward the United States. By 1977 Egypt had expelled all Soviet advisors from Egypt, signed two US brokered cease-fire and disengagement agreements with Israel, and abrogated the Soviet-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.\textsuperscript{168}

Despite Sadat's growing rapprochement with the West, however, the Egyptian economy was suffering. After the 1973 War, the shadow of war with Israel loomed over the region, and in this uncertain context, Egypt had not experienced the influx of Western investment its experts had predicted. By 1977, Egypt faced a $2 billion budget deficit and a national debt that was larger than its GDP.\textsuperscript{169} In order to secure an emergency loan of $130 million dollars from the International Monetary Fund, Sadat was forced to initiate currency reforms and attempted to cut government food subsidies. This resulted in riots breaking out across Egypt in January 1977, and the unrest further threatened Sadat's already weakened domestic support.\textsuperscript{170}

The nationwide "bread riots" forced Sadat to rely on Egypt's armed forces to maintain order; the riots were quelled only after bloody clashes between the army and the protestors. Sadat's use of the army against Egyptian citizens was extremely unpopular within the military, an important bulwark of his power. Egypt's military was already unhappy with the regional military situation by 1977. Israel had increased its military strength to 160% of

\textsuperscript{167} Indyk, 5-6.
\textsuperscript{168} For an analysis of Sadat's foreign policies from 1970 to 1976 see Meital, Chapters 4-7.
\textsuperscript{170} Friedlander, 4-6.
1973 levels, while Syria had been able to rearm after the war—thanks to Soviet Bloc largess—and so had regained 100% of its 1973 strength. Only Egypt's military had continued to decline, and it was worried that if Sadat's political policies were not successful, it would bear the brunt of the public's outrage.

Sadat had initiated drastic economic reforms in 1974 with his *Infitah* liberalizations that opened Egypt to foreign investment and aid.\(^{171}\) He had promised that these reforms would bring an economic boom, but by 1977 Egyptians were losing patience. Sadat still believed that his strategies for Egypt and the Middle East could work, but he had underestimated how long the process would take, and by Carter's inauguration, Sadat knew he needed rapid progress.\(^{172}\) To secure this progress, Sadat would have to change Egypt's relationship with Israel. The United States was firmly committed to Israel's security and survival. Therefore, as long as Egypt and Israel were enemies, American economic and military aid for Egypt would be inadequate.

When Sadat went to Washington on April 4, 1977, he was determined to ascertain if President Carter was indeed serious about taking a large role in the Middle Eastern peace process.\(^{173}\) In an interview on the US television program, "60 Minutes," Sadat made it clear that he hoped the United States would become an arbiter in the peace process; capable of pressuring both the Arabs and the Israelis. If so, Sadat proclaimed his willingness to cooperate, though he rejected the possibility of any settlement that did not include a full

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171 Brownlee, 649.
172 Indyk, 7-9.
173 Henry Tanner, “In the U.S. This Week, Sadat Will Try to Determine If the Optimism Is Justified,” *New York Times*, April 3, 1977; Vance, 173.
Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula or that involved 'security zones' where Israel maintained a military presence. He warned of Soviet attempts to regain influence in North Africa, and stressed Egypt's usefulness in countering these efforts. Sadat also stated that the Palestinians could not be separated from the Arab-Israeli dispute, and urged Carter to meet with the PLO, and further insisted that it be included in the Geneva conference.

The difficulty of PLO participation in any upcoming negotiations, however, was made readily apparent in a "60 Minutes" interview with PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat that aired the same day as that of Sadat. Despite admitting the importance of Carter's call for a Palestinian homeland, Arafat could not accept the possibility of recognizing Israel's right to exist. Since the Israeli government refused to have any contact with the PLO without this recognition, PLO participation in Geneva was one of the difficulties that needed to be addressed during Carter's upcoming meetings. The matter was further complicated by a pledge Henry Kissinger had made to Israel in 1975. While negotiating the Sinai II agreement, Kissinger had promised the Israelis that the United States would not recognize the PLO or negotiate with it until it accepted UN 242 and 338.

Brzezinski believed that despite Sadat’s well known penchant for hyperbole, the Egyptian president was “eager for a closer relationship with the United States.” The Department of Defense agreed, citing Sadat's well publicized desire for American

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174 Anwar Sadat, interview by Mike Wallace, 60 Minutes, CBS, March 27, 1977, transcript found in Egypt, President Sadat, 4/4-5/77: Cables and Memos Folder, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, VIP visit file, China through Egypt, Box 3, Jimmy Carter Library, 1-11; Indyk, 23.
175 Yasser Arafat, interview by Mike Wallace, 60 Minutes, CBS, March 27, 1977, transcript found in Egypt, President Sadat, 4/4-5/77: Cables and Memos Folder, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, VIP visit file, China through Egypt, Box 3, Jimmy Carter Library, 1-11.
176 Quandt, Peace Process, 169.
177 Brzezinski, 93.
Consequently, the American administration was hopeful that Sadat would be more open to compromise than Rabin had been. Before Sadat's arrival, Brzezinski sent Carter a memo in which he characterized the stages of normalization between the Arabs and Israelis and explained how difficult they would be for Sadat to endorse.

Brzezinski thought that if Israel ceased the construction of new settlements in the occupied territories the Arabs could be convinced to make concessions like toning down anti-Israeli propaganda, allowing Israeli ships to use the Suez Canal, and permitting entrance to third country travelers with Israeli passport stamps. More difficult would be issues like discussions in joint commissions on security issues, the pre-notification of military training near the borders, and the opening of consular offices. Ultimately, these would lead to the most difficult levels of normalization like full diplomatic relations and normal movement of people across borders.179

During Sadat's visit, Carter quickly became convinced of the sincerity of his wish for peace, and pressed him for concessions on some of the contentious issues. Despite his initial hesitancy, Sadat did eventually agree that some slight adjustments to the 1967 borders could

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be negotiated and that there was a possibility that relations between Israel and the Arabs could be normalized five years after a peace agreement was implemented.\footnote{Bernard Gwertzman, "Sadat Said to See Full Relations With Israel 5 Years After a Pact," \textit{New York Times}, April 8, 1977.}

Additionally, Sadat stated that as long as Palestinians were able to participate in negotiations that would result in the creation of a Palestinian "entity" he would be willing for Egyptians and Israelis to have direct negotiations, and he also stated his willingness to attend a peace conference in Geneva.\footnote{Bernard Gwertzman, "Sadat Tells Carter Palestinian Dispute is 'Crux' in Mideast: Calls for 'Political Entity,'" \textit{New York Times}, April 5, 1977.} While these were modest gains (and they came with some difficult preconditions, i.e. finding a procedure to include the Palestinians in Geneva that would be acceptable to all parties), they were the first compromises to come from any Arab leader.\footnote{Carter, \textit{Keeping Faith}, 283; Brzezinski, 93.} The administration was happy with the result of Sadat’s visit, and Carter wrote afterwards that he felt “the prospects for peace in [Sadat’s] troubled region might not be dead.”\footnote{Carter, \textit{Keeping Faith}, 282.}

After Sadat's successful visit to Washington, the PRC met on April 19 to evaluate the progress of the peace initiatives. Brzezinski was pleased with the framework delineated by Carter's public statements and believed that the basic principles of "comprehensive peace with minor territorial changes but with transitional security arrangements and with a homeland for the Palestinians" represented a "significant step forward" in the peace process.\footnote{Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, "Weekly National Security Report, #7," 4/1/77, Weekly Reports [to the President] 1-15: [2/77-6/77] Folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Subject File,}
The PRC meeting was held to decide how the United States should proceed in the coming months. Vance opened the discussion by asking whether a peace conference in Geneva during 1977 should still be the American goal. This immediately led to a discussion on what the format of such a conference should be while recognizing that a failed conference would be disastrous.\textsuperscript{185} The PRC quickly concluded that getting all of the parties to a Geneva conference by the end of 1977 was still the optimal objective, and the discussion shifted to determining the steps that would enable the convening of this conference.

One important factor that would influence the American timetable was the Israeli election scheduled for May 17, 1977. Despite the Labor Party's recent struggles, it was still the unanimous opinion of the attendees of the April PRC meeting that Shimon Peres, the Labor Party candidate, would be Israel's new Prime Minister. There was no discussion as to how America should proceed should Peres not win, and it was even postulated that the Labor Party would gain seats in the Knesset, which would put Peres in a stronger position than recent Israeli Prime Ministers.\textsuperscript{186} The PRC speculated about how long it would take Peres to form a government and what type of coalition it would involve. Finally, the PRC recognized that it would be fruitless to pressure the Israelis before the May election, but Washington should be prepared to act as soon as the new Israeli government under Peres was formed.\textsuperscript{187}
The PRC also discussed how and when to involve the Soviet Union in the Middle East peace process. Kissinger's Middle Eastern policies after the 1973 War had successfully reduced Soviet influence in the region, but Carter and his advisors believed that the Soviets were necessary to influence Moscow's friends in the region. The Soviet Union had broken diplomatic relations with Israel during the 1967 War, and Brzezinski believed that if the United States could convince the Soviets to resume relations with Israel it would earn America "credit with the Israelis," and might put pressure on the PLO to finally recognize the State of Israel, as well.  

The PRC also concluded that the Soviets' close relationship with the PLO could be useful "in getting the PLO to change its positions" with regard to UN 242. The PRC was concerned that the Soviet Union could become the conduit for American communications with the PLO. Consequently, the PRC decided to try to get the Soviets committed to a favorable outcome in Geneva, but not to involve them in such a way that would lead to a resurgence of Soviet influence in the Middle East.

The Carter administration's decision to include the Soviet Union in the Middle East peace negotiations represented an important change from the manner in which détente was pursued by the Nixon and Ford administrations. Ford and Kissinger had tried to keep the Soviets out of the Middle East—pursuing Kissinger's bilateral negotiations while promising

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190 Ibid., 15.
the Soviets that the Geneva conference would eventually be resumed. But Carter, Brzezinski, and Vance disagreed with this policy.

Brzezinski believed that the United States should not simply continue the geopolitical antagonism of the previous eight years, but develop a relationship with the Soviet Union that combined "elements of both competition and cooperation." He advocated "a comprehensive and reciprocal détente" with the USSR that was "incompatible with irresponsible [Soviet] behavior in…the Middle East." The Carter administration wanted a comprehensive treaty negotiated at a Geneva conference, and this meant that the Soviet Union (as conference co-chair) would have a role. Although the PRC discussed a variety of ways the Soviet Union could be useful to the peace process, no thought was given to the domestic backlash that might occur as a result of allowing America's cold war adversary to participate.

Finally, the PRC addressed King Hussein of Jordan's upcoming visit to Washington. Although Jordan was not involved in the 1973 War, it had an important role in the peace process due to its relationship with the West Bank and the Palestinians. Prior to Israel's occupation of the West Bank, the territory had been part of Jordan. Hussein, like Sadat, advocated a West Bank at least partially administered by Jordan in conjunction with the

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192 Brzezinski, 149.
193 Brzezinski, 150.
194 Garthoff, 640-1.
PLO, and the PRC believed that this plan was similar "to the Israeli answer." 

Nevertheless, the PRC did not want to make any promises to Hussein during his visit.

During Vance's trip to the Middle East, Hussein had said that he would not be willing to accept substantial border changes to the West Bank, and would agree only to "minor changes if they were reciprocal [with Israel]." Assistant Secretary of State Roy Atherton believed that Hussein would not play an important personal role in the peace process unless he received assurances from the United States that "virtually all of the West Bank and East Jerusalem" would be returned to Jordan. Since Carter could not make that promise at that time, the PRC concluded that the president "should not specifically endorse a Jordanian formula for dealing with the Palestinian issue."

After the April 19th PRC assessment, some of the difficulties of convening a Geneva conference in 1977 were apparent. Even amongst Carter's advisors, there was some dispute as to what would be the most problematic obstacle in bringing all of the necessary parties to Geneva. Vance, Brzezinski, and Atherton believed the issue of borders would prove the most intractable (though there was not even a consensus as to which border—the Golan, the Sinai, or the West Bank—would be the most problematic), while Secretary of Defense Brown thought that finding a way to include the PLO in the negotiations would cause the most trouble.

196 Ibid., 12.
197 Ibid.
Despite the complexity of the issues involved in the negotiations for a comprehensive peace treaty, however, there was still a feeling that such an agreement was possible, if only the proper formula could be found. In search of this formula, the PRC created a working group to study the idea of holding a referendum amongst the Palestinians to decide whether a new Palestinian entity should be affiliated with Israel, Jordan, or independent, but later the idea was dropped. The PRC also concluded that the next several months should be spent in completing the preparatory talks necessary to garner as much "prior agreement on general principles as possible."

At this time, Brzezinski had his staff prepare a working paper on the Carter administration's foreign policy goals that included a potential timeline for the next four years. In the section on the Middle East, the paper recommended that 1977 was the appropriate time to "establish a framework for Arab-Israeli negotiations," as well as "secure agreement of all parties on basic principles, which will govern the settlement, and deal with the nature of peace, withdrawal and the establishment of final borders, security arrangements, and the Palestinians, and the implementation of an agreement in stages."

The paper also advocated that the United States should "initiate US-Palestinian contacts in order to promote a moderate Palestinian settlement" and to begin the negotiation of "specific trade-offs" that would facilitate a comprehensive peace agreement during

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Carter’s first year in office.\textsuperscript{202} But this contact between the Carter administration and the PLO would prove impossible until the PLO ended its call for the destruction of Israel and accepted UN 242.

A week after the PRC meeting, Carter met with King Hussein of Jordan. Hussein was another impressive leader, described by Vance as “charismatic, urbane, articulate, and well informed.”\textsuperscript{203} Carter wanted to get Hussein’s opinion on several issues including the possibility of real peace between Israel and the Arabs, the nature of Israel’s final borders after its withdrawal from occupied territory, the role of the PLO and its refusal to accept UN 242, and the future of Palestinian refugees.\textsuperscript{204} During Carter’s talks with the Jordanian King and his advisor (later Prime Minister) Abdul Hamid Sharaf, Carter asked Hussein to give his assessment of the obstacles to peace in the Middle East. Hussein summarized the situation in the Middle East, but did not provide any new insights.

Hussein also stressed that a Geneva conference must have the participation of Palestinians and any agreement negotiated at a Geneva conference must address the Palestinians and their aspirations. Additionally, Hussein spoke of a framework for negotiations. He believed that any negotiations that began without a prearranged structure would be plagued by discord that could easily prevent any progress. Finally, both Hussein and Sharaf made it clear that they believed the United States would not be able to bring the Israelis and Arabs together without thorough preparation. In their opinion, the United States

\begin{footnotes}
\item [203] Vance, 175.
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would have to meet with all the parties involved, listen to their demands, and then introduce its own initiatives based on its understanding of each side’s proposals. 205

After Carter’s meetings with King Hussein, Brzezinski penned his Weekly Report for Carter. He made two important points concerning the Middle East peace process. First, that he agreed with the president that a Geneva conference should not be convened "unless we have a reasonably substantial preliminary agreement, at least on the basic principles." The United States' "public posture regarding Geneva should be more assertive and positive," so that the Israeli government would recognize that by compromising before Geneva, it would ensure that any treaty would be favorable to its interests. This could motivate all parties to make "real progress…prior to Geneva." 206

Second, Brzezinski wanted the Arabs and the Israelis to begin thinking realistically about peace and the relationships that would develop between Israel and its neighbors after any treaty. As Brzezinski stated, Israel could not "realistically expect right away to have a relationship with the Arabs like [the United States has] with Canada." 207 Since the United States advocated that any agreement be implemented in stages, part of this realistic thinking would be for Israel to prioritize the steps towards peace.

The only Middle Eastern leader to turn down Carter's invitation to Washington was the Syrian President Hafez Assad, although he agreed to meet in Switzerland in May.

205 Carter, Keeping Faith, 285, Vance, 177.
207 Ibid.
Despite Assad's snub, the Carter administration was guardedly optimistic about the meeting. Just a few days before, during a May 5 press conference, Assad had announced for the first time that he would be willing to discuss "the establishment of demilitarized zones" in order to ensure successful peace negotiations.\(^{208}\)

In Geneva, the discussion between the two presidents was friendly and good-natured, but this did not mean that they shared similar views on the Middle East peace process. Assad was not interested in peace if it meant strengthening Israel, Egypt, Jordan, or the PLO.\(^{209}\) During their meeting, Carter and Assad spoke in general terms about borders, the return of territory in exchange for peace, and of "the Palestinians, both in terms of their representation at negotiations and in the longer term aspect of a settlement."\(^{210}\) Brzezinski later wrote in his memoir that Carter "not only pushed Assad into greater flexibility on such issues as the Palestinians or security arrangements, but at the same time he managed to convey a sense of warmth and concern to the Arabs."\(^{211}\)

Although the purpose of the meeting was primarily to allow Carter and Assad to meet and assess each other, their discussion was significant. Syria had been the Arab state most unwilling to compromise during previous negotiations and it was still "suspicious of


\(^{211}\) Brzezinski, 94.
American intentions." Carter tried to assure Assad by calling again for the creation of a Palestinian "homeland.  

After the meeting, Assad said that Carter's statements had "created an atmosphere of faith and...optimism" so that there was now a "will to look for a solution." Despite Brzezinski's impression that Assad had been "evasive" and his realization that there was still "a long way to go" before negotiations could begin, there was growing optimism on the part of the Arabs and the Americans that the Geneva conference would be possible.

After Carter's meeting with Assad, he had met with most of the key players (although he still had to meet with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia on May 25th), and his administration knew how it wanted to proceed in the coming months. Carter had made his desire for a comprehensive peace agreement clear to each leader, but he also recognized that the Arabs and the Israelis had very different goals and different ideas of how to reach them. The Arabs wanted the end of the existing state of war, the return of all of the occupied territories, and the establishment of a Palestinian entity. Any other progress towards the normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab states would be a matter that each individual Arab country could then pursue according to its own sovereign wishes and needs.

The Israelis, however, were not interested in any agreement that did not also include the normalization of relations, nor did Israel want to simply withdraw to its pre-1967 borders.

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214 Ibid.
Not only did Israel have security concerns that any new borders must address, but there were now nearly sixty Israeli settlements with 40,000 residents in the occupied territories.  

Then there were the procedural questions that would determine the format for a Geneva conference. The Israelis would not negotiate with the PLO, but the PLO was the only organization authorized to speak on behalf of the Palestinian people according to an Arab League decision in 1975.

Additionally, the Israeli government preferred to negotiate with each Arab state separately because it believed that any conference with a single Arab delegation would be doomed from the outset by inter-Arab bickering. Even the Arabs did not agree on the nature of Arab representation in Geneva. Syria wanted a unified Arab delegation to neutralize Egypt's bargaining power; while Egypt wanted delegations representing each Arab state because it feared a single delegation would devolve into internecine disputes which would prevent any agreement. Jordan wanted "a single pan-Arab delegation which could break into functional committees to deal with each topic."  

The Carter administration knew that there was still much work necessary to bring the Arabs and the Israelis together in Geneva. However, Carter and his advisors believed that if the summer months were spent creating agreement amongst the Arab states on the procedural and substantive issues of a Geneva conference, there was hope for a successful summit.

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217 Stein, 192-8

218 Vance, 176.
Then, with a new Labor government in place in Israel, the two sides could begin the difficult work of negotiating a comprehensive peace treaty. And the Carter administration did have reason to hope that both the Israelis and the Arabs would be willing to make concessions. After Rabin's state visit in March and Carter's subsequent statements, Israeli officials had announced that they were willing "to explore to the fullest the possibility of trying to move this year to a full, comprehensive peace." Carter was further encouraged by Sadat's agreement that an Arab-Israeli peace treaty could involve the normalization of relations between the signatories. Even the difficult issue of demilitarized zones in the occupied territories was gradually gaining Arab acceptance. However, events in Israel were soon to disrupt Carter's plans.

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CHAPTER THREE

As the spring of 1977 turned into summer, the Carter administration moved beyond asking Middle Eastern leaders their opinions on the peace process and became increasingly assertive in suggesting solutions to the procedural obstacles impeding a Geneva conference. It was a difficult and frustrating task, but Carter and his administration persevered, and by September it was beginning to look like Geneva was a real possibility. But as Carter pressed for comprehensive peace negotiations, Israel and Egypt were not completely happy with the direction they saw the peace process taking and began bilateral talks. By the end of September, the Middle East peace process was developing in two different directions at the same time.

Yitzak Rabin's defeat in Israel's May election came as a complete shock to the Carter administration. Israel, since its creation, had been led by the Labor Party, and although Rabin and his cabinet faced a severe electoral challenge, observers still believed that the Labor Party would win. The Carter administration believed that a Labor government would be willing to negotiate. After all, Labor governments had already cooperated in several disengagement negotiations and agreements—and even after Rabin’s disappointing visit, Carter and his advisors had not been discouraged.222

For example, Rabin had told Vance in February, and had not recanted during his meetings with Carter, that Israel was more interested in security than sovereignty. This made

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the Americans feel that there was promising room for discussions which would have a real chance of reaching some compromises.  

Ironically, Carter may bear some responsibility for the Labor Party's defeat. In the aftermath of Rabin's March visit to Washington, Carter's press conference reference to an Israeli withdrawal to its pre-1967 borders and his town hall statement of the need for a Palestinian homeland caused an eruption of outrage in Israel's press. Israeli newspapers called Carter's statements "a tragedy" and accused the United States of adopting the Arab position on the nature of an Israeli withdrawal.

Others believed that the message that Rabin brought back to Israel was "that only a realistic policy of accommodation has any prospect of winning the vital support of the U.S.; and that a policy of territorial obduracy is tantamount to beating the nation's head against a wall of American opposition." Rabin did his best to calm the furor, claiming that although he was not pleased with everything Carter had said, the messages from Carter had been positive for Israel. Nevertheless, Rabin wrote in his memoir that after his meetings with Carter he felt that "Israel would probably have to pay heavily until the new American government acquired expertise and political maturity."

Rabin also commented that the uproar just weeks before the Israeli election helped Menachem Begin and the Likud Party, as the Israeli electorate searched for "'tough' and

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223 Vance, 169.
224 Israeli Press Reaction Special Analysis, 2.
226 Rabin, 300.
'uncompromising' leadership" in the face of the now uncertain and incomplete American support. In an Israeli poll published shortly before the election, "61% of those polled object[ed] to a return to the 1967 borders, even in exchange for genuine peace with the Arabs." This meant that the Labor Party was out of step with the electorate, and this did not bode well for its success in the May election.

Rabin's concerns proved accurate when the Likud Party won the Israeli election and Menachem Begin became Prime Minister. Begin was the son of an ardent Polish Zionist and had been a close associate of the arch-Zionist leader and philosopher Ze'ev Jabotinsky. After fleeing Poland in 1941, Begin became the leader of the controversial Zionist guerilla organization, the Irgun, which battled British soldiers and policemen in an attempt to gain independence for an Israeli state. The Irgun had been responsible for the bombing of the British headquarters in Palestine at the King David Hotel in 1946 which killed ninety one civilians and British soldiers. Additionally, during the 1948 War which followed the independence of Israel, the Irgun massacred hundreds of Arab civilians, wiping out the village of Deir Yasin, an atrocity which became a rallying point for Palestinians in the decades of conflict that ensued.

Begin believed that the State of Israel had to be powerful to survive. Additionally, he believed that modern Israel should contain all of the territory that had made up biblical Israel

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227 Rabin, 300.
229 For a history of Begin's life and activities in Poland and Palestine during the British Mandate see Ned Temko, To Win or to Die (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1987), Chapters 1-12.
(this included the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights, not just the West Bank, but not the Sinai Peninsula). Consequently, he was firmly and publicly committed to maintaining and even expanding Israeli settlements in the territories occupied in 1967, as well as opposed to any substantial withdrawal from these territories.

After the Israeli election, Carter watched an interview of Begin which greatly concerned him. He wrote in his diary that, “It was frightening to watch [Begin’s] adamant position on issues that must be resolved if a Middle Eastern peace settlement is going to be realized.” Begin had stated that the West Bank was part of Israel, that it had been “liberated” by Israel in the 1967 War, and that he intended to establish a Jewish majority there. Additionally, Begin said he would never participate in any negotiations that included the PLO in any capacity. Carter was worried that “if he maintained these positions, there was no prospect of further progress in the Middle East.”

The Carter administration waited for Begin to organize his government, and it benefited from the opportunity to reevaluate its next steps in light of the changes Begin’s election created in the political landscape of the Middle East. In early June, Brzezinski advised the President that the time was rapidly approaching when Carter would have to make "a massive effort" to garner domestic political support for his Middle Eastern initiatives.

The PRC met on June 10, 1977 to discuss the Middle East and concluded that it was important to invite Begin to visit the United States as soon as possible. It was also decided

230 Carter, Keeping Faith, 288.
that Secretary Vance should be sent back to the Middle East in July or early August to help prepare for Geneva. During this trip, Vance could attempt to organize a pre-Geneva meeting either in Washington or elsewhere.

Additionally, if Vance was able to get each party to explicitly "state their positions on specific principles," then the United States could "compare these and try to translate them into a set of agreed principles in the informal pre-Geneva talks." This would, hopefully, allow the Geneva conference to begin with a good deal of the negotiations completed, and the likelihood of failure would be diminished.232 It was important to Brzezinski that the United States make the Middle East a high priority in the coming months so that when Carter sought domestic support for a Middle Eastern solution his political capital had not already been spent on other issues.233

The Policy Review Committee met to discuss the Middle East several more times in the weeks before Begin's visit in mid-July. One of the most important issues that the PRC had to decide was the supply of weapons to Middle Eastern countries. Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia were all requesting arms from the United States, but President Carter had spoken publicly about his desire to limit the supply of weapons worldwide. Consequently, the administration had to decide on a list that would be not be seen as reneging on Carter's


campaign promises but would still satisfy the demands coming from America's Arab and Israeli allies.

In the spring of that year, President Carter had officially lowered Israel's historically high priority in arms deliveries, which was seen by many Israelis as a shift in America's alliance with Israel because they considered the sale of weapons to represent a touchstone by which to judge the strength of America's relationship with a particular country.\textsuperscript{234} The Carter administration wanted to reassure Israel, and at the same time, strengthen US relations with the moderate coalition of Arab leaders like Sadat, Hussein, and Fahd all of whom expected economic and military assistance. If these leaders were disappointed, then their willingness to cooperate with the United States could evaporate, as would all hope for a Geneva conference in 1977.\textsuperscript{235}

Both the Arabs and the Israelis were asking for weapons that the United States would not be able to provide either for political or security reasons. For example the Israelis had asked for more than a billion dollars worth of weapons and weapon systems ranging from the state of the art F-16 fighter down to simple, unguided mortar rounds. The Egyptian Air Force had previously depended on the Soviet Union, but since Sadat had moved Egypt out of the Soviet sphere of influence in 1972, Egypt needed a new arms supplier. Consequently, Egypt had requested both the C-130 transport aircraft and the F-5 attack aircraft F-5F.\textsuperscript{236}


\textsuperscript{236} Ibid.
Saudi Arabia also wanted to buy fighter aircraft from the United States, but the Saudis were requesting the far more advanced F-15 fighter plane.

Israel's requests were even more problematic. Israel had requested the United States provide a huge arms package. This included 250 F-16 fighter aircraft, 1000 M-113 armored personnel carriers (APCs), 18 AH-1S Attack Helicopters, 200 TOW anti-tank missile launchers, 800 of the most advanced type of Maverick missiles, and 1350 of the latest type of Sidewinder missiles.237

The package also included hundreds of millions of dollars worth of other military equipment, and the Carter administration had concerns providing some of the requested technology and with providing the volume of requested arms. However, it was important to the PRC that they not poison their new relationship with Prime Minister Begin with a blanket refusal. Nevertheless, the American Department of Defense recommended against providing some of the arms package like the latest version of missiles, Forward Looking Infrared Sights for tanks, and special operations Swimmer Delivery Vehicles due to the sensitive technology involved, and cutting back on the number of APCs, F-16s, and other munitions.238

Ultimately, the PRC decided that an arms package that would include 50 F-16s, 18 AH-1S helicopters, and most of the requested munitions (although instead of the latest versions of the Maverick and Sidewinder missiles the Defense Department wanted to

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substitute a slightly older model), should be ready to submit to Congress immediately after the Begin visit.\textsuperscript{239} The PRC also decided that, for the moment, it could offer Sadat only a package of non-lethal equipment which included the American C-130 transport aircraft.\textsuperscript{240}

When the administration did submit its arms sale proposals to Congress at the end of 1977, it bundled together Israel's request for F-16's, Saudi Arabia's request for F-15's and AWAC aircraft, and Egypt's request for F-5's and sought approval for all three at the same time. Israel and the American Zionist community ardently opposed the proposed sales to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, but Carter and his cabinet hoped that by bundling the package together, Congress' desire to approve Israel's request would trump its reluctance to approve the more controversial sales to Saudi Arabia and Egypt.\textsuperscript{241} Carter's use of Israel's aid as a tool to benefit Arab states worried Israel and its American supporters.

This uneasiness deepened throughout 1977, and contributed to the alarm that was expressed by Zionists in their opposition to the Joint US-Soviet communiqué in October 1977. In May 1978, the combined arms package was narrowly approved, but to secure the planes for Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Carter had had to expend a great deal of political capital.\textsuperscript{242} This would later limit the pressure that Carter was able to apply to Begin during


\textsuperscript{241} Brzezinski, 247-8; Vance, 205.

the difficult negotiations that led up to the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979.243

Another item discussed during these PRC meetings was the upcoming visit to Washington of Prime Minister Begin. Carter wanted to convene the Geneva conference in 1977, and since his first meeting with Begin had been scheduled for mid-July, the PRC believed that Begin's visit should be used to extract either public or private commitments on important issues. The PRC wanted Begin to reaffirm UN Resolutions 242 and 338 with the understanding that they applied to all occupied territory including the West Bank, as well as promise "to refrain from actions that might jeopardize the chances for successful negotiations" (no more settlements in occupied territory, for example). Carter also hoped to get a statement from Begin's government that Israel would be prepared to withdraw from occupied territory on all fronts in the context of a peace agreement.244

The PRC decided to prepare a list of draft principles for a Middle East peace treaty that would clearly expound the Carter administration's vision for Geneva, and give Begin a starting point from which to gauge the American goals for negotiations. These draft elements were simply a collection of the principles that Carter and his staff had been expounding since before the 1976 election, and included the now familiar statements that the purpose of a Geneva conference was to negotiate a comprehensive peace settlement that was based on UN 242 and 338, and would result in an end to belligerency and the establishment

243 Brzezinski, 247-9; Vance, 213.
of peace between Israel and the Arabs "which would include trade, the free movement of people, and diplomatic relations." Israel would agree to withdraw to "mutually agreed and recognized borders on all fronts," which could be implemented in stages, and the security of these borders could be ensured through "external guarantees." The agreement would also include the creation of a non-militarized Palestinian entity and contain a method for Palestinian self-determination.\footnote{Draft Principles to be Agreed Upon Prior to Geneva, undated, Meetings—PRC 24: 7/12/77 Folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Subject File, [Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 10/80-1/81] through [Meetings—PRC 55: 2/27/78], Box 24, Jimmy Carter Library, 2.}

However, the PRC also understood that Begin might reject these principles either totally or in part, and it worried that he would characterize them as an attempt "to predetermine the outcome of negotiations."\footnote{Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Summary of PRC Meeting on the Middle East, July 5, 1977," 7/7/77, Meetings—PRC 21: 7/5/77 Folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Subject File, [Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 10/80-1/81] through [Meetings—PRC 55: 2/27/78], Box 24, Jimmy Carter Library, 2.} If he insisted that Israeli participation in Geneva was dependent on the provision that there would not be any preconditions, then the PRC thought that the advisability of convening the Geneva conference should be reassessed.\footnote{Ibid.} Already there was doubt as to whether there would be enough common agreement between the Arab and the Israeli positions to warrant spending the political capital necessary to hold a conference. The PRC agreed that convening Geneva without preconditions was "a formula for failure."\footnote{Memorandum, William Quandt to Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Discussion Paper for PRC Meeting on Middle East, July 12, 1977," 7/11/77, Meetings—PRC 24: 7/12/77 Folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Subject File, [Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 10/80-1/81] through [Meetings—PRC 55: 2/27/78], Box 24, Jimmy Carter Library, 2.} But there also seemed little chance of finding a formula for Palestinian participation that would satisfy both sides. Nevertheless, several
possible methods of Palestinian participation were prepared so that that President Carter could discuss them in his upcoming meeting with Prime Minister Begin.

Carter and his advisors believed it was unreasonable to allow the PLO to participate in Geneva given its refusal to accept UN 242 and Israel's right to exist. However, the administration hoped that the PLO might accept UN 242 with the reservation that the resolution did not address the Palestinian issue. Carter decided that if the PLO would agree to this compromise, then it would have met the conditions necessary to allow the United States to meet with PLO representatives and therefore the PLO could be included in the Geneva negotiations. But the Carter administration doubted this would be acceptable to either the PLO or the Israelis.

Another option was to include low-ranking and internationally unknown PLO members in either the Jordanian delegation or in a single, unified Arab delegation. The Carter administration believed that the Israelis would accept PLO participation in a Jordanian delegation, but that neither Jordan nor the PLO would be amenable.

Additionally, during his meetings with Middle Eastern leaders, Carter had learned that Jordan and Syria supported a unified Arab delegation, but Israel and Egypt would not accept one; Egypt because Sadat believed a single Arab delegation would limit his freedom of maneuver, and Israel because one delegation would give the PLO the same status as a sovereign state. Another suggestion was to have prior Arab-Israeli agreement that negotiations would proceed on the other issues, and postpone discussion on the Palestinian

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249 Carter, White House Diary, 57; Brzezinski, 102; Steven L. Speigel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 335.
question until after an agreement was arranged and then discuss the Palestinian issues with Palestinian participation. The Carter administration understood that this option only postponed the problem until a future date, and consequently it was not popular.  

Despite the emerging difficulties and growing American doubts, there were still indications that Begin might be willing to compromise. Two weeks before his scheduled arrival, the influential liberal Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* published several editorials which suggested that it might be necessary for Israel to adopt a position that was more moderate than Begin's. Gideon Samet, *Ha'aretz'*s deputy editor wrote that:

> It seems at times that we regard the US administration as a naïve and generous friend, whose only task is to grant us our assistance requests without having the right to seek to understand what we plan to do with this help…It is inconceivable that the American Administration will agree to continue the dialogue with the Israeli Government once it realizes that either Israel won't compromise on the West Bank or that it is unwilling to let the White House know its position on that issue.  

While deciding how to proceed when he met Begin, Carter also drew on advice suggesting that Begin might be convinced to compromise. Before the Israeli election, Carter had received a letter from an NBC News consultant, Lawrence Spivak, who wrote that,

> If Menahem [sic] Begin becomes Prime Minister of Israel, I think he may offer more of an opportunity for peace than a peril to it. I have known him since 1948 and have kept contact over the years. He has softened considerably since his days in the Irgun…. If he should recognize the

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importance of compromise, it will be easier for him to sell the Israelis than it would be for a Prime Minister who is more dovish.\textsuperscript{252}

Additionally, immediately after Begin's election, Brzezinski (a fellow Pole) made what he termed "a 'perverse' observation" about the possibility of finding a compromise with Israel governed by Begin. Brzezinski recognized that the United States and Israel would probably reach an impasse at some point during the negotiations. He speculated that Begin's history of extremism could be helpful. Brzezinski believed that Begin's radicalism "would split both Israeli public opinion and the American Jewish community. Carter's "position of moderate firmness" would eventually attract "both the Israeli opposition and significant parts of the American Jewish community, including its responsible leadership." This could lead to Begin being blamed for any strain on the U.S.-Israeli relationship, which might persuade him to modify his negotiating position.\textsuperscript{253} Additionally, if Begin lost support, it would be "easier for the President to prevail and to have the needed congressional support."\textsuperscript{254}

Furthermore, because Begin was recognized to be “an honest and courageous [as well as an extremely rational] man,” the Carter administration hoped that, when faced with evidence of progress in the peace negotiations, Begin would moderate some of his positions.\textsuperscript{255} Carter's advisors also told him that Begin was, extremely sensitive to American attitudes and believes… that he can ‘convince’ [the President and his] Administration, as well as the Congress and American public, that his assessment of the situation in the Middle East and

\textsuperscript{252} Letter, Lawrence Spivak, 5/18/1977, White House Central Files, Box 10-34, Jimmy Carter Library.
\textsuperscript{254} Brzezinski, 96.
\textsuperscript{255} Carter, \textit{Keeping Faith}, 288.
his ideas about resolving the problems are correct…. [But] if he were dissuaded from such a belief… he might well be dissuaded from his original convictions.\textsuperscript{256}

President Carter met with Prime Minister Begin on July 19, 1977. It soon became clear that Begin wanted less American involvement in any peace negotiations. Previous Israeli governments had wanted “close consultation with the Americans” to ensure that the Israeli position was not weakened by unexpected American initiatives. Begin, on the other hand, expressed his belief that the United States should work simply to bring all the negotiating parties together, while leaving the discussions on the substance of any agreement to the Arabs and Israelis.\textsuperscript{257} President Carter and his staff had been working for six months to find solutions to both the procedural and substantive issues obstructing the Geneva conference.

Consequently, Carter outlined the principles that he believed a peace must include: comprehensive peace based on UN 242, involving open borders and free trade, Israeli withdrawal to secure borders, and the establishment of a Palestinian entity (although not a state). After “a long, frank discussion,” Begin agreed in principle to everything but any type of Palestinian entity, although he did agree to keep an open mind, and he stated his intention to meet with Sadat.\textsuperscript{258}

Carter found Begin to be unexpectedly flexible. Although Begin had been elected with a large majority of the popular vote, his political support was far from secure. His

\textsuperscript{256} Memorandum, Robert Lipshutz to President Carter, 5/23/77, Mondale Papers, Iran through MidEast/Panama Box 206, Jimmy Carter Library.
\textsuperscript{257} Quandt, Peace Process, 184.
\textsuperscript{258} Carter, Keeping Faith, 290-1; Quandt, Camp David, 78-84 ; Stein, 199-202; Moshe Dayan, Breakthrough (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 18-20.
coalition government initially held only 61 of 120 Knesset seats (although he would eventually add a few more), and the national labor union, the Histadrut (which represented over 58% of Israel's adult population) had held elections in June in which the Labor Party had done very well, illustrating the fragility of Begin's political support. Begin appointed Moshe Dayan as Foreign Minister in an attempt to placate Israel's moderates, but he also had to reassure his conservative Likud base. And an issue of vital importance to Begin's supporters was the fate of the West Bank.\textsuperscript{259}

Consequently, Begin and Dayan formulated a detailed peace initiative which was approved by the Israeli cabinet on July 13\textsuperscript{rd} and presented to President Carter during Begin's visit to Washington.\textsuperscript{260} In this plan, Begin announced that Israel would be prepared to attend a Geneva peace conference after October 10\textsuperscript{th} if it was held without preconditions and in accordance with UN Resolution 338 which specifically named Israel, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan as the participants. All of these states (along with the Soviet Union and the United States as co-sponsors) would meet during the inaugural session, but then working groups (consisting of Israel and Jordan for the West Bank, Israel and Syria for the Golan, and Israel and Egypt for the Sinai) would bilaterally negotiate separate peace treaties. The PLO could not be included, but if Palestinians who were not well-known members of the PLO were members of the Jordanian delegation, Israel would not make it an issue.

Prime Minister Begin also privately informed President Carter that Israel would be willing "to make a significant withdrawal" from the Sinai and a partial withdrawal from the

\textsuperscript{259} Friedlander, 39-40.  
\textsuperscript{260} Meital, 158.
Golan. But although Israel would not claim Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, neither would Israel withdraw its forces.\(^{261}\) Begin and Dayan both believed that Israel must retain the West Bank for security and religious reasons, and they were willing to compromise in the other occupied territories if it resulted in the establishment of peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors while still assuring that the West Bank remained under Israeli control.\(^{262}\)

After having met all of the Middle Eastern leaders, Carter felt that there might be room for compromise. He was further encouraged when, after their meeting, Begin sent Carter a message that he had “deep hope that we are making progress toward peace in goodwill and in good faith”.\(^{263}\) However, some of this optimism was lost when Begin announced immediately upon his return to Israel that some of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank were permanent. Not only did this cause an uproar in the Arab states, but it greatly angered President Carter. Carter believed that he had obtained Begin’s promise to use restraint in future dealings with the controversial settlements, in exchange for Carter agreeing not to publicly discuss Israeli withdrawal to pre-1967 borders with minor modifications or to use the phrase "Palestinian homeland."\(^{264}\)

After having met with Begin and the Arab leaders, the Carter administration began to reformulate its approach to the Geneva conference. The United States had been trying to mediate between the Arabs and Israelis to come to an agreement on the substantive issues before the leaders would attend the conference in Geneva. Sadat favored this approach.

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\(^{261}\) Dayan, 19-20; Stein, 199-200.
\(^{262}\) Dayan, 20; Stein, 200; Peleg, 99-100.
\(^{263}\) Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Carter, 7/25/77, Staff Offices, Office of Staff Secretary, Handwriting File, Box 26, Jimmy Carter Library.
\(^{264}\) Brzezinski, 100.
because he was worried that if the important issues were not largely already worked out before the conference began, the ensuing negotiations would descend into chaos.

Sadat was especially concerned that if Geneva was used for anything more than the signing of a pre-agreed document, the Syrian President, Hafez Assad would take advantage of the discussions to sabotage the conference by refusing to compromise. However, the Israelis had always insisted that any pre-Geneva discussions should be just on procedural issues such as the composition of the delegations. Although the Carter administration tried to make progress mediating the substantive disputes, it found it impossible to make any real headway. Additionally, the Americans were having trouble finding solutions to the disagreements surrounding the procedural issues of the Geneva talks.

By the time Carter sent Vance back to the Middle East on August 1st, a Geneva Conference was, as Brzezinski wrote, “beginning to look more as an end in itself rather than as a device to pressure or induce the parties to move on substantive issues.” But the Arab states would not attend Geneva without the PLO, so a way for PLO participation had to be found. Vance’s trip was largely to obtain “broad Arab agreement to consider a different approach to the Palestinian question.” The Israelis refused to talk to any representative of the PLO and Kissinger had promised Israel that, until the PLO accepted UN 242, the United States would not have any direct contact with the Palestinian organization either. However, the Carter administration recognized that without PLO involvement, there was no hope of a

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265 Indyk, 38; Meital, 155-6; Speigel, 337.
266 Brzezinski, 102.
267 Vance, 187.
comprehensive settlement. Vance offered four different methods for representing the Palestinians:

(1) Palestinians, including PLO members, would be included in a national Arab delegation, such as Jordan’s; (2) Palestinians, including PLO members, would be included in a pan-Arab delegation; (3) prior Arab-Israeli agreement that when the Palestinian question arose at Geneva, Palestinian representatives would join the discussions; and (4) prior Arab-Israeli agreement that when the Palestinian issue arose at the conference, the terms of Palestinian participation would be negotiated.268

The Israelis insisted that any Palestinian representatives be part of the Jordanian delegation and that no reference be made to the PLO. Vance said that he would present the four alternatives to the Arab leaders, relay the Israeli response, and state that the United States did not agree that the Israeli proposal was the only possible resolution to the issue.

Vance met with Sadat, Assad, Hussein, Fahd, and Begin and discussed with each of them America’s proposals for Geneva. Each leader agreed that a comprehensive settlement would need to be based on UN Resolutions 242/338, and Vance believed that “all Arab parties seem to be finding [the idea of establishing normal peaceful relations with Israel] increasingly acceptable.” There was also increasing agreement that peace could come after the completion of a “phased [Israeli] withdrawal to secure and recognized borders”, although Sadat, Assad, and the Saudis all agreed “that minor border adjustments could be possible only on the West Bank, not Sinai or Golan.”269

Vance also gave each leader an American draft for PLO acceptance of UN 242. The Carter administration had decided that if the PLO accepted the proposed statement, then

268 Vance, 185.
269 Memorandum, Gary Sick to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 8/12/77, Jimmy Carter Library.
representatives from the United States could officially meet with the PLO despite Kissinger's promised limitations on US-PLO contact. The draft statement (as amended after Vance’s meeting with the Arab leaders) declared that:

The PLO accepts UN Security Council Resolution 242, with the reservation that it considers that the Resolution does not make adequate reference to the question of the Palestinians since it fails to make any reference to a homeland for the Palestinian people. It is recognized that the language of Resolution 242 relates to the right of all states in the Middle East to live in peace.\(^{270}\)

Instead, after an internal debate, the PLO issued a statement at the end of August that blamed Resolution 242 for being inadequate. The PLO statement reiterated the PLO's rejection of UN 242 because "it ignore[d] the national rights of [the Palestinian] people" and "deal[t] with [their] cause as a refugee case."\(^{271}\)

Vance met with Sadat for three days beginning August 1, and during Vance's visit, Sadat gave him a copy of a draft peace treaty with Israel that he would be willing to sign. Sadat's proposed treaty called for the total withdrawal of Israeli forces from Egyptian territory according to an agreed timetable to begin within three months of the treaty's signing and the establishment of demilitarized zones on both sides of the Egyptian-Israeli border. Egypt would guarantee Israeli freedom of navigation in the Straits of Tiran and the Suez Canal, and both states would pledge to "respect and acknowledge each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence."\(^{272}\) They would "respect and acknowledge

\(^{270}\) Memorandum, Gary Sick to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 8/12/77, Jimmy Carter Library.


\(^{272}\) Ismail Fahmy, *Negotiating for Peace in the Middle East* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 218.
each other’s right to live in peace…and refrain from the use of force during the implementation of the agreement.\textsuperscript{273}

The treaty would also have ended the state of belligerency between Israel and Egypt, and the agreement would be guaranteed by the United States and the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{274} Vance, with Carter’s approval, then asked the other Middle Eastern leaders for their versions of a peace treaty. At the same time, the Americans continued to try to find a formula that would bring everyone to Geneva. The Carter administration hoped that with each party’s positions explicitly outlined in draft treaties, some ‘give’ might be found that would allow compromises. Additionally, it had been decided that the Middle Eastern foreign ministers would meet in New York in September; the Americans planned to use the elements suggested in the different “drafts [to] provide one element for discussion” during the meeting.\textsuperscript{275}

When Vance returned to Washington, he met with Carter and Brzezinski to determine what the next steps should be. They were not encouraged by the results of Secretary Vance’s trip to the Middle East. Sadat was seemingly the most willing to negotiate with Israel, but still demanded the full and rapid return of the Sinai. And although Sadat had expressed his willingness to attend Geneva, he insisted on the necessity of pre-Geneva talks and finding a way for the PLO to participate in the conference.\textsuperscript{276}

\\textsuperscript{273} Fahmy, 218.
\textsuperscript{274} Fahmy, 218-9.
\textsuperscript{275} Memorandum, Gary Sick to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 8/12/77, Jimmy Carter Library.
\textsuperscript{276} Meital, 43.
While Hussein and Assad agreed that the PLO must be included, they both felt that a pre-Geneva meeting would be counterproductive; Assad stated that he did not believe the Geneva conference was possible in 1977.\textsuperscript{277} The Israelis were displeased that Vance stood firm behind Carter's public statement that a comprehensive treaty would have to include Israeli withdrawals on all fronts and the creation of a Palestinian entity. After hearing Vance's report, the Carter administration determined “that increasingly [the United States would] have to develop [its] own proposals and put them forth, including the need for the parties to settle largely on the basis of the 1967 frontiers.”\textsuperscript{278}

During the month of September, the United States would simultaneously pursue what William Quandt, a National Security Council expert on the Middle East and later a historian, called “four parallel, potentially even conflicting goals.”\textsuperscript{279} The first goal was the acquisition of a draft peace treaty from each party. The second was finding a method of Palestinian representation at Geneva that would be acceptable to everyone. The third objective was to reach as much consensus as possible regarding the negotiating procedures for Geneva. Finally, as the autumn deadline for the resumption of the Geneva conference set by Carter neared, it was time to bring the Soviet Union into the picture. This would prove to be a critical piece of the puzzle.

The United States had the draft peace treaty that Sadat had said would be acceptable to his government. Sadat believed that if the Americans also received drafts from the Israelis

\textsuperscript{278} Brzezinski, 104.  
\textsuperscript{279} Quandt, \textit{Peace Process}, 186.
and the other Arab participants, Carter could present the Egyptian treaty and then create a compromise treaty that would be acceptable to both parties.\textsuperscript{280} To facilitate concessions and to show Carter his seriousness, Sadat had written in the margins of the Egyptian treaty compromise positions that would be acceptable to him.

The Israelis eventually gave the Carter administration their draft, but according to Quandt, it was extraordinarily “legalistic” and “left the delicate question of the border and the status of settlements in Sinai obscure.”\textsuperscript{281} The Israeli draft lacked a timetable for withdrawal, and did not link withdrawal to normalization of relations. Carter deemed it “inadequate.”\textsuperscript{282} Syria and Jordan did not submit draft treaties, but they did each eventually give Carter a list of principles that they believed a peace settlement should contain.

While the United States government was attempting to reconvene Geneva, Israel and Egypt began investigating other methods to achieve their national goals. In light of the difficulties that had plagued the Geneva process thus far, the Egyptians were worried that the conference might be impossible to convene. In addition, Israel feared that comprehensive negotiations would pressure it to withdraw from most of the West Bank, and wanted to negotiate bilaterally with Egypt. In the preceding months, Begin and Sadat had both traveled to Romania (which had maintained relations with both countries) and held meetings with Nicolae Ceausescu, the Romanian president.

\textsuperscript{280} Brzezinski, 103; Stein, 206.
\textsuperscript{281} Quandt, \textit{Peace Process}, 186.
\textsuperscript{282} Message to White House from the American Embassy, Tel Aviv, 9/2/77, Brzezinski Collection, Box 13, Jimmy Carter Library.
Begin had convinced Ceausescu that he wanted to meet with Sadat and was serious about finding a formula for a peace agreement. Ceausescu had informed Sadat saying "Let me state categorically to you that he [Begin] wants peace." Additionally, in early September, King Hassan of Morocco invited Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan to Rabat with the purpose of facilitating a meeting between Israeli and Egyptian representatives, and the Israelis and Egyptians agreed to meet secretly in Morocco on September 16th.

Although Dayan had proposed a meeting between Sadat and Begin, King Hassan informed him that the Egyptians preferred that Dayan meet with Dr. Hassan Tuhami, Egypt's Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary General of the Islamic Conference. Tuhami had been a member of Gamal Abd al-Nasser's Free Officer Movement and had held an assortment of diplomatic posts during Nasser's presidency, while Sadat had appointed him Secretary General of the Islamic Conference in 1973; but he was not considered a political insider. As the Secretary General, Tuhami was the government's link with Egypt's Islamic clerical community (including those of fundamentalist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood). This meant that he could negotiate without being accused of the same self-interested motivations that Sadat would have faced.

During the meetings, which both Begin and Sadat had ordered be kept secret to all but a few of their closest advisors, Tuhami presented Egypt's position: Israel could have peace only in exchange for total withdrawal from all occupied territory, and Sadat required Israel's agreement to this principle before negotiating the other issues such as the Palestinians and

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284 Friedlander, 46-7.
security guarantees for Israel. However, Tuhami also communicated to Dayan that Sadat had great faith in Begin's government (unlike previous Israeli administrations) and believed that the two sides could work out a mutually agreeable settlement without the direct participation of the United States. Sadat, however, did not want to keep the United States completely out of the process. Tuhami suggested that Israel and Egypt exchange peace proposals and show them to the Carter administration. Then, at another bilateral meeting, the proposals could be discussed.\footnote{Stein, 207.}

Dayan responded that he "was only an emissary of Begin," and therefore could not speak for him, but that Israel's democratic procedures would necessitate Knesset approval before any agreement could be ratified. Consequently, he would relay to Begin everything that Tuhami had said, but he was certain that before any settlement could be reached, Begin would personally need to meet with Sadat.

Dayan also assured Tuhami that he believed Sadat could be relied on and trusted unlike Assad, and that if Begin and Sadat approved, Dayan and Tuhami should meet again in Morocco in two weeks. A key result of their discussion was that by the end, Tuhami believed that Israel would completely evacuate the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for a peace treaty. In response, Tuhami had intimated Egypt's willingness to sign such a peace treaty if the progress toward Geneva stopped. The meeting concluded, and the two emissaries returned to report the results to their leaders.\footnote{Dayan, 46-52; Meital, 161-3; Indyk, 35-6; Stein, 207.}
After Dayan and Tuhami met in Morocco, the Middle East peace process progressed along two separate yet concurrent paths. The Carter administration continued working hard to convene the comprehensive peace negotiations in Geneva, while Egypt and Israel also had their bilateral discussions. At this point, neither Sadat nor Begin was particularly happy with the American attempts to bring all parties to Geneva. Sadat continued to believe that if Geneva was convened without having already obtained agreement on the substance of a comprehensive peace treaty, Syria and the PLO would obstruct the negotiations and prevent a peace agreement. Begin was also concerned about Assad's subversion of the peace process and recognized that Sadat (more than any other Arab leader) needed progress in the negotiations to quell domestic unrest.

Furthermore, after Secretary Vance's August trip to the Middle East, the Israelis were not pleased with what they considered to be America's forceful insistence on a Geneva conference. Begin feared that, despite Carter's assertion that he would never impose a peace settlement, if Geneva were convened, Israel would have to make substantial withdrawals from the West Bank, which Begin was adamantly opposed to on ideological grounds. Neither Sadat nor Begin was against a comprehensive treaty in principle, but they both were skeptical that a Geneva conference would result in a peace treaty that they would find acceptable. So in order to provide an alternative method of obtaining their national interests in case the Geneva negotiations failed, the two leaders authorized the Dayan-Tuhami meeting.

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287 Indyk, 35-6; Meital, 158.
288 Stein, 206; Friedlander, 45-46.
289 Meital, 159.
Additionally, both Sadat and Begin had already told the Carter administration that they believed the Geneva negotiations would eventually have to break into working groups that would negotiate each issue separately. So on one hand the Egyptian-Israeli contact in Morocco merely preceded the negotiations that would follow later if Geneva was convened. But the Morocco talks were also a crucial development in the Middle East's peace process because Sadat and Begin both had additional, divergent motivations for beginning the secret bilateral negotiations.

In order to strengthen his domestic control, Sadat needed to show the Egyptian people that his foreign policies were benefiting Egypt. One way to do this was to successfully negotiate Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. His hold on power could also be strengthened by economic and military aid from the United States, but this assistance was also contingent on Egypt and Israel negotiating successfully. However, even if Carter successfully convened Geneva, quick progress in the subsequent peace negotiations was not likely; Israel might return the Sinai too late to preserve Sadat's government.

On the other hand, if Egypt publicly began to negotiate bilaterally with Israel outside of the comprehensive Geneva conference, Sadat's influence in the Arab world would suffer and Egypt could be isolated. His willingness to open talks with Israel shows that Sadat was more concerned with negotiating the return of the Sinai—and shoring up domestic support in that way—than he was with Egypt's regional hegemony. Nevertheless, Tuhami had relayed to Dayan Sadat's insistence that the Palestinian situation also be addressed. Sadat did not want to forfeit any future chance at leadership of the Arab world, and if he could, he would
operate under the umbrella of Geneva. But if that proved impossible, Sadat would negotiate directly with Israel and benefit from the Americans.

Begin also wanted to remain in power, and he wanted to keep the West Bank under Israeli control. He considered the West Bank to be the biblical provinces of Judea and Samaria, now again part of Israel. This was different from the territories in the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights that Israel had also occupied since 1967. This land was important because it was militarily valuable and control of it enhanced Israeli security. But peace with Egypt would enhance Israeli security far more than would the Israeli military bases in the Sinai Peninsula; even in its weakened state, Egypt's military was by far the strongest of Israel's neighbors. If Egypt and Israel established peaceful relations, it was very unlikely that an Arab coalition—minus the Egyptian army—could threaten Israel militarily.

Furthermore, UN 242 had been worded vaguely, only requiring Israel to withdraw from territory occupied during the 1967 War and not all territory. Consequently, if Israel met Sadat's condition for peace and withdrew from the Sinai, Begin could claim that he had met the conditions of UN 242 and therefore not have to return the West Bank to Arab sovereignty. This would forestall President Carter who had always maintained that the comprehensive peace treaty he envisioned would require Israel to withdraw from most of the West Bank. If Begin believed that a comprehensive settlement would allow Israel to maintain its control of the West Bank, then Israel could attend Geneva, negotiate, and sign the treaty. But Begin would not let Israel participate in a Geneva conference that he believed would result in a treaty that forced Israel out of the West Bank.
The bilateral Egyptian-Israeli talks gave Begin another option. There are different accounts as to whether Dayan explicitly told Tuhami that Israel would agree to a full withdrawal from the Sinai in exchange for peace. With the lack of available sources it is impossible to know for certain. But regardless of whether Dayan spoke the words (or as some believe, gave Tuhami a brief handwritten note for Sadat's eyes only), the message was communicated to Sadat.

Begin knew that Sadat was under increasing domestic pressure, and after the Morocco meeting, it was apparent that Sadat was willing to negotiate bilaterally outside of Geneva. Prior to Morocco, if Begin was unhappy with the manner in which the Carter administration organized Geneva, he could only refuse to participate. By September, the Carter administration was acting more assertively in bringing all the parties to Geneva, and if Israel was seen to be intransigent, Begin might be forced into compromises he did not want to make. After Morocco, if Begin did not approve of the American plan for Geneva he could stall and eventually Sadat would come to him.

On September 19th, while in the United States to attend the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly, Dayan met with Carter and his staff several times. During these meetings with Carter, Vance, Brzezinski, and other members of the Carter administration, Dayan was dismayed by the vehemence of Carter's disapproval of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Carter told Dayan that it was the American belief that these

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290 Stein, 202.
291 Meital, 161-3.
settlements were illegal and that Israel's persistence in approving new settlements was becoming a problem.

Additionally, Israeli Minister of Agriculture Ariel Sharon's public statements that Israel planned to settle two million Israelis in the West Bank had predictably been denounced by the Arab world, and Carter was beginning to feel as if the Arab governments were being more reasonable and flexible than the government of Israel. Carter's characterization of Israeli actions angered Dayan who responded that Israel did not share Carter's belief in the illegality of the settlements and that it was not the settlements that were an obstacle to peace but the Arabs' unwillingness to "reconcile themselves to Israel's existence for thirty years, even when [Israelis] had lived within the pre-1967 boundaries." Procedural issues for Geneva were then discussed. The Israeli position was that Geneva was a conference for states only, and therefore the PLO could not be included as it was merely an organization and should not be given the same status as countries like Israel, Egypt, or Jordan. Then, of course, there was the problem of the PLO's refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist and the PLO charter which called for Israel's destruction.

After much discussion, Dayan finally agreed that there could be a single Arab delegation for the opening ceremony which would be used simply for "picture-taking, etc" and then the conference would break into separate delegations to negotiate bilateral peace treaties. This stage would not take place in Geneva and would probably continue for quite a

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293 Dayan, 59.
while, with all parties reconvening in Geneva to sign the resulting treaties. The issue of Palestinian representation could be resolved by having any Palestinian representatives included in the Jordanian delegation, and Dayan reaffirmed Begin's consent to Carter's suggestion that low-level PLO members could participate in Jordan's delegation.

Dayan, however, insisted that only the issue of Palestinian refugees could be discussed at Geneva. The question of the West Bank would be solely a matter for the bilateral negotiations between Jordan and Israel. Carter asked Dayan about a potential division of the West Bank between Jordan and Israel or an eventual referendum by the Palestinian residents of the West Bank.

Dayan answered that the Israeli government believed that the results of a referendum would just show that the Palestinians favored an Israeli withdrawal, a fact that was already well understood. In answer to Carter's question concerning the division of the West Bank, Dayan stated that Jordan would have to propose a division; Israel would never be the first to suggest it. Since Dayan did not think that King Hussein supported the idea, he believed that it was unlikely that the issue would be raised. 294

Carter envisioned a comprehensive treaty in which Israel would withdraw from nearly all the territory it had occupied in 1967 in exchange for peace—a treaty very different from that proposed by Israel. But by the end of Dayan's visit, the Israeli Foreign Minister had agreed to recommend to Begin that Israel accept Carter's structure for the Geneva

conference. There would be an inaugural session involving the Americans and Soviets as co-sponsors of the conference, as well as the Israelis and a unified Arab delegation. The conference would then break into the bilateral working groups, with the negotiations continuing later outside of Geneva. After coming to agreements on bilateral peace treaties, the parties would then reconvene Geneva in order to ratify them.

While Dayan was in the United States, Carter also held a series of meetings with Arab foreign ministers which took the form of 'shuttle diplomacy' on a small scale. Carter would meet with one minister, and then convey the substance of the discussion to the next minister. Other than Dayan, Carter's most important meetings were held with Ismail Fahmy, Egypt's Foreign Minister. Fahmy insisted that the PLO must be officially included in the Geneva negotiations and that there be important pre-Geneva negotiations dealing with the substantive issues. Additionally, Fahmy stated that the United States should play a major role in the negotiations, putting pressure on Israel to compromise.295

Carter told Fahmy that the United States was committed to playing an active role in the peace process but would not force Israel to include the PLO in the negotiations. He would present the idea of pre-Geneva negotiations to the other parties, and he reiterated that the United States was hopeful that some degree of conformity could be found before the convening of Geneva. Finally, Carter repeated to Fahmy that it was the belief of his administration that a comprehensive peace agreement based on an Israeli withdrawal to its

295 Fahmy, 195-212.
pre-1967 borders with only slight modifications in exchange for peace with its Arab neighbors was still possible.296

By end of September, it seemed that the procedural obstacles for convening Geneva were being gradually resolved. On September 25th, the Israeli cabinet approved the compromise formula recommended by Dayan: there could be a unified Arab delegation during the plenary session of Geneva, although there would be no negotiations during that phase. This delegation could include Palestinians, as long as there were no known members of the PLO. When the conference broke into its negotiating groups, these must consist exclusively of states, so the PLO or any Palestinians could not be represented as a separate entity.297

As it appeared that Geneva was approaching, the Israelis were increasingly concerned with the outcome that Carter envisioned. The tone of Dayan's meetings with Carter had been adversarial and Dayan had been displeased with many of Carter's positions. However, Dayan was not completely pessimistic about the peace process. He stated publicly that he believed that Egypt was serious about finding a negotiated solution, and that some Arab states were willing to make peace with Israel.298 During Dayan's meeting with Tuhami in Morocco, the Egyptian had implied that Sadat would sign a bilateral peace treaty if Egypt regained the Sinai, and the more inflexible position presented by Fahmy in Washington had not dissuaded the Israelis that a bilateral agreement was possible.

296 Fahmy, 205.
297 Stein, 211.
During the spring and summer of 1977, the Carter administration made a great deal of progress toward bringing the Arabs and Israelis together at a Geneva peace conference. Rabin's electoral defeat had been a shock, but Begin had indicated that he was willing to compromise. He had agreed to a formula that would allow PLO participation in the peace negotiations and hinted that Israel would withdraw from the Sinai in exchange for peace.

Carter was also encouraged by Sadat's cooperation. Sadat (unlike Begin) wanted a peace treaty very similar to that advocated by Carter, primarily disagreeing with the American administration on procedural issues for Geneva. But there were still issues to be resolved. Carter wanted a comprehensive treaty, and that would necessitate the participation of Syria, Jordan, and the PLO in addition to Israel and Egypt in the negotiations. But Syrian President Assad and King Hussein of Jordan were not eager to compromise, and the PLO still refused to accept Resolution 242.

Furthermore, fearing that a comprehensive peace summit in Geneva would fail to secure their needs, Israel and Egypt also opened secret bilateral talks in September. This resulted in the development of two related but ultimately competitive routes towards a Middle Eastern peace treaty.
CHAPTER FOUR

The two distinct routes toward a Middle East peace treaty—bilateral talks between Egypt and Israel and the comprehensive Geneva conference pursued by the Carter administration—collided as the result of the events of October and November 1977. The United States and the Soviet Union issued the US-Soviet Communiqué on October 1 which enumerated the general goals for Geneva. But on October 5, the United States and Israel issued the US-Israeli Statement which stated that agreement with the US-Soviet Communiqué was not a condition of attending the Geneva conference.

By the beginning of November, the peace process had stalled due to the political fallout of these two statements, prompting Sadat to make a historic and controversial, visit to Jerusalem to address the Israeli Knesset. After Sadat's trip, Carter gradually shifted his administration's efforts away from trying to convene the Geneva conference to facilitating Egyptian-Israeli talks. And once bilateral negotiations became Carter's goal, the idea of the Geneva conference was discarded.

In February 1977, when the Carter administration first decided to pursue Middle East peace negotiations within the context of the Geneva Peace Conference, it recognized the need to involve the Soviet Union since the USSR had been a co-sponsor of the original Geneva Conference in 1973. The PRC meeting on February 4th had decided that even though the Soviets should not play a role in the negotiations that would precede Geneva, it would be important to incorporate them in the actual conference in order to have the Soviet Union as a
co-guarantor of the peace treaties that would result. The Carter administration considered involving the Soviets a procedural matter, a necessary preliminary step to convening Geneva. During the PRC's brief discussion about Soviet participation, Brzezinski had concluded "The issue is not whether or not to leave them out; the issue is when to bring them in."

The Carter administration clearly realized that the Soviet Union wanted to use its role as cosponsor of the Geneva conference as a way of regaining influence in the Middle East. Nevertheless, Carter decided to utilize the Soviet Union's relationship with the PLO to press the Palestinians to accept UN Resolution 242; this, according to Brzezinski, would "keep [the Soviets] engaged and get them to pay a little for their involvement."

Consequently, throughout the spring and summer of 1977, Secretary Vance was in periodic contact with the Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, keeping him abreast of the progress towards Geneva. When Vance met with Gromyko in May, the Soviet Foreign

300 Garthoff, 644.
301 Ibid.
303 Ibid.
Minister informed him that the USSR wanted to issue "a cochairmen's statement prior to a Geneva conference."³⁰⁴

Later, during an August meeting with the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin, Vance learned that Gromyko wanted make a joint US-Soviet statement concerning the Middle East during his September trip to attend the United Nations General Assembly. At Carter’s instruction, Vance replied positively and asked for a Soviet draft of a potential statement.

When Vance received the Soviet draft from Dobrynin in September, the Carter administration was pleasantly surprised by its restraint. The draft did not insist on open PLO participation in Geneva or on Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders, although it did refer to “Palestinian national rights.”³⁰⁵ But the draft still required a great deal of compromise before the language of the communiqué could be finalized to the satisfaction of both sides.

Vance, Roy Atherton (the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs), and Harold Saunders (Atherton’s Deputy) were responsible for the bulk of the negotiations with Gromyko and the Soviet diplomat, Mikhail Sytenko.³⁰⁶ The Soviets initially insisted that the communiqué include a reference to the "legitimate national rights of the Palestinians," and refused to consider "normal peaceful relations" between Israel and its neighbors as the goal of the peace process; instead pressing for just "peaceful relations".³⁰⁷

³⁰⁴ Vance, 191.
³⁰⁵ Quandt, Camp David, 119.
³⁰⁶ Stein, 212-3.
³⁰⁷ Quandt, Camp David, 122.
But Vance and his team found Gromyko and Sytenko to be extraordinarily accommodating, and by the end of September, the United States and the Soviet Union were able to agree on a statement that largely mirrored Carter’s five principles. The Soviets compromised on every issue—they dropped their requirement that the statement mention the Palestinian's "national" rights and agreed to add "normal" peaceful relations at the United States' urging.

The Carter administration was pleased with the Soviets' changes to their rhetoric and believed that although the modifications were small, they were significant and represented genuine cooperation between the two superpowers. For example, the US-Soviet communiqué was the first time an American administration had referred to the “legitimate rights of the Palestinian people,” instead of legitimate interests. The Americans hoped the communiqué, with its clear proof of Soviet and American cooperation, would “squeeze the Syrians and the PLO,” who were seen as using pedantic arguments over procedure to obstruct Geneva.

On October 1, 1977, the US-Soviet Communiqué was issued jointly by Secretary Vance in New York and Foreign Minister Gromyko in Moscow. It stated:

within the framework of a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problem, all specific questions of the settlement should be resolved, including such key issues as withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict; the resolution of the Palestinian question including insuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people; termination of the state of war and establishment of normal peaceful relations of the basis of mutual

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308 Stein, 213.
309 Quandt, *Camp David*, 122.
310 Quandt, *Camp David*, 122.
recognition of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence…

According to Bill Quandt, the statement was not considered by the Carter administration to be “a complete statement of the U.S. position, but rather as a document codifying those points on which the United States and the Soviet Union agreed on the eve of the Geneva conference.”

The furor that erupted when the communiqué was issued was unexpected by the Carter administration and would derail the progress towards Geneva. Within the United States, the US-Soviet communiqué was immediately denounced. Bill Quandt later wrote that the "neoconservatives, which included Republicans and Democrats, were both pro-Israeli and anti-Soviet, … [and] took the lead in attacking the communiqué.” They believed that the United States was surrendering political gains won by earlier administrations by re-inviting Soviet involvement in the Middle East. Senator Henry Jackson (D-WA), a neoconservative, said that the "fox is back in the chicken coop," and Republican Senator Bob Dole claimed that the communiqué "was an abdication of Middle East leadership by President Carter." Even some liberal Democrats opposed the communiqué because they thought that it "press[ed] Israel too hard on the Palestinian issue.”

The Carter administration had begun to seek domestic support for its Middle Eastern initiatives in June, and an important step was to garner the approval of the American Jewish

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312 Quandt, Camp David, 122.
313 Quandt, Camp David, 123.
315 Quandt, Camp David, 123.
community. As part of the process, Carter's chief domestic policy advisor, Hamilton Jordan, prepared a memo that analyzed American Jewish influence on Congress and on Middle Eastern policy and suggested a strategy for coordinating with Jewish leaders. AIPAC, the American-Israel Political Action Committee, which consisted of leaders from thirty-two Jewish organizations, had "overall responsibility for representing their collective interests on foreign policy (Israel) to the Congress," Jordan explained. Furthermore, AIPAC had "one continuing priority—the welfare of the state of Israel as perceived by the American Jewish community." Jordan estimated that AIPAC could count on the votes of between 65 and 70 senators on issues where the interests of Israel "are clear and well defined."

Jordan believed that the uneasiness of the American Jewish community about the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process could help the Carter administration exert pressure on the Israeli government. He recommended that Carter and his staff begin an immediate program of extensive consultations with the American Jewish community with the aim of exerting influence on Israel. They should clearly state the administration's goals for the peace process, the proposed structure of negotiations, and the prospects for Israel in a peaceful Middle East. If Carter was able to enlist the support of the American Jewish

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317 Ibid., 28.
318 Memorandum, Hamilton Jordan to Jimmy Carter, untitled, 6/77, Foreign Policy/Domestic Politics Memo, HJ Memo, 6/77 Folder, Chief of Staff Jordan, Camp David, 1979 (changes, etc) through Foreign Policy Issues—Work Plans, 6/77, Box 34A, Jimmy Carter Library, 32.
319 Ibid., 37.
community, Jordan hoped that it might lead to American Jews to pressure the Israeli government to make concessions.320

But when it came to issuing the Joint US-Soviet communiqué, the Carter administration had not followed Jordan's; neither Congress nor American Jewish leaders had been adequately briefed or consulted, and this resulted in vocal opposition.321 Carter had met with fifty Jewish leaders in the White House on July 7, and "said exactly the things they hoped to hear about Israel's right to exist, the desirable nature of a future Middle East peace and many other Mideast issues."322 But by the end of September, Rabbi Schindler (who had taken part in the July meeting) complained that "the assurances with which we walked out of the meeting have turned to new doubts and new fears."323

The communiqué was issued on a Saturday, but already by Sunday, Mark Seigel, a White House liaison with Jewish organizations commented that the administration was "in a potentially serious [political] situation" because of "a serious genuine misperception" in the American Jewish community of the United States' Middle East policies.324 American Jewish leaders did not just oppose the US-Soviet communiqué; they were thought it represented "a

320 Memorandum, Hamilton Jordan to Jimmy Carter, untitled, 6/77, Foreign Policy/Domestic Politics Memo, HJ Memo, 6/77 Folder, Chief of Staff Jordan, Camp David, 1979 (changes, etc) through Foreign Policy Issues—Work Plans, 6/77, Box 34A, Jimmy Carter Library, 43.
323 Ibid.
324 Ibid.
change in attitude and perhaps a change in policy" that was leading to a "confrontation between the United States and Israel."\textsuperscript{325}

Vance and Brzezinski tried to soothe the fears of the communiqué's opponents. Vance claimed that there were "some things that were very positive from the standpoint of Israel" in the statement, including the explicit reference to the establishment of normal relations between Israel and the Arab states.\textsuperscript{326} A National Security Council spokesman stated that the communiqué was "not a change in the policy of the United States nor is it the sum total of our views on the subject."\textsuperscript{327} Unfortunately, an interview that Brzezinski had taped for Canadian television before the communiqué had been issued was broadcast on October 2. In it Brzezinski said he was "reasonably hopeful that before the end of this year we...will be having a conference in Geneva."\textsuperscript{328}

Brzezinski later added that "the United States is not just an interested bystander, not even just a benevolent mediator...[It] has a direct interest in the outcome of the Middle Eastern conflict...[and] in obtaining a resolution of the conflict."\textsuperscript{329} Consequently, "the United States has a legitimate right to exercise its own leverage, peaceful and constructive, to

\textsuperscript{327} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{329} Ibid.
obtain a settlement."³³⁰ Israeli would participate in the negotiations because it did not "want to be left alone, out of the process which has a settlement as its ultimate objective."³³¹

Furthermore, if the Arab-Israeli conflict continued it would hurt the Israeli economy and radicalize Israel's Arab neighbors. Brzezinski said that Begin was "one of the very few people who . . . has had the opportunity to fight for a cause and to see it prevail. And now he has the last chance opportunity of his life to give his people lasting peace."³³² The tone of Brzezinski's comments immediately worked against the Carter administration's attempts to mollify adversaries of the communiqué.

Israel rejected the US-Soviet Communiqué on October 2, with a government spokesman declaring it to be "unacceptable."³³³ Although the Israelis had been aware that the United States and the Soviet Union were in contact, Israel was only made aware of the communiqué immediately before it was issued, when Vance gave Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan an advance copy on September 30th. Israel claimed that this short notice was an abrogation of earlier agreements between the United States and Israel. In 1975, Kissinger had signed a memorandum that stated "the United States Government will consult fully and seek to concert its positions and strategy at the Geneva peace conference" with Israel.³³⁴

³³¹ Ibid.
³³² Ibid.
But even this short warning had provided time for Begin and Dayan to mobilize a response by the government in Israel and Israel's supporters in the United States. The objections raised in the Israeli government when it condemned the US-Soviet statement on October 2nd mirrored those coming from American Jewish leaders, labor officials, and members of Congress and centered on several concerns. According to both Israelis and their American supporters, it represented an attempt by the two superpowers to impose a solution to the Middle East's problems on Israel, something that Carter had promised never to do. Additionally, the communique made no reference to UN Resolutions 242 and 338 or to the negotiation of actual peace treaties, which the Israeli government saw as further evidence that the United States was "devaluing certain principles and commitments which [had] guided U.S. Mideast policy during the last six Administrations."

Furthermore, Begin and his cabinet interpreted the statement's reference to "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" and the participation of "representatives of all the parties involved in the conflict including those of the Palestinian people" as attempts to officially include the PLO. The Israelis believed this language to be pro-PLO, implying the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank after an Israeli withdrawal "from territories occupied

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335 The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "The United States, the Soviet Union, and a Middle East Peace," 10/77, Middle East, 6/10/77-6/27/78 Folder, Chief of Staff Selig, Illinois Brick [legislation], 12/8/78 [O/A 605] through Miller, G. William, 12/28/77-10/5/79 [CF, O/A 624], Box 176, 1.
336 The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "The United States, the Soviet Union, and a Middle East Peace," 10/77, Middle East, 6/10/77-6/27/78 Folder, Chief of Staff Selig, Illinois Brick [legislation], 12/8/78 [O/A 605] through Miller, G. William, 12/28/77-10/5/79 [CF, O/A 624], Box 176, 1-2, Sobel, 159.
This prompted a statement from a Begin spokesman that Israel would not take part in a Geneva conference which included the PLO, even though this rejection contravened earlier agreements made between Begin and Carter.\(^{338}\)

The uproar around the communiqué continued to gain strength, and in order to end the attacks, Dayan was invited back to the United States for lengthy discussions with Carter, Vance, and Brzezinski on October 4. Earlier that day, the President had used his address to the UN to reaffirm the American commitment to Israel, but the rift between the governments of Israel and the United States had not been resolved and the talks with Dayan were tense.\(^{339}\) Dayan wanted to know whether the United States expected all parties involved in Geneva to accept the communiqué in order to attend the conference. Carter spoke of the seriousness of a public argument between Israel and the United States over Geneva, warning that without American support "Israel would be isolated, with world opinion against her."\(^{340}\) Nevertheless, when Dayan refused to yield, Carter told him "What you say of the declaration is your own affair."\(^{341}\) The joint statement was an agreement between only the United States and the Soviet Union.

During the discussions (which lasted late into the night), Dayan made it clear that Israel could not accept the communiqué and then, as Brzezinski later described, "blackmailed the President" with the threat of using public opinion (especially that of the American Jewish

\(^{337}\) The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "The United States, the Soviet Union, and a Middle East Peace," 10/77, Middle East, 6/10/77-6/27/78 Folder, Chief of Staff Selig, Illinois Brick [legislation], 12/8/78 [O/A 605] through Miller, G. William, 12/28/77-10/5/79 [CF, O/A 624], Box 176, 1-2.


\(^{339}\) Vance, 192.

\(^{340}\) Dayan, 67; Stein, 218.

\(^{341}\) Dayan, 68.
community) as a weapon against Carter.\textsuperscript{342} Earlier that day, Carter's arrival to New York had been disturbed when Representative, New York City mayoral candidate, and prominent Jew, Ed Koch (D-NY) gave Carter a letter in which he said that the United States seemed to have "abandoned its commitments to peace, to Jewish refugees, to protection of Israel."

Carter also knew that a joint press conference of "about a dozen senators" all critical of the US-Soviet communiqué had been scheduled, and more than 150 Representatives had signed a letter condemning the statement.\textsuperscript{344} Carter bowed to the pressure, and the two sides worked out a joint US-Israeli statement that would palliate Israel’s supporters. The Joint US-Israeli Statement which was issued on October 5 said that:

\begin{quote}
The United States and Israel agree that Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 remain the agreed basis for the resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference and that all understandings and agreements between them on this subject remain in force.

Proposals for removing remaining obstacles to reconvening the Geneva Conference were developed. Foreign Minister Dayan will consult his government on the results of these discussions. Secretary Vance will discuss these proposals with the other parties.

Acceptance of the Joint United States-U.S.S.R Statement of October 1, 1977, by the parties is not a prerequisite for the reconvening and conduct of the Geneva Conference.\textsuperscript{345}
\end{quote}

Despite having been the primary force behind the crafting of the U.S.-Israeli statement, Dayan made certain that it was Vance who presented the statement during the press conference.

\textsuperscript{342} Brzezinski, 108.
\textsuperscript{345} Joint U.S.-Israel Statement of October 5, 1977, Public Information Series, Bureau of Public Affairs, 10/77 Folder, NSA Collection, Chronological File-2/77 through 1/78, Jimmy Carter Library.
Furthermore, the statement came just four days after the U.S.-Soviet communiqué, and the timing implied that it was an amendment of the principles outlined in the communiqué. The outcry against the US-Soviet communiqué immediately quieted; the House of Representatives' letter was never sent, the Senators' press conference was cancelled, and Representative Koch even apologized to the President for "any inadvertent embarrassment he may have caused."\footnote{Martin Tolchin, "Carter Assures Representatives On Israel; Calls Koch 'My Friend,'" \textit{New York Times}, October 7, 1977; Murrey Marder, H.D.S. Greenway, and Robert G. Kalser, "Israel, U.S. Find Talks Formula; Arabs Seem Wary," \textit{The Washington Post}, October 6, 1977.}

The talks with Dayan also resulted in the creation of working paper which enumerated the most recent procedural suggestions for holding the Geneva conference. The elements of the "Working Paper on Suggestions for the Resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference" were similar to those negotiated during Dayan's talks with the American administration two weeks earlier and approved by the Israeli Cabinet on September 25th. They included a unified Arab delegation for the opening session, which would then break into several working groups consisting of Egypt and Israel, Syria and Israel, and Jordan and Israel which would meet "for the negotiation and conclusion of peace treaties."\footnote{"Working Paper on Suggestions for the Resumption of the Geneva Peace Conference," 10/5/77, Middle East—Negotiations: [10/77-12/77] Folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Geographic File, Middle East—[10/78-7/79] through Middle East—Negotiations: [7/78-9/78], Box 13, Jimmy Carter Library, 1.} The new working paper also recognized the need to address the issue of Arab and Jewish refugees, but did not provide a format for these discussions; although it did assert that the basis for all negotiations would be UN Resolutions 242 and 338.\footnote{Ibid.}
The most important element of the working paper, however, was Israel's consent to discussing the West Bank and Gaza in a group consisting of "Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and the Palestinian Arabs," although no there was no further clarification as to which Palestinian Arabs would be included and Syria was still left out. The Carter administration interpreted this as a significant departure from Israel's earlier position that maintained only states could participate in Geneva's working groups and that the working groups must be bilateral. The Americans hoped that this development reflected Begin's willingness to compromise once Geneva was convened, prompting one White House official to state, "procedural issues to some extent are a mask for substantive issues. This is why procedural issues tend to be so difficult."  

This new plan was unanimously approved by the Israeli Cabinet on October 11th, and Carter was hopeful that the Arabs would do the same. In a memo summarizing the significance of the October 4 meeting, NSC official Bill Quandt wrote:

Foreign Minister Dayan has agreed to recommend to his government a number of proposals which had previously been unacceptable. If the Israeli Cabinet approves his recommendation, this will constitute a significant step in the direction of reconvening the Geneva Peace Conference. Only Syrian acceptance will remain difficult to obtain.

However, Arab leaders were increasingly skeptical “as to the likelihood of Geneva producing any constructive result,” and the US-Soviet communiqué followed by the apparent backpedaling contained in the subsequent US-Israeli statement confused and dismayed the

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350 Memorandum, Bill Quandt to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 8/5/77, Brzezinski Collection, Box 13, Jimmy Carter Library.
Arab leaders. 351 Egyptian President Sadat was extremely displeased. He was adamantly anti-Soviet, with the relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union reaching "a new low" earlier in 1977 when the Soviet state newspaper, Pravda, published a personal attack against the Egyptian leader. 352 Sadat had repeatedly told Carter that he envisioned the Soviets having only a face-saving role in the peace process, and yet the Carter administration was involving the Soviet government before it was assured that any conference would be convened in Geneva.

Furthermore, the communique made no reference to the format of the negotiations, only that there were "several questions of a procedural and organizational nature which remain to be agreed upon." 353 Sadat continued to worry that if the negotiations in Geneva did not occur in bilateral groups, the conference would fail to arrive at a solution that would satisfy all of the negotiating parties. He had consistently argued that the bulk of the peace negotiations should occur between the individual states before the parties met in Geneva and outside the conference's framework.

Finally, Sadat feared that the participation of the Soviets would bolster the PLO in uncompromising positions unacceptable to Israel. In sum, Sadat thought that Soviet

351 Brzezinski, 110.
participation would doom the peace negotiations. Sadat had frequently stated his support of the PLO's right to attend Geneva, but he did not want them strong enough to disrupt the negotiations.

As a result, Sadat interpreted the US-Soviet communiqué as clear evidence that Carter did not support Egypt's preferences. As soon as he was informed of the communiqué, Sadat and his senior advisors met to discuss Egypt's next move, and after six hours, he decided to work privately to mitigate the influence of the statement. Sadat wrote a letter that was delivered to Carter on October 4, in which he asked that the United States do nothing that would "prevent Egypt and Israel from negotiating directly… either before or after the Geneva Conference is convened."

Sadat also recognized that the U.S.-Israeli statement was proof of Carter's unwillingness or inability to pressure Israel to compromise. Sadat was afraid that if the Geneva conference was convened it would fail. He wrote another letter to Carter on October 19 suggesting amendments to the U.S.-Israeli working paper including an explicit reference to PLO participation in the conference's plenary session and the inclusion of "the Palestinians and perhaps others" in the working group which would address "the West Bank, the Palestinian question, and the question of refugees" with Egypt, Israel, and Jordan.

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356 Meital, 163-4; Stein, 216; Indyk, 42-4.
357 Friedlander, 68.
358 Carter, White House Diary, 112.
359 Fahmy, 244.
The PLO had seen much that it had liked in the U.S.-Soviet communiqué; although the PLO was not specifically mentioned, the statement did refer to the legitimate rights of the Palestinians and called for Palestinian participation. The PLO immediately issued a statement stating that the communiqué "gives rise to the feeling that a genuine effort has been made to insure a just and permanent peace in the Middle East." However, on October 16 the PLO rejected the American-Israeli formulated working paper and demanded to participate in Geneva as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The U.S.-Israeli statement also alarmed the government of Jordan. By mid-October, King Hussein of Jordan had little interest in the Geneva process because he feared it could further destabilize his hold on power. The working paper's provision for bilateral working groups was a problem for Hussein because after the Rabat Conference, he no longer had the authority to negotiate for the Palestinians. Although Carter was aware that King Hussein was under increasing pressure, he believed that the Jordanians would nevertheless attend Geneva.

The Syrian response to the US-Soviet communiqué had been positive but noncommittal; Damascus pointed out that despite the mention of Palestinian participation it did not specifically mention the PLO or discuss full Israeli withdrawal from all occupied

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361 Ibid.
362 Friedlander, 73.
364 Quandt, Camp David, 121-2.
After the US-Israeli statement was issued, Syria continued its long and vocal support of the necessity for PLO participation in Geneva, and five days after the PLO rejected the U.S.-Israeli working paper, Syrian President Assad did as well. However, Assad did not just cite the Palestinian issue when he communicated Syria's rejection of the working paper to Carter. He also repeated his demand that the peace negotiations in Geneva occur in multinational committees instead of the bilateral working groups suggested in the working paper. He was worried that bilateral negotiations would provide Sadat with the opportunity to make a separate peace with Israel.

The US-Soviet communiqué and US-Israeli statement dramatically affected the peace process far beyond the expectations of the American administration. After Carter had left office, he and Brezinski both claimed in interviews that Vance was the person most responsible for the joint US-Soviet statement. Brzezinski admitted that he "had erred in not consulting our domestic political advisers about its likely internal impact and in not objecting more strenuously to the very notion of a joint U.S.-Soviet public statement."

Unfortunately, few of the documents dealing with the discussions surrounding the communiqué are available. But in what is available, Brzezinski does not object at all. State Department officials also blamed Vance for the trouble that the communiqué caused. Roy

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366 Carter, Keeping Faith, 295.
367 Sobel, 163.
368 Stein, 221.
369 Stein, 212-3.
370 Brzezinski, 110.
Atherton, who was the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, later stated that the communiqué:

was not an idea that was staffed out. We [the negotiating team] were not consulted about it in advance. Vance gave us our marching orders… and our job [was] to salute like good soldiers and…try to make it work….We had an uneasy feeling that this was starting down a path that might cause problems; it might blow up.  

Yet these attacks on the communiqué by members of the administration are both unfair and inaccurate revisionism. The question of whether Vance was the American most responsible for the negotiation of the communiqué is irrelevant; the statement itself was little more than a general summary of the principles contained in the Brookings Institute's plan for negotiating a Middle East peace treaty—principles that had formed the basis of the Carter administration's Middle East initiatives since February 1977.

The communiqué called for the "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict," using the same ambiguously indefinite territories as did UN Resolution 242. It also recognized that a comprehensive treaty would have to "insur[e] the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people." The PLO is not mentioned, just Palestinians. Since his days as a presidential candidate, Carter had insisted that the interests of the Palestinians had to be considered when negotiating a peace treaty.

Furthermore, Israel had already agreed that Palestinians (even those with PLO affiliations) could attend the Geneva conference as members of the Jordanian delegation provided that they were not well known. The US-Soviet communiqué also called for the

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371 Roy Atherton quoted in Stein, 213.
373 Ibid.
"establishment of normal peaceful relations," between Israel and the Arab states, a concession that the Arabs had theretofore been unwilling to make.\textsuperscript{374} This went further toward the Israeli point of view than the Brookings Report which only spoke of making "progress toward the development of normal...political and economic relations."\textsuperscript{375}

The US-Soviet communiqué did provide immediate benefits to the Soviet Union, and this prompted some of the criticism directed at the Carter administration and the communiqué itself. The Soviet Union had been marginalized in Middle East peace process, and it was suddenly relevant again. In addition to increasing its standing with the Arabs by seeming to extract concessions from the United States, the Soviet Union was now actively participating in the Geneva process, and even offering to join in any "international guarantees" that might be necessary to "insur[e] the security of the borders within Israel and the neighboring Arab states."\textsuperscript{376} Yet obtaining Soviet involvement was a necessary step of the Geneva process. The USSR was a co-sponsor of the Geneva Peace Conference and would have to be included if the conference was reconvened. The United States remained the primary force advocating comprehensive peace negotiations in Geneva; Middle Eastern leaders went to Washington, not Moscow, to prepare for Geneva.

The uproar surrounding the US-Soviet communiqué was not primarily the result of its specific content. Instead it was a tactic that Israel and its supporters used to achieve Israel's foreign policy objectives. The tactic was successful, in large part, due to the Carter

\textsuperscript{374} Joint US-Soviet Statement on the Middle East Public Information Series, Bureau of Public Affairs, 10/77 Folder, NSA Collection, Chronological File-2/77 through 1/78, Jimmy Carter Library.
\textsuperscript{375} Brookings, 2.
\textsuperscript{376} Joint US-Soviet Statement on the Middle East Public Information Series, Bureau of Public Affairs, 10/77 Folder, NSA Collection, Chronological File-2/77 through 1/78, Jimmy Carter Library.
administration's poor handling of the communiqué, its timing with other administration comments, and the US-Israeli Joint Statement. The US-Soviet communiqué did not explicitly state anything to which Israel could object. But Begin's government claimed the statement strengthened Arab intransigence by not referring to UN Resolution 242 and not explicitly barring the PLO from participation in Geneva, announcing "ambiguity has its uses in diplomacy but not in this context." This assertion was buttressed by the timing of other statements made by Carter and members of his administration.

On September 29, two days before the communiqué was issued, Carter spoke in detail at a news conference about what the PLO would need to do in order to be officially included in the peace negotiations. He admitted "that there can be no Middle Eastern peace settlement without adequate Palestinian representation." The United States had "no national position on exactly who would represent the Palestinians," but Carter did recognize that the PLO was "a group that represent[ed] certainly a substantial part of the Palestinians." Additionally, if the PLO endorsed UN Resolution 242—even while maintaining that the resolution did not adequately deal with the Palestinians' issues—the United States "would then begin to meet with and to work with the PLO."

The day after Carter's press conference, on September 30, 1977, Israel received an advance copy of the US-Soviet communiqué from the United States and given just twenty

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379 Ibid.
four hours for comment, followed the next day by Brzezinski's statements about using leverage to influence the peace process. The Carter administration was acting increasingly forcefully in its efforts to convene Geneva.

If Carter was successful in bringing the Arabs and Israelis to a peace conference in Geneva, the comprehensive treaty he would advocate would be based on the Brookings' plan. But Begin preferred bilateral rather than comprehensive negotiations and opposed the Brookings' plan because it would require Israel to withdraw from most of the West Bank to be replaced by a Palestinian entity.

Consequently, the interests of the American and Israeli governments were diametrically opposed, and Begin worried that the Geneva conference might construct a situation in which Israel either had to accede to an unacceptable comprehensive treaty or lose support in the United States Congress. At the same time, representatives from the governments of Egypt and Israel had begun to meet bilaterally. If the Geneva conference failed, Sadat was still interested in negotiating. Israel did not want to appear to scuttle the Geneva conference and be put "in the position of the villain," according to an Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman. But if Carter could not garner the support necessary to convene Geneva, then the comprehensive treaty that Begin opposed would not be negotiated, Israel could still negotiate bilaterally with Sadat, and the American efforts toward a comprehensive peace based on the Brookings' plan would be derailed.

The Israeli government used the US-Soviet communiqué to stir up American opposition to Carter's plan for Geneva, forcing the American administration to issue the US-Israel Joint Statement. Like the US-Soviet communiqué, the US-Israeli statement did not develop any ideas that were new to the peace process. It reaffirmed that UN Resolutions 242 and 338 were the basis for the Geneva peace conference and stipulated that acceptance of the communiqué was not a prerequisite for participation in the Geneva negotiations. But because the Carter administration clearly intended the US-Israeli statement to calm the protests that had erupted after the US-Soviet communiqué, it was viewed by Israelis and Arabs as a renunciation of the principles contained (or more accurately, implied) in the communiqué. Israeli officials claimed that "the Americans have taken two steps toward the Arab position and one step back toward Israel." In his memoir, Brzezinski later concluded that Carter administration's perceived backtracking, "undermine[d] Arab confidence in our determination to obtain a genuine settlement in Geneva." The idea of a comprehensive peace treaty negotiated in Geneva was mortally wounded.

By the third week of October, the American administration was beginning to doubt if there was any formula that could bring everyone to Geneva. Carter had other important issues to deal with: the controversial treaties that would cede control of the Panama Canal to Panama were being debated in Congress, Carter's energy legislation was under attack, and he had to deal with an unemployment crisis in America's steel industry, to name just a few.

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385 Brzezinski, 110.
According to Bill Quandt, Carter did not feel that he had the time to form the necessary consensus; he believed that he had already done nearly all he could.\textsuperscript{386}

However, on the day of Syria's rejection of the working paper, Carter decided to make one last appeal to Sadat, drawing on the friendship that had formed between them in April. He wrote Sadat a letter saying that when the two leaders had met, he had been "deeply impressed and grateful for your promise to me that, at a crucial moment, I could count on your support when obstacles arose in our common search for peace in the Middle East. We have reached such a moment, and I need your help."\textsuperscript{387} Carter explained to Sadat that "The time has now come to move forward and your early public endorsement of our approach is extremely important—perhaps vital—in advancing all parties to Geneva."\textsuperscript{388} And to ensure that there was no misunderstanding Carter ended the letter with, "This is a personal appeal for your support."\textsuperscript{389} The letter did not produce any immediate results.

After a week with no further progress in finding a formula for Geneva, Carter wrote to Sadat again that he did “not frankly see any likelihood of reaching agreement on a paper acceptable to all parties nor do I believe that this is necessary.” Carter believed that the negotiations on the procedures for Geneva had progressed far enough and "that any remaining problems can be worked out at Geneva."\textsuperscript{390} The time had come to "move boldly to convene the conference." To reassure the Arabs that the United States was committed to

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\textsuperscript{386} Quandt, Camp David, 138.
\textsuperscript{387} Handwritten Letter from President Carter to President Sadat, 10/21/77, Camp David Accords through Collucci, Frank Vertical File, 8(A), Jimmy Carter Library.
\textsuperscript{388} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{389} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{390} Carter letter to Sadat, October 28, 1977 found in Fahmy, 247.
\end{flushleft}
finding a fair resolution to the Palestinian issue, he would "make an unequivocal public statement that the Palestinian question, as well as the question of withdrawal and borders of peace, must be dealt with seriously at the conference." At the conclusion of the letter, Carter wrote that he was "convinced that we are now at a critical moment in the efforts my administration had been making since taking office nine months ago."

Sadat desperately needed progress in the peace process to remain in power, and he was determined to find a way to keep the United States involved in the negotiations. But he was not ready to agree to Geneva. In early November, Sadat proposed a meeting in East Jerusalem involving what he termed 'the Big Five' (the permanent members of the United Nations' Security Council) and Israel, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. The Carter administration thought that this suggestion was "crazy" since it was a completely new and different plan that introduced additional participants into the already complicated negotiations, and politely demurred. This forced Sadat to find another way to keep the peace process alive.

Sadat chose the dramatic move of traveling to Jerusalem to address the Knesset. Although Sadat's decision was unexpected, the idea of Israeli leaders meeting with Arab leaders was not completely new. On June 20, in his first speech to the Knesset, Prime Minister Begin had invited King Hussein, President Sadat, and President Assad to meet, "either in [their] capitals or on neutral ground, in public or away from the spotlights of

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391 Carter in Fahmy, 247.  
392 Carter in Fahmy, 248.  
publicity—in order to discuss the establishment of true peace between their countries and Israel.\textsuperscript{394}

Then, when King Hassan of Morocco brokered a meeting between the Egyptians and the Israelis, the Israelis requested a meeting between Begin and Sadat; though at the request of the Egyptians, Foreign Minister Dayan met Deputy Prime Minister Tuhami instead. During a brief state visit to Romania on October 30, Sadat was told by Romanian President Ceausescu that he could trust Begin and should negotiate directly with the Israelis, and Dayan and Tuhami had already agreed in Morocco that, if the bilateral talks progressed suitably, then Sadat and Begin would need to meet.\textsuperscript{395}

Nevertheless, Sadat's overture to the Israelis came as a surprise to the Carter administration. On November 5, just five days before Sadat announced his willingness to go to Jerusalem, Bill Quandt sent a memorandum to Brzezinski in which he said "the present atmosphere in Israel would improve if prominent Israelis and Egyptians could meet publicly together to discuss the chances for peace."\textsuperscript{396} He doubted, however, that "this could be done in the near future. Prior to Geneva, Sadat is not going to agree to meet with any prominent Israeli."\textsuperscript{397}


\textsuperscript{395} Dayan, 43-52; Stein, 221-2.


\textsuperscript{397} Ibid.
Then in an address to the Egyptian Parliament on November 9th, Sadat expressed his willingness to go to Israel, "to the Knesset itself," to discuss peace. During the speech, Sadat also stated his desire to stop debating over procedural issues, to convene the Geneva conference, and to demand "the return of the Arab territory occupied in 1967" and to realize the rights of the Palestinians to "self-determination and … to establish their state." 

Although Sadat's promise to go to Israel was a breakthrough, it was cloaked in rhetoric referring to Israel's "lying propaganda and her notorious influence in American society." Despite Israeli concern that Sadat was not sincere, the next day Begin issued a verbal invitation to him through a visiting American congressional delegation. Then on November 11th, Begin spoke to the Egyptian people directly in a radio address saying that "it will be a pleasure to welcome and receive your president," and calling for an end to wars, bloodshed and threats. But Sadat wanted Israel to issue an official, written invitation. Finally, an Israeli letter of invitation was delivered to Sadat, in which Begin invited the Egyptian leader "to meet [at] your convenience," even offering to rearrange his state visit to Great Britain to accommodate Sadat's schedule. Sadat quickly accepted, and a visit was arranged for November 19th, 1977.

Sadat's historic trip to Jerusalem was not without controversy. His speech to the Egyptian Parliament had been a surprise to the Egyptian government as well as to outside

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399 Anwar Sadat, "Address to the Egyptian Parliament," in Fahmy, 150.
401 Stein, 223.
402 Menachem Begin, Radio Address to the Egyptian People, November 11, 1977, in Hurwitz, 8.
403 Menachem Begin, cable to Anwar Sadat, November 15, 1977, in Hurwitz, 12-3.
observers, and once it became obvious that Sadat did intend to travel to Jerusalem, Egypt's Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Muhammed Riyadh resigned their positions in protest. They feared that Sadat's visit would imply Egypt's recognition of Israel and that it would isolate Egypt from the Arab world.  

Sadat himself was worried about the response of the Egyptian people, and he raised the level of alert for the Egyptian military.

This, in turn, worried the Israeli military which feared that Sadat's trip could be a ruse to cover an Egyptian military build-up prior to an invasion. Nevertheless, Begin believed that Sadat was sincere in his desire to move the peace process forward, and he hoped that his trip might lead to real progress in forging an agreement between Israel and Egypt.

Although Sadat's trip to Israel and his address to the Knesset were momentous events in the history of the Middle East peace process, their significance was symbolic rather than substantive. The memorable moments were the image of Sadat exiting an aircraft of the Egyptian Air Force onto Israeli territory, receiving the salute of an honor guard of Israeli soldiers, and standing in front of the Israeli Knesset, addressing the parliament of a state with which his country had been at war four years earlier. The speeches given by Sadat and Begin were more forgettable. Although Sadat spoke often of peace, he stressed that he was not seeking a separate peace with Israel, and the principles that he outlined as necessary for success had not changed. Sadat called for Israel to withdraw to its May 1967 borders, recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, and create a Palestinian

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405 Stein, 223-4; Dayan, 75-6; Friedlander, 87-8.
national entity. If Israel did, Sadat claimed that there would be peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.\textsuperscript{406}

Begin then spoke. No advance copy of Sadat's speech had been circulated, so Begin's address was not a direct response. Instead, he asserted that Israel wanted peace, as well, but that it was the Arabs who had prevented it. Focusing on the future, Begin stated that he believed a permanent peace was possible, and he commended Sadat's courage in coming to Israel. He hoped that Sadat's visit would open the communication between the two countries and allow negotiations that would result in a lasting peace. While Begin admitted that the Israeli position was still very far from that of the Arabs, he stated that all contentious issues were open for negotiation.\textsuperscript{407}

Sadat was disappointed with Begin's speech, but did agree that the Tuhami-Dayan meetings should continue. However, neither side budged. The Egyptians wanted the Israelis to return all occupied territory and to find a solution to the Palestinian issue, while the Israelis said simply that all issues were on the table but negotiations must begin immediately, without waiting for Syria or Jordan to agree to join. Both sides agreed that Sadat's trip had been a watershed event, and (perhaps influenced by the extraordinary emotion stirred by the visit) hoped that it would result in a narrowing of the distance between Arab and Israeli negotiating positions.

\textsuperscript{406} Anwar Sadat, Speech to the Knesset, November 20, 1977, in Hurwitz, 16-28.
\textsuperscript{407} Menachem Begin, Speech to the Knesset, November 20, 1977, in Hurwitz, 28-36.
President Carter called Sadat’s trip to Jerusalem “among the most dramatic events of modern history.” Initially, he saw it as “an effort to promote reconvening the Geneva Conference,” but he was worried about the backlash against Sadat for threatening Arab unity and failing to specifically mention the PLO in his address. In a cabinet meeting two days after Sadat landed in Jerusalem, Carter stated that he believed peace would "not come easily" and that it would involve "tedious" negotiations. The censure that Carter feared was quick in coming.

Libya broke off diplomatic relations with Egypt on November 19, and Syria denounced the Egyptian visit during a November 22 debate on the Middle East in the United Nations General Assembly, prompting the Egyptian delegation to walk out. The PLO objected to Begin's Knesset speech, but both the PLO and Jordan withheld their judgment until the results of Sadat's trip were better known. And although the Soviet Union did not immediately condemn Egypt, it did criticize Sadat for undermining Arab solidarity by bowing to American pressure to hold separate peace talks with Israel.

Sadat wanted to capitalize on the momentum generated by his visit to Jerusalem, and announced on November 26 a preparatory meeting for Geneva to be held in Cairo in mid-December. The Carter administration decided that it needed to reassess America's Middle Eastern policy before responding. The Israelis immediately accepted Sadat's invitation,
while the rejectionist Arab states hardened their objections. Syria not only declined Sadat's invitation, but decided to convene a conference in Tripoli for the Arab states that opposed Egypt's recent actions. Jordan chose not to rebuff either Sadat's conference or the Tripoli meeting, but issued a statement that it would not attend either meeting unless all of the Arab parties involved in the peace process were also present.

The Tripoli meeting was held from December 2 to 5, and was attended by the PLO, Syria, Algeria, Libya, South Yemen, and Iraq; it resulted in the Tripoli Declaration that strongly denounced Sadat for negotiating with Israel. In response, Sadat broke relations with the five states which participated in the conference and expelled their diplomats from Egypt along with several high ranking PLO representatives.

After his visit to Jerusalem, Sadat hoped that Israel would respond with a grand gesture of its own, which would jumpstart the peace negotiations. Progress in the peace process would then cause his Arab opponents to reverse their ostracism and join the negotiations. Yet when Dayan and Tuhami secretly met in Morocco on December 2nd and 3rd while the Tripoli Conference was being held, the Egyptians were disappointed by the Israelis' intransigence.

At the beginning of the talks, Dayan presented Tuhami with a handwritten position paper that spelled out Israel's basis for an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Begin and Dayan had discussed these principles before Dayan had left Israel, and agreed that the most important issue was that the treaty would result in the normalization of the relationship

413 Quandt, *Camp David*, 149-50.
414 Sobel, 180-1.
415 Stein, 230.
between Israel and Egypt and the establishment of peace between the two countries, not just an end to the state of belligerency. This meant the normalization of "diplomatic and cultural relations, freedom of passage, [and] mutual trade and tourism." Additionally, an Egyptian-Israeli treaty would not be dependent on the conclusion of peace treaties with the other Arab states. Although Dayan insisted that Israel wanted to make peace with Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, it would not allow those states "to veto an Egypt-Israel treaty."

Dayan said that if they could establish normal relations, Israel would withdraw its military forces from the Sinai. Egypt should demilitarize the land east of the strategic Mitla and Gidi Passes and declare the Sharm al-Sheik Straits an international waterway. However, the Israeli settlements in the Sinai would remain, and Sharm al-Sheik and El Arish would remain under the administration of Israelis, albeit civilians.

Tuhami was not pleased. Sadat wanted any agreement between Israel and Egypt to also address (at least in general terms) the resolution of Israel's disputes with the other Arab states. This would include Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights and the establishment of some sort of Palestinian entity. With regard to an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai, Tuhami repeated his assertion that Egypt must regain "every square yard" of occupied territory. Sadat envisioned the Egyptian-Israeli treaty as generating "leverage to press for a comprehensive arrangement with all the Arab States." The meeting ended amicably, but neither Dayan nor Tuhami had been reassured by what they had heard.

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416 Dayan, 93
417 Dayan, 93.
418 Dayan, 95-6.
Secretary Vance traveled to Cairo on December 10, where Sadat informed him of the position Tuhami had relayed to Dayan, and he pressed Vance to secure a public statement from Begin promising a major withdrawal and resolution of the Palestinian issue. Sadat believed that if Begin would commit Israel to withdraw from most of the occupied territories, it would allow Syria and Jordan to join the negotiations without losing face. Sadat repeatedly stressed that he was not interested in simply negotiating a bilateral treaty; he needed progress toward a comprehensive treaty to disprove those who accused him of betraying the Arab cause. If Israel was accommodating, Sadat would call for all Arabs to participate in the peace talks. If Syria and Jordan still refused to negotiate, then Sadat could claim that he was advancing the Arab cause by making real progress toward peace while the obstructionist policies of the rejectionist states were not benefiting the Arabs at all.\(^{419}\)

But when Vance traveled to Jerusalem to meet with Begin and Dayan, he did not find the Israelis willing to do as Sadat wished. Vance brought with him a message from President Carter which relayed Sadat's need for an Israeli statement, but Begin countered with a request that he be invited to Washington to consult with Carter. It was clear to Vance that Begin believed that Egypt and Israel could come to an agreement on a withdrawal from the Sinai, but that he had no confidence that Syria or Jordan would agree to negotiate on terms acceptable to Israel.\(^{420}\)

The Carter administration had accepted reality: it was no longer conceivable to hold a Geneva conference in December; therefore the Egyptian-Israeli talks would become the

\(^{419}\) Vance, 196-7.
\(^{420}\) Vance, 197.
priority. Carter saw these negotiations as a springboard to reach a comprehensive agreement. Egyptians, Israelis, Americans, and a small UN delegation attended the conference that opened on December 14 in Cairo. The Soviet Union joined Syria and Jordan in announcing that they would not attend the talks. Since the United States was now focusing on bilateral talks between Israel and Egypt, it concluded that Syria and the USSR "could be ignored." The Soviet Union and the Arab rejectionists were no longer essential to process. At the Cairo conference, it was obvious that no progress would be made; neither Israel nor Egypt presented any new initiatives. By the conference's close, its only accomplishment had been to allow Egyptian and Israeli officials to meet and cautiously develop the relationships that would be necessary to implement any future agreement.

While the Cairo conference was underway, Begin traveled to Washington and presented his plan for the West Bank to President Carter on December 16th. Carter later wrote in his diary that he felt that Begin's "autonomy plan" for the West Bank was inadequate and "unacceptable." Under the Israeli proposal, an Administrative Council elected by the residents of the West Bank would be responsible for "all problems of daily life." However, the Israeli military would remain in the occupied territory, and Israeli citizens could settle in the West Bank.

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421 Brzezinski, 112; Quandt, Camp David, 150.
422 Quandt, Camp David, 149.
423 Stein, 238; Friedlander, 109.
424 Friedlander, 111-2.
425 Carter, White House Diary, 150.
Furthermore, the authority for the Administrative Council would come from the Israeli Military administration and not the United Nations, which meant that in the highly charged atmosphere of distrust, the Israelis were willing to share power but not relinquish it, and could therefore choose to take it back.\textsuperscript{427} Another important issue raised during Begin's discussions with the Carter administration was the question of sovereignty for the West Bank. Begin said in no uncertain terms that Israel considered the West Bank sovereign Israeli territory—Judea and Samaria. However, because the Arabs also claimed sovereignty over the same land, officially the question of sovereignty would be put off, with no mention of it in the autonomy plan. Although Carter did find Begin's plan "more flexible than [he] had expected," it was still only sufficient as a beginning point for negotiations.\textsuperscript{428}

In the weeks that followed, neither Israel nor Egypt would agree to further compromises. The Israeli and Egyptian defense ministers met in Egypt after Begin's trip to Washington, and Begin and Sadat themselves met in Ismailia in late December. However, the negotiating positions of both sides had hardened, and both worried that a peace treaty might be unobtainable.\textsuperscript{429} As this concern grew, the optimism and momentum created by Sadat's trip to Jerusalem dissipated. As December ended and January began, Carter and his administration decided to focus on reaching an agreement between Egypt and Israel,

\textsuperscript{427} Memorandum, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, "NSC Weekly Report #40," 12/16/77, Weekly Reports [to the President], 31-45 Folder, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, [trips]—Four Power Meetings: [9/77-1/80] through Weekly Reports (to the President), [6/78-9/78] 61-71, Box 41, Jimmy Carter Library.
\textsuperscript{428} Carter, \textit{Keeping Faith}, 300.
\textsuperscript{429} Quandt, \textit{Camp David}, 159.
although they still hoped to find a way to draw the other Arab states and the PLO into the negotiations.  

When the United States and the Soviet Union issued the joint US-Soviet Communiqué on October 1, 1977, the Middle East peace process had been making progress along two separate paths. The preparations for a comprehensive peace conference in Geneva were moving forward, and Egypt and Israel had secretly begun bilateral talks. The communiqué, however, disrupted this progress. Its most vocal opponents were the Israelis. They worried that it signaled that a Middle East peace plan would be imposed on Israel, and they feared that the reference to the Palestinians' legitimate rights and the omission of any mention of UN Resolutions 242 and 338 reflected a change in the United States' relationship with Israel.

Consequently, Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan and American Secretary of State Vance negotiated the US-Israeli Statement that was issued on October 5 and stated that acceptance of the US-Soviet Communiqué was not a condition of attending Geneva. Progress in the peace process quickly halted; Israel had never wanted Carter's comprehensive negotiations, and Sadat had lost confidence in the Geneva process. The other Arab participants were also distrustful of Carter because they considered the US-Israeli Statement evidence that his administration would sacrifice its negotiating principles in the face of Israeli opposition.

This was the backdrop to Sadat's astounding decision to travel to Jerusalem. His visit did reanimate the peace process, but it also derailed the Geneva conference. This had not been Sadat's intention: he had merely wanted to guide the shape that Geneva would take. He

430 Brzezinski, 120-1; Vance, 200-203, Quandt, Camp David, 154-159.
recognized the emotional impact of his Knesset speech, and believed that if Begin would make a similar conciliatory gesture, Jordan could be convinced to attend Geneva. Then the Syrians would have to participate or risk being marginalized in the Middle East's regional politics.

Begin, however, refused to make any concessions, and Sadat was castigated by Arab leaders across the Middle East. The Carter administration initially tried to use Sadat's overture as a stepping stone to Geneva, but soon recognized that his trip had polarized the Arab world to such an extent that it would be impossible to convene Geneva in 1977 or early 1978. Begin used Sadat's isolation to compel Egypt to negotiate a separate, bilateral peace treaty, and by the end of the year, the Geneva process was dead.
CONCLUSION

The Middle East peace process evolved during 1977, President Carter's first year in office. Carter initially decided to advocate comprehensive peace negotiations that would occur in the framework of a Geneva peace conference and involve all of the parties that had attended the conference after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. This conference would result in a treaty (or treaties) based on the principles of UN Resolution 242; that is, it would result in an Israeli withdrawal from most of the territory it had occupied in the 1967 War, the normalization of relations between the Arab states and Israel, and some form of self-governance for the Palestinian Arabs. Carter's choice of comprehensive instead of bilateral negotiations was a departure from Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy under Presidents Nixon and Ford, and the Carter administration did not expect the process to be easy.

Nevertheless, the Middle East was important enough to Carter that he was willing to take the risks associated with changing American foreign policy and becoming involved with the complicated diplomacy of comprehensive peace negotiations. But by early 1978, the administration altered its goals for Middle Eastern peace negotiations. Carter still hoped for comprehensive peace negotiations in the future, but realizing their immediate impossibility, decided to focus on bringing the Israelis and Egyptians together. After the United States chose to support bilateral negotiations between Israel and Egypt, the progress towards a Geneva conference never restarted.

This thesis differs from other scholarship addressing Carter's Middle East policies because it focuses specifically on the developments in the peace process during 1977. By
limiting the scope of the study, important conclusions can be made about Carter's attempts to initiate comprehensive negotiations. Bill Quandt, a historian and a member of the Carter administration, has claimed that the administration's efforts were sincere attempts to make peace that served to keep up the peace process's diplomatic momentum until the political situation in the Middle East allowed bilateral contact between Israel and Egypt to succeed.431

Additionally, he does not think that the success of the Carter administration's Middle East initiatives can be "judge[d] by the standard of initial designs."432 Kenneth Stein believes that Carter's work toward comprehensive negotiations was a doomed aberration in a successful series of bilateral negotiations between Middle Eastern states under the sponsorship of the United States.433 The evidence shows that Carter's ambitious goal of comprehensive peace negotiations was not doomed—it was defeated in 1977, and this forced him to support more limited bilateral negotiations between Israel and Egypt in 1978. The Carter administration's efforts in 1977 must be judged in relation to the goals Carter and his advisors set for themselves.

Carter understood that there were many difficult problems that had to be overcome to permit a Geneva conference to successfully negotiate a comprehensive peace treaty. The 1973 Geneva conference had been co-sponsored by the United States and Soviet Union, and the Carter administration believed that if the Soviet Union was not included in comprehensive negotiations Moscow would use its influence to disrupt the peace process.

431 Quandt, Camp David, 331.
432 Quandt, Camp David, 315.
433 Stein, 203-6, 264-8.
Consequently, Washington had to involve the Soviets but without allowing them to increase their influence in the Middle East at the expense of the United States.

Additionally, a way had to be found to allow Palestinian representation at Geneva. This would be particularly difficult because the Arabs insisted that only the PLO could represent the Palestinian people, and the PLO called for the destruction of Israel. As a result, the Israelis refused to negotiate with the PLO. The issue of Palestinian representation was further complicated by an agreement between the United States and Israel that prevented the United States from having any official contact with the PLO until the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist.

Each Middle Eastern leader also had separate motivations and goals for the peace process, although the Carter administration believed that they shared a desire for peace (even if what that meant was different from person to person). But Carter was unable to find enough partners amongst the Middle Eastern leaders who were willing to make the compromises necessary to successfully convene the Geneva conference. Sadat was in urgent need of progress in the peace process. His hold on power in Egypt was weakening to a point that threatened his government.

Sadat's first priority was remaining in power in Egypt, and he believed that this would be facilitated by an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. But he also wanted Egypt to retain its influence in the Arab world. Sadat believed (rightly) that for both of these things to happen, he would have to negotiate bilaterally with Israel but in a context that included other Arab states. Additionally, Sadat recognized that a closer relationship with the United States
would also provide much more financial, economic, and military aid that would benefit Egypt and solidify his government.\footnote{For analyses of Sadat's motivations and of Egypt's domestic politics under his leadership see Indyk, "To the Ends of the Earth;" Sadat's Jerusalem Initiative (Cambridge: Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University, 1984); and Yoram Meital, Egypt's Struggle for Peace; Continuity and Change, 1967-1977 (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1997), Chapters 4-7.}

Hafez al-Assad, Syria's president, was Sadat's primary Arab rival. Like Sadat, influence throughout the entire Arab world was a secondary concern to Assad. Unlike Sadat, Assad's government was stable; instead he was most concerned with the intra-Arab power struggle between Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon and with gaining control of the PLO.\footnote{Daniel Pipes, Greater Syria (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 117-9.} Assad wanted Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights, but not at the expense of his designs on Greater Syria. Assad, like Carter, favored a comprehensive format for any peace negotiations, because he distrusted Sadat and believed (rightly) that Egypt would make a separate peace with Israel to regain the occupied Sinai Peninsula.

On the other hand, Assad did not share Sadat's urgent need for peace. In order to secure Syria's cooperation, the Carter administration needed to convince Assad that the Geneva conference would benefit him politically. Carter failed to win Assad's cooperation, and Syria was vocally opposed to Sadat's efforts to shift the focus of the peace process towards Egypt. Nevertheless Carter continued to hope that Assad would eventually join comprehensive negotiations and he made sure that the Camp David Accords had a comprehensive element.\footnote{Seale, 293-8.}
King Hussein of Jordan was in a difficult position. The West Bank had been part of Jordan before 1967, and Israel had stated that it would negotiate with Jordan only concerning the West Bank. However, the Arab League had decided that the only entity which could negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians was the PLO. Therefore, if Jordan did negotiate with Israel it would be going against a decision made by the Arab states to which Jordan had agreed. Consequently, Hussein refused to play an active role in Carter's attempts to convene the Geneva conference throughout 1977.437

For a Geneva conference to be possible, some way for the PLO to participate had to be found. After the Arab League's pronouncement concerning the PLO's representation of the Palestinians, no conference without PLO involvement could have any hope of negotiating treaties that would be considered legitimate in the Arab world. Therefore, the Carter administration worked very hard and spent a great deal of Carter's political capital in trying to bring members of the PLO to Geneva. Indeed, in his press conference on September 29, 1977, Carter himself presented a formula that he stated would satisfy the restrictions set by earlier American administrations and permit contact between representatives of the PLO and the American government. But the PLO would not be guided by Carter's advice and refused to become Carter's partner in the peace process; it maintained that its goal was the total destruction of Israel.

Regardless of how many Arab partners Carter could enlist in his Middle Eastern peace initiatives, they would be useless unless he could also achieve the participation of

Israel. Early in 1977, the Carter administration was optimistic that the Israeli government would cooperate. Despite the domestic political troubles of the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzak Rabin, Washington believed that Israel would continue to be governed by the Labor party. This party had governed Israel since the country's creation, and it was more concerned with Israel's security than with the occupation of all the territory of biblical Israel.

However, the Labor party did lose power and was replaced by a conservative coalition headed by Menachem Begin, a member of the Likud party. To the religious parties that made up much of Begin's coalition, the West Bank was significant because it was the ancient provinces of Judea and Samaria. In Begin's view, the 1967 War had not occupied Jordanian territory; it had reunited parts of the land given to the Jews by God. When it came to the peace process, Begin preferred bilateral negotiations with Egypt because they allowed him to defang Israel's primary aggressor while avoiding the controversial issue of the West Bank.

Additionally, Carter had never hidden the fact that he wanted a comprehensive settlement that would mean a near complete Israeli withdrawal from the territory it had occupied in 1967. Nevertheless, Begin seemed willing to attend a Geneva conference, and he agreed that a Jordanian delegation could include PLO members, even if the PLO refused to end its calls for Israel's destruction. Carter believed that this was an important concession, and at the beginning of October 1977, he still felt confident that the conference could be successful. He believed that a comprehensive peace settlement would benefit everyone concerned, that Middle Eastern leaders shared his belief, and that these leaders would
eventually make compromises. But most of the participants in the peace process were interested in peace only on their own terms.

Prime Minister Begin was Carter's chief adversary standing in the way of the Geneva conference. The only way that Begin would allow Israel to attend comprehensive negotiations was if the structure of those negotiations clearly allowed Israel to retain the West Bank. When Carter and Begin met for the first time, Begin made it clear that he did not oppose an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and the Sinai in return for peace, but that Israel must retain the West Bank both for security and religious reasons. For the rest of 1977, nothing that Begin did or said differed from the principles that he outlined in that first meeting. Even when he said on multiple occasions that every issue—including the West Bank—was open for negotiation, he never said that he would moderate his position or that he would seriously consider an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

Begin did not want to alienate the Carter administration; Israel owed its continued existence in large part to its alliance with the United States. The bilateral meetings between Dayan and Tuhami, however, persuaded Begin that Sadat was willing to negotiate outside of comprehensive peace talks. Therefore, if Carter's Geneva initiatives failed to successfully convene a comprehensive conference, Israel and Egypt were ready with an alternative. But Begin did not want to be seen as the reason for Geneva's failure. He knew that the Arab states had their own reservations about a Geneva conference, so he first let the Carter administration work to overcome their objections.
Nevertheless, after Carter’s September statement about PLO representation followed immediately by the US-Soviet Communiqué, Begin was compelled to act. He understood that the pressure exerted by a unified Arab bloc in conjunction with the Carter administration could be strong enough to put Israel in a difficult position. The Arab states were not unified, but Begin feared that when faced with the possibility of achieving many of their separate goals they would be convinced by Carter to stop their internecine quarrels long enough to negotiate peace treaties that did not favor Israel. Suddenly, Israel would have to openly oppose the Carter administration’s initiatives. This was unacceptable to Begin because he did not want to risk appearing to be impeding the peace process—Israel would lose valuable support. So, Israel and its American allies created the uproar over the communiqué that forced Carter to bow to the pressure and issue the US-Israeli Statement.

The Carter administration was shocked by the uproar. The communiqué did not contain any new proposals or initiatives. Additionally, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Moshe Dayan, had met with Carter in New York on September 19. After that meeting, Dayan recommended to the Israeli cabinet a formula for the Geneva conference that had been worked out between Dayan and Carter and they had approved. It is true that the communiqué did not mention UN Resolutions 242 and 338, and that it spoke of the Palestinian's legitimate rights.

But Carter had repeated time after time, first as a candidate for president and then throughout his first year as president, that he expected any Middle Eastern peace treaty to be shaped by those two resolutions and he had publicly cited the interests of the Palestinians
several times. The objections raised by the Israeli government (Begin was in the hospital at the time) about the failure of the communiqué to explicitly refer to the UN resolutions are extremely thin. Similarly, Carter had made no secret of his belief that the PLO would have to be represented in Geneva and some type of Palestinian entity would have to be created. When the Israeli government complained that Carter was trying to find a way to include the PLO in the Geneva negotiations, it was being disingenuous; Begin himself had agreed that the PLO could be part of the Jordanian delegation.

However, the Carter administration bears much of the responsibility for its failure to convene Geneva. Carter and his staff allowed themselves to be deceived by Begin from their first meeting. Carter was hopeful after meeting Begin in July, but then angry when as soon as Begin returned to Israel he announced that some of the settlements in the West Bank were permanent. Shortly before Carter's September 19 meeting with Dayan, the Israeli Minister of Agriculture (Ariel Sharon) stated publicly that Israel planned to settle two million Israelis in the West Bank. Carter confronted Dayan over Israel's expansion into the West Bank, calling the settlements illegal under international law. Dayan angrily disagreed. Throughout 1977, Begin's government consistently acted in line with the policies he initially outlined to Carter, but Carter and his advisors were slow to realize that the Israelis were working against their attempts to convene Geneva.

Carter also provided Israel and its American supporters the means to pressure his administration. On one hand, Carter's September pronouncement about negotiating with the PLO had been an attempt to find a solution to the difficult problem of Palestinian
representation in peace negotiations. But it also gave the opponents of the US-Soviet communiqué ammunition when the Israeli government accused Carter of trying to impose a Palestinian state on Israel. The forceful comments in Brzezinski's Canadian interview which aired in the middle of the furor caused by the communiqué further aided Begin and the opponents of a comprehensive peace treaty. The communications coming from the Carter administration had a more assertive tone, and the message of these statements worked against the interests of the Israeli government.

Consequently, Carter was accused of suddenly dismantling the close relationship that existed between Israel and the United States. But everything the Carter administration had done was in line with the concept of comprehensive negotiations at Geneva it had been working all year to convene. The incongruities in the objections to the communiqué that were being raised by its opponents were noted in a few articles in the US press at the time, but they were lost in the noise created by the far larger volume of sound bites and headlines that repeated Israel's protests. Then Carter gave in to Dayan's threat that there would be more trouble for the administration unless it issued the US-Israeli Statement.

Like the US-Soviet Communiqué, the US-Israeli Statement could be interpreted in different ways. It reiterated the fact that the Geneva conference would be based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and it stated that "acceptance of the Joint United States-U.S.S.R Statement of October 1, 1977… [was] not a prerequisite for the reconvening and conduct of the Geneva Conference."438 The Carter administration believed that this was a benign

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statement; the communiqué had been issued by the United States and the Soviet Union and merely outlined some of the principles that they believed were important for Geneva. In a strict sense, it did not matter if the participants in the Geneva negotiations accepted the communiqué as long as they attended the conference. The US-Israeli statement was intended to quiet the fears of Israel's advocates, but Carter did not realize how it would be interpreted in the Middle East. No Arab leader fully trusted the United States, and many like Assad and Yassir Arafat, the Chairman of the PLO, did not trust the United States at all.

Carter was asking Arabs to radically change their foreign policies, and for the Geneva conference to succeed, he needed the Arab leaders to trust that his administration would pressure Israel if necessary. The communiqué and Carter's statement about Palestinian representation were considered by Israel and the American press to be pro-Arab, and the Arab response had been guardedly positive. But the Carter administration then issued the US-Israeli Statement after only four days (which the Arabs interpreted as repudiating the pro-Arab initiatives) in order to calm the objections raised by Israel and its supporters. This proved to most of the Arab leaders that Carter would not truly pressure Israel to compromise and that he would sacrifice his foreign policy goals to curry the goodwill of Israel—and the friends of Israel in the United States. After October 5, only Sadat was still interested in joining Carter in Geneva.

The attempt to reconvene the Geneva talks was dead by the end of October. On November 20, Sadat went to Jerusalem, and both he and Carter wanted Begin to make a similar gesture that would reanimate the progress toward Geneva. The Arab response to
Sadat's Jerusalem visit was extremely negative, which left bilateral negotiations between Israel and Egypt under the aegis of the United States the only viable option for continuing the peace process. By the end of December, the Carter administration refocused their efforts on facilitating these bilateral contacts.

The actions of the Carter administration in September and October 1977 are largely to blame for the failure to convene the Geneva peace conference. Carter and his advisors made broad statements that, although consistent with Carter's concept for Geneva, contained elements that could be interpreted very negatively by the Israelis and the Arabs. As a result, each effort that the Carter administration made angered one side or the other.

Additionally, none of the available primary source material shows that Carter or his staff were aware of the consequences of their actions. The US-Israeli Statement could have represented a reevaluation of the United States' Middle Eastern policies in light of the Congressional opposition that they were receiving. Carter was going to need the support of the neoconservatives in Congress on issues like the Panama Canal Treaty and the SALT II negotiations, in addition to the Middle East peace negotiations. It would have been understandable if, in early October, Carter had reevaluated his Middle East initiatives in light of the virulent opposition caused by the US-Soviet communiqué. The Carter administration could have decided to issue the statement with Israel to maintain the Congressional support vital to its other projects and then focused on facilitating Israeli-Egyptian negotiations. But that did not happen.
Carter chose to placate Israel and the neoconservatives and not to defend the US-Soviet communiqué believing that he was facilitating the Geneva conference. He did not realize the impact that the US-Israel Statement would have on the peace process. After the meeting with Dayan that spawned the US-Israeli Statement, Carter wrote that they had "had a productive meeting" that had "lasted until about 2:00 a.m., following which Dayan and Jody [Powell, the White House press secretary,] made a statement to the press. I went to be a little after midnight."\(^{439}\)

Carter believed that "the two days in New York [where the US-Israeli statement had been negotiated] were very successful. We made good progress on the Middle East," and he later explained to the Jewish Caucus of the House of Representatives that his "decisions were being trusted by all the Arab nations, the Soviets, and the Israelis."\(^{440}\) This simply was not true, and Carter's failure to understand it allowed him to be manipulated by Israel. Carter did recognize that Israel was being the least helpful of any participant in the Middle East peace process, but he still believed that progress was being made toward convening the Geneva conference.\(^{441}\)

Nevertheless, without the efforts of President Carter and his administration the peace process could have easily broken down during 1977, and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty may never have been negotiated. Even though Sadat was willing to allow secret talks between Israeli and Egyptian representatives, it is unlikely that he would have made public overtures to Israel without Carter's attempts to convene the Geneva conference. It is true that


\(^{441}\) Carter, *White House Diary*, 113.
Sadat urgently needed the dividends that would come from a peace treaty, but he wanted to maintain Egypt's preeminent position in the Arab world. If Sadat openly pursued separate peace negotiations with Israel before comprehensive negotiations were eliminated as an option, Egypt's regional stature would suffer.

Additionally, because Israel opposed comprehensive negotiations, it is unlikely that Begin would have participated in the diplomatic processes involved in convening the Geneva conference without Carter's insistence. The efforts of the Carter administration throughout 1977 to convene comprehensive negotiations (Vance and Carter's repeated meetings with Middle Eastern leaders and foreign ministers, Vance's trips to Middle Eastern capitals, the draft peace treaties, Carter's overtures to the PLO, etc.) gave Sadat the political strength to go to Jerusalem.

First, Sadat could claim that while cooperating with the United States to convene comprehensive negotiations he had exhausted every opportunity to include the Arab states in the peace process. The other Arab governments refused; only then had he been forced to continue alone. By this logic, Sadat was the only Arab leader who was providing benefits to the Arab people by making some (albeit limited) progress toward peace. If the Arab population accepted this argument, Sadat could negotiate bilaterally with Israel without losing influence in the Arab world.

Sadat's Jerusalem trip had been prompted by Carter's handwritten plea for help. Therefore, Sadat could risk isolation in the Arab world. To remain in power, Sadat needed the return of the Sinai to shore up his domestic popularity or he needed the aid that would
come with a closer relationship with the United States. Sadat made his trip to Jerusalem after Carter sent him a "personal appeal," so he could reasonably expect that Carter would repay his debt by supporting Egypt's needs in Egyptian-Israeli negotiations. This would provide Sadat with the means to stay in power and weather his condemnation by the other Arab governments.

The Camp David Accords and the 1979 Peace Treaty fell far short of the ambitious goals set by President Carter in January 1977, but they did achieve some of his objectives. Carter wanted a comprehensive Middle East peace treaty in order to prevent another Middle Eastern war, to maintain Israel's security, and to solve the rapidly worsening human rights issue of the stateless Palestinian people. Egypt and Israel have kept the peace that they established in 1979 and this prevented a war between Israel and an Arab coalition. Without another major Middle Eastern war, the United States and the Soviet Union did not again resort to threats of nuclear war to influence events in the Middle East.

Additionally, the United States has not faced another OPEC oil embargo, as it had after the 1973 War. However, with less direct superpower involvement, the probability of smaller conflicts between Israel and the other Arab states increased. Carter wanted the comprehensive peace negotiations to find solutions to all of the issues involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Begin successfully prevented this, ensuring that the unresolved issues would remain, festering. This created a Middle East in which Israeli citizens are forced to live in a state of siege—constantly vigilant, not at war but not at peace. A Palestinian entity was

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442 Handwritten Letter from President Carter to President Sadat, 10/21/77, Camp David Accords through Collucci, Frank Vertical File, 8(A), Jimmy Carter Library.
eventually created in the West Bank in 1993 by the Oslo Accords giving some Palestinians at least partial self-determination. Finally, in 1994 Jordan and Israel signed a bilateral peace treaty. Therefore, some of the goals for Carter's Middle Eastern policies that he had set at the beginning of his term were met.

After his failure to convene the Geneva conference, Carter was less accommodating to Israel's desires. In October 1977, the United States abstained from voting on a UN resolution that condemned Israeli settlements on Arab land. In March 1980, the United States voted for a similar resolution, while in the interim, the United States had approved sales of F-15 supersonic fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia and F-5 aircraft to Egypt; sales that were protested by Israel and AIPAC. This made Carter lose popularity amongst the American Jewish population. In 1976, Carter received 75% of the Jewish vote and would not have been elected without the support of this important electoral demographic. By the 1980 election, Carter had lost this support receiving only 45% of the Jewish vote, and he lost the election. Lack of Jewish support was not the only cause of Carter's electoral defeat, but it did contribute greatly.

Finally, any judgment about the success or failure of Carter's peace proposals must also dip into the realm of the counterfactual to determine if Carter's goals were reasonable or ever even possible. If there was never any chance that he would be able to extract from Middle Eastern leaders the concessions necessary to convene the Geneva conference, then the bilateral Egyptian-Israeli negotiations would be the best that the Carter administration

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443 Lazarowitz, 128-34.
444 Lazarowitz, 136.
could have expected. Carter then could be criticized for his handling of the diplomacy of 1977, but not for the result of that diplomacy. If, on the other hand, a reconvening of Geneva was possible, then Carter's diplomacy must be assessed more negatively because he failed to achieve a goal that was obtainable.

When the Carter administration decided to pursue a comprehensive Middle East peace treaty it understood that convening a Geneva peace conference would be difficult. But Carter believed that it was possible. This was a valid conclusion as each participant in the Middle East peace process needed or wanted something that could be provided by a comprehensive treaty. There was probably a formula that, if it could have been found, would have convinced the Arabs and Israelis to attend comprehensive peace talks. Consequently, the Carter administration's Middle East policies made sense at least through his first meeting with Begin in July 1977.

Prime Minister Begin outmaneuvered the Carter administration diplomatically in 1977, but whether or not Carter can be criticized for his failure to convene Geneva is not as clear. Carter and Begin were not able to meet before the middle of July, and only two and a half months elapsed between that first meeting and the controversies surrounding the US-Soviet Communiqué and the US-Israel Statement. Some of the actions of Begin's government (especially its expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank) angered Carter, but until the US-Soviet communiqué, it was not obvious that Begin was working against Carter and his goal of comprehensive peace negotiations. The likelihood of Carter successfully convening the Geneva conference had greatly decreased when Sadat agreed to
send Tuhami to Morocco to meet with Dayan, but a comprehensive peace conference was still possible at the end of September. It was no longer possible a month later.

The US-Soviet communiqué and the furor it caused was the first substantial direct challenge to Carter's Middle East policy. Carter did not rise to the challenge. After one night of argument, he bowed to the pressure exerted by Foreign Minister Dayan. Carter did not seem to realize that the US-Israel Statement would cause his administration to lose the trust of the Arab states, but he should have.

Furthermore, he should have realized that Prime Minister Begin would interpret the statement as a sign of Carter's weakness, and it would embolden him to reject the Geneva process. Convening a Geneva conference was an enormous challenge that required Carter to fight indefatigably his policy. When the uproar flared up in response to the US-Soviet communiqué, the Carter administration did not respond forcefully. The meek manner in which it capitulated to Zionist outrage showed Carter's opponents that he was vulnerable to pressure. Carter chose to placate his attackers rather than defend his policies. A tough stance by Carter in October could have put the Middle East on the path to moderation; we cannot know. In the closely intertwined politics of the Middle East, it is impossible to tell where the ripples would have stopped. But what is certain is by not taking such a stance he forever ended the possibility of a comprehensive settlement. The result was decades of further conflict.
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