Israeli History, Politics and Society

THE US, ISRAEL, AND EGYPT

DIPLOMACY IN THE SHADOW OF ATTRITION, 1969–70

Yehuda U. Blanga
Translated from Hebrew by
Lenn Schramm and Ben Bokser

ROUTLEDGE

The US, Israel, and Egypt

This book deals with the diplomatic triangle of Israel, the United States, and Egypt during the War of Attrition along the Suez Canal in 1969–70. Considering the Egyptian president's political positions and outlooks on the Arab–Israeli conflict and the pan-Arab sphere, relations with the United States, the study reviews the internal disagreements between the State Department and Henry Kissinger, the National Security Advisor in the White House.

The study demonstrates that the United States and Egypt worked together to thaw their relations after the severance of ties in June 1967, motivated by a desire to protect and advance their interests in the Middle East. The book is based chiefly on textual analysis of political and historical events in the domain of international relations, but with the same attention to internal policy as well. In addition, the research draws chiefly on primary sources that have only recently been released to the general public and that have not yet been the subject of serious analysis. The lion's share of the work is based on qualitative content analysis of documents from the National Archives in Washington and especially of the US State Department.

Providing a reading that is new, comprehensive, and complete, both with regard to the scope of the sources as well as the analysis of developments in the relations between Egypt and the United States, this book is a key resource for students and scholars interested in the Arab–Israeli conflict, political science and diplomacy, Israeli studies and the Middle East.

Yehuda U. Blanga is a senior lecturer in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at Bar-Ilan University. His research focuses on the military and political involvement of the superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, in the Middle East and on Egyptian and Syrian policies (regime, military, and society).

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To my beloved parents
Refael and Esther Blanga

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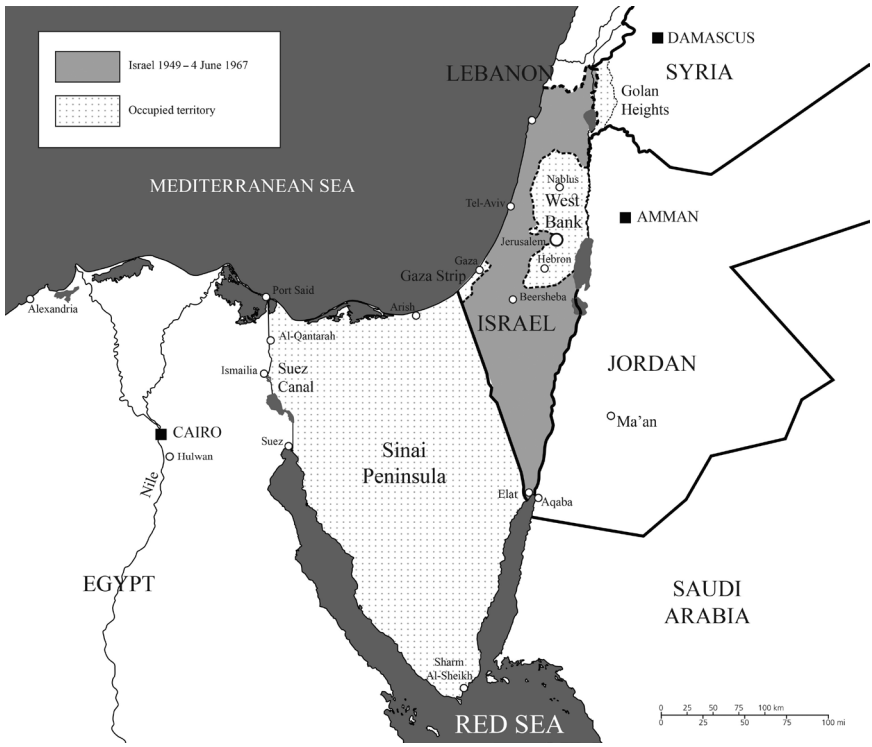
Israel 1949 – 4 June 1967
Occupied territory
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LEBANON
DAMASCUS
SYRIA
Golan
Heights
Nablus
West
Bank
Tel-Aviv
Jerusalem
AMMAN
Gaza
Hebron
Gaza Strip
Port Said
Beersheba
Alexandria
Arish
ISRAEL
Al-Qantarah
JORDAN
Ismailia
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Introduction

On the afternoon of October 23, hours after his return from an urgent trip to Moscow, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger convened the team that was handling the ongoing crisis of the Yom Kippur War. Kissinger surveyed the course of the conflict—mostly from the diplomatic perspective, with an occasional look at the military side, highlighted the American strategy that had been worked out following the renewal of active combat in the Middle East, and reviewed the achievements registered by the United States against a list of the objectives it had defined for itself. He also updated those present on the agreements reached with the Soviets about the cease-fire that was supposed to lead into a diplomatic process when the shooting stopped.

One of the understandings reached in Moscow, Kissinger explained, was reaffirmation of Security Council Resolution 242. That document was the political outline crystallized through American–Soviet cooperation six years earlier, in November 1967, after the Six Day War, an outline that had been intended to lead to peace between Israel and the Arabs: "We affirmed Security Council Resolution 242 which has been on the books since 1967," Kissinger said. Then, in the same breath, he added while laughing, "and while it asks for the immediate implementation, this is impossible even with good will, since no one knows, except Joe Sisco [the Assistant Secretary of State], what 242 means." To which Sisco replied, also laughing, "and I won't tell."[1]

The Six Day War was a watershed in the history of the Arab–Israeli conflict. Until 1967 the Arabs had believed that they could liquidate "the Zionist entity in Palestine" by military means, but the lightning war that had occurred in June made it clear to them that Israel was a fait accompli. Now the question was, inside what borders? On the surface, the answer to this was provided by Resolution 242, which proposed a lasting peace between Israel and the Arabs in return for an Israeli withdrawal "from territories occupied in the recent conflict" and "a just settlement of the refugee problem."[2]

Although the Americans and Soviets had reached an agreement then, and even gained broad international support for a diplomatic formula that would lead to peace, an acute disagreement about the interpretation of the resolution emerged almost at once. Was Israel to withdraw from *all* of the territories occupied or only from *some* of them? Were the contacts between Israel and the Arabs to

be direct or indirect? Must peace include normal relations between Israel and the Arab countries? What was a "just solution to the refugee problem"? And was there a defined timetable for implementing the resolution? So even though a formula for peace had been set forth, there was no clear mechanism for its implementation. As Kissinger quipped, no one really knew what the resolution meant. Thus the diplomatic process in the Middle East went nowhere. For President Nasser of Egypt, the frozen situation was tantamount to acknowledging his defeat, while also giving Israel valuable time to establish facts on the ground that might work against the eventual return of the entire Sinai Peninsula to Egypt.

In addition to the political crisis, after June 1967, Egypt faced many challenges both at home and abroad. Nasser had had to put the pieces back together and lead his country after its second defeat in just more than a decade. But this time, unlike 1956, there was no joint American–Soviet support for an end to the fighting and a return to the status quo ante. On the contrary, in June 1967 the Egyptian president had to deal with a distinctly unsympathetic American position and an enemy entrenched on the other side of the Suez Canal. Nasser consolidated a new strategy and for the next three years endeavored to maintain the military tension across the Canal, in order to keep the Middle East issue from dropping off the international agenda. That was precisely the goal of the War of Attrition he launched against Israel.

Here we should note the differences between the periodization of the war by the Israelis and by the Egyptians. Even though the present study begins with a brief background review of the situation in Egypt right after the June 1967 war, and American–Egyptian relations then, it focuses on events between March 8, 1969, and August 7, 1970—the months that Israel knows as the "War of Attrition," when the clashes across the Suez Canal became a daily occurrence and escalated in intensity, and which ended only when the two sides concluded a cease-fire agreement.

On the Egyptian side, however, there are multiple and divergent perspectives on the years between 1967 and 1973. In Nasser's definition, the Egyptian armed forces were to prepare themselves for a long struggle, divided into four stages: steadfast resistance (*sumud*), preventive defense (*dafaʿ al-waqa'i*), deterrence (*al radaʿ*), and liberation (*taḥrir*). He did not specify the timetable for each of these stages, though, and this left room for various interpretations. We will mention two of them here. Mahmoud Fawzi, the War Minister (1968–71), divided the hostilities into three stages: steadfast resistance (*sumud*), July 1967–March 1968; confrontation (*mu'ajahat*), March 1968–March 1969; and provocation and deterrence (*al-taḥdi w'al-radaʿ*), April 1969–July 1970.[3] Differing with Fawzi, three Egyptian scholars—Hassan el Badri, Taha el-Magdoub, and Mohammed Dia el-Din Zohdy—divided the period from the end of the Six Day War in June 1967 until the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War in October 1973 into steadfast resistance (*sumud*), June 1967–August 1968; active defense (*dafaʿ al-nasht*), September 1968–February 1969; attrition (*istinzaf*), March 1969–August 1970; and cease-fire (*waqf atlaq al-nar*), August 1970–October 1973.[4]

The present work traces the diplomatic process spearheaded by the United States during the War of Attrition—a round of the Egyptian–Israeli conflict that

has not received adequate scholarly attention and has been more or less pushed out of the Israeli historical memory. It begins with the arrival of the Nixon administration in January 1969 and the outbreak of the War of Attrition that March. It goes on to survey the diplomatic and military developments that followed the start of the fighting, tracks the several peace initiatives and their failures, and winds up with the cease-fire agreement in August 1970, its violation by Egypt, and Nasser's death a month later.

In practice, this book deals with the triangular relationship among the United States, Egypt, and Israel while the fighting was going on. One leg of the triangle refers to the United States after Nixon's inauguration in January 1969. Even though the new administration's priorities were focused on Vietnam, relations with the Soviet Union (especially in the context of nuclear weapons), and the opening of diplomatic relations with China, Washington did not ignore the Middle East. Consequently, an additional layer of this study refers to the formulation of the Nixon's administration's Middle East policy, including the ongoing conflict between Egypt and Israel, and the rebuilding of the relations between the United States and Egypt. Although on the surface it might seem that during the War of Attrition the Nixon administration functioned as a single entity vis-à-vis the Middle East, this study reviews the long series of internal disagreements between the State Department under William P. Rogers and Henry Kissinger, the National Security Advisor, which in practice undercut the American efforts to achieve an agreement between Israel and Egypt.

The second leg of the triangle relates to Egyptian foreign policy, as it applied both to the conflict with Israel and to the ties between Egypt and the United States. Here our starting point is the Egyptians' awakening to reality after the trauma of June 1967 and launch of the campaign to "eliminate the results of the aggression." From there we proceed to Nasser's political stand and outlook vis-à-vis the United States and its peace initiatives, against the background of the War of Attrition and the close and extensive ties woven between Cairo and Moscow.

Finally, no discussion of the relations between the United States and Egypt can omit Israel. Hence the third leg of the triangle examines Israel's policy and positions in reaction to the developments between Egypt and America relating to the conflict and its resolution. We will go into some detail about the diplomatic clash between Israel and the United States during the War of Attrition, its highs and lows, and its impact on the relations between the two countries.

All three sections of the research rely on a textual analysis of diplomatic and historical events, which falls into the realm of international relations, but also makes some inroads into domestic policy. In general, the organization is chronological, with occasional reliance on a thematic approach. The research is based overwhelmingly on primary sources that were recently released for public scrutiny and have never been thoroughly studied. The lion's share of this volume is based on qualitative content analysis of documents, especially those produced by the State Department, from the National Archives in Washington. Despite the severing of ties with Egypt and closure of the embassy in Cairo, the

United States continued to have an active Interests Section housed in the Spanish Embassy there, run by Donald Bergus. Because Israel was the third leg of this triangle, which imposed a heavy strain on the diplomatic give-and-take between Washington and Cairo, I also examined documents from the Israel State Archives. These often cast a somewhat different light on events and the political developments in the Middle East theater.

Memoirs and autobiographies are another primary source. On the American side, we should note the memoirs of the then-National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years*, and *Decade of Decisions*, by William Quandt of the National Security Council. Among the Israeli participants, we have the books by Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban (*Autobiography*) and by Yitzhak Rabin, the ambassador in Washington in 1968–73 (*Memoirs*), which provide a fascinating look at Israeli diplomacy as it related to the United States during those years. Given the lack of access to official documents, the Egyptian perspective on the War of Attrition and its military and diplomatic aspects must be extracted (with full awareness of the selective and subjective presentation) from the memoirs of the major players: three volumes by Nasser's confidant Mohamad Hassanein Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar*, *The Road to Ramadan*, and *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat*; Field Marshal Mohamed Abdel Ghani el-Gamasy's *The October War*, and War Minister Mahmoud Fawzi's *Harb al-Thalath Sanawat* for the military aspect; and then-Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad's *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East* to complete the picture from the diplomatic side.

As stated, unlike the other wars between Israel and the Arabs, historical research into the War of Attrition is still in its infancy. Even though the present study is based almost exclusively on primary materials, I employed other sources where it was necessary to fill in missing pieces of the puzzle.

Dan Schueftan's *Attrition* (Hebrew) is the most exhaustive, objective, and penetrating study of that war. It focuses on Nasser's strategy vis-à-vis the superpowers and Israel after the debacle of 1967 and relates to almost all of the political and military aspects of the period March 1969 to August 1970. In English, Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov's *The Israel–Egyptian War of Attrition, 1969–1970*, is the major study of the military developments during the War of Attrition, including from the theoretical perspective.

Three new studies of the War of Attrition have appeared in Hebrew in recent years. Avraham Zohar's *War of Attrition 1967–1970* surveys the theory of attrition warfare, the course of the war, the notable military operations, and stories of the fighters. Whereas Schueftan examined the war from the Egyptian perspective Yoav Gelber's *Attrition: The Forgotten War* does so from the Israeli side, including its political, social, and cultural impact. Gelber's advantage over other studies in Hebrew is his extensive use of archival sources. Also noteworthy is Dima Adamsky's *Operation Kavkaz: Soviet Intervention and the Israeli Intelligence Failure in the War of Attrition*, a trailblazing look at the Soviet Union's direct involvement in the war and how it took Israel and the United States by surprise.

The dominant tendency in scholarship today is to address the Middle East crisis of 1967 to 1973 from the superpower perspective, without much attention to the Egyptian and Israeli facets. This category includes David A. Korn's *Stalemate: The War of Attrition and the Great Power Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1967–1970*. Korn served in the American embassy in Tel Aviv from 1967 to 1971, first as a political officer and then as chief of the political section. His book lays a solid foundation for the diplomatic efforts by the two superpowers, especially the United States, in the Middle East during the years covered by this volume. Two other important works are Craig Daigle's *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab–Israeli Conflict, 1969–1973*; and *The Soviet–Israeli War, 1967–1973*, by Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez.

By integrating all of these sources, both primary and secondary, I sought to produce a comprehensive new look at the topic, both with regard to the volume of sources drawn on and the analysis of the events. The reliance on these sources demonstrates that the United States and Egypt worked together to thaw their relationship after the rupture in June 1967, out of a desire to maintain and enhance their interests in the Middle East. The United States wanted to preserve stability in the region, to check Soviet expansion there, and to bring the Arab–Israeli conflict to an end. Egypt wanted to turn the wheel back and especially regain the Sinai Peninsula. Nasser hoped to accomplish this without making any overt commitments, knowing that only with American assistance could he reach a political solution and get the Sinai back. When Nixon entered the White House in 1969, the new administration evinced a desire for a balanced policy in the Middle East between Israel and the Arabs. Nasser identified the opportunity and the new climate in Washington and accordingly worked to achieve his objectives.

Throughout these years Israel, the third leg of the triangle, endeavored to frustrate all the attempts to promote an agreement with Nasser, because he refused to conduct direct negotiations and because of his stubborn insistence on employing the military option and using it to leverage his influence on Israel and the United States in the diplomatic arena. But after June 1967 Israel also believed that the status quo served its interests. It saw no need to make concessions or accept compromise proposals as long as the terms offered did not satisfy its security needs and terminate the conflict through a binding mutual peace agreement. Another round of violence, the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, was required before Egypt and Israel would find themselves on the road to peace.

Earlier versions of several chapters have been published in English, as follows:

- Chapters 1–2: "Nasser's Dilemma: Egypt's Relations with the United States and an Agreement with Israel, 1967–1969," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 51:2 (2015): 301–26.
- Chapter 3: "'Why Are They Shooting?': The American View of the Events at the Outset of the War of Attrition," *Israel Affairs* 18 (2012): 155–76.

- Chapter 4. "'Between Two and Four': The French Initiative and the Multipower Diplomatic Initiatives to Resolve the Middle East Crisis," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 27:1 (2016): 93–120.
- Chapter 6. "Full Effort to Avoid Peace: The Failure of the First Rogers Plan," *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, No. 6 (2018): 981–99.
- Chapters 9–10: "The Path that Led to the Cease-Fire ending the War of Attrition and the Deployment of Missiles at the Suez Canal," *Middle Eastern Studies* 48 (2012): 183–204.

Notes

1 "Minutes of the Secretary of State's Staff Meeting," October 23, 1973, *FRUS*, 1969–76, XXV, 689–96.
2 For the text of the resolution, see https://undocs.org/S/RES/242(1967).
3 Fawzi, *Ḥarb al-Thalath Sanawat 1967–1970*, 215–20.
4 Badri, Magdoub, and Zohdy, *The Ramadan War 1973*, 10–14.

1 An internal shock

Egypt after the 1967 war

> Ever since his defeat, Israel has become an obsession with him [Nasser]. He took the defeat as a personal failure and will not rest until he can record some sort of victory over Israel.
>
> Prof. Morroe Berger[1]

The great disaster

On May 23, 1973, the Israeli Minister in Paris, Yosef Hadas, submitted a report on a conversation with one of his local contacts. It was a routine filing and contained no new and earth-shattering revelations, but its heading attracted the attention of the officials in the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem: "A Young Egyptian Defines Nasser." The French official had told Hadas about his recent meeting with the Egyptian ambassador in Paris, at which he heard his concise and on-target description of the late Egyptian president Nasser. The fellow had said that "Nasser wanted to change the history of the region, but he only changed its geography."[2] No one at the Israel Embassy in Paris could have offered a better summary of Nasser's years in power (1954–70), so Hadas recommended exploiting the phrase—for Israeli propaganda purposes, of course.

Three years after the idolized leader's death, some Egyptian citizens recognized that he had deceived them. Yes, Nasser had expelled the British and nationalized the Suez Canal. Yes, he had chalked up important political and industrial achievements, such as the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Yes, Egypt had made itself the leader of the Arab world and of the Non-aligned Bloc.[3] But the bottom line, when all was said and done, was that he had not been able to unite the Arabs under his baton. The Egyptian economy had not taken off, despite his socialist projects. In slightly more than a decade, the country had gone down to military defeat twice, trounced by Israel in 1956 and again in 1967. So the Egyptian quoted by Hadas was right: Nasser had sought to change the history of the Middle East, as was evident from his book *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, but had only redrawn its map in the wake of the defeat of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in June 1967.

After that debacle, the Arab world began beating its breast: searching within itself for the roots of the failure and proposing diverse solutions of the problem

that had led to it. As time passed the public debate turned into an obsession. The trauma of defeat was burned into the masses and they could not stop thinking about it. But no Arab country had been wounded as deeply as Egypt by the lightning war. In both its own eyes and those of its allies (Syria and Jordan), Egypt bore the main responsibility for the defeat. Having dragged the confrontation-line states into the war, it now had to bear the guilt of the disastrous outcome.[4] That guilt rested heavily both on the Egyptian people and on its political and military leaders, because the scale of its losses on the battlefield was unbearable.

The fighting, which lasted no more than four days, cost the Egyptians 15,000 dead, 50,000 wounded, and 4,230 prisoners. On top of that, the armed forces had lost nearly 70% of their heavy artillery, 361 aircraft, and 590 tanks. The Egyptian army had been shattered, and the country itself crashed into a reality that dwarfed its leaders' worst nightmares. Not surprisingly, they reacted as if their world had come to an end. On June 8, four days after the start of the fighting on the Egyptian front, there were signs of a general disintegration of the senior military echelons. At 11 o'clock that night, War Minister Shams al-Din Badran asked Nasser to come urgently to the Egyptian General Headquarters. When he arrived, the president found the deputy supreme commander of the armed forces, Field Marshal Muhammad Abdel Hakim Amer, in a state of total collapse and contemplating suicide. Nasser tried to soothe him, accepted full responsibility for the outcome of the war, and promised to resign.[5]

Another leader of the 1952 Free Officers' coup, Anwar Sadat, fell into a deep depression and closeted himself at home for four days. When the war was over, he was tormented by his pangs of remorse and sense of utter impotence ("I … was completely overwhelmed by our defeat").[6] Nasser himself, "the man who had been deified by his own countrymen, worshipped by the Arab masses … [was] thrown upon the mercies of a disdainful Russia, with no army or air force to defend his country."[7] On June 11, after he withdrew his resignation, he confessed that he had been in such a severe emotional state that he had sent his family out of Cairo and "kept a gun beside [himself] to use at the last minute."[8] That same day he was informed that there were only seven tanks left to defend the capital. Later, Sadat wrote that

> those who knew Nasser realized that he did not die on September 28, 1970, but on June 5, 1967, exactly one hour after the war broke out. That was how he looked at the time, and for a long time afterwards—a living corpse. The pallor of death was evident on his face and hands, although he still moved and walked, listened and talked.[9]

In addition to the initial trauma right after the defeat, Egypt was rocked by repeated aftershocks, some of which threatened the pillars of the Nasserist regime and were not much weaker than the rout on the battlefield. The first tremor that struck the Egyptian people was Nasser's resignation, announced in a speech on June 9. The French journalist Eric Rouleau, who was then in Cairo, described a haggard and troubled man whose voice was choked by tears as he read his speech:

> I tell you truthfully and despite any factors on which I might have based my attitude during the crisis that I am ready to bear the whole responsibility. I have taken a decision in which I want you all to help me. I have decided to give up completely and finally every official role, to return to the ranks of the masses and to my duty with them like every other citizen.[10]

Shocks in the leadership

The president had resigned. The father of the July 1952 revolution, the man who had placed himself at the head of the Arab world and endeavored to unite it, the figure to whom Egyptians had lifted their eyes in the hope that he would lead them to a promising future, had handed in his keys and turned to leave. That was not what was supposed to happen. Egypt refused to accept the defeat; even more so, it refused to believe that Nasser had resigned in its wake. Pursuant to Article 110 of the provisional constitution of March 1964, Nasser named Vice-President Zakaria Mohieddin to succeed him. Mohieddin declined the position.[11] No sooner had Nasser finished his speech than shocked crowds poured into the streets. Whether these demonstrations were spontaneous or carefully orchestrated by the authorities, Nasser clearly had regained the people's trust.

On the morning of June 10, Nasser planned to address the National Assembly, but could not reach its building. Thousands of demonstrators blocked the roads between downtown Cairo and Nasser's home in Heliopolis. Thousands more took up stations outside the National Assembly and proclaimed they would not allow him to enter until he withdrew his resignation. Many demonstrators carried placards declaring that the Egyptian people were behind Nasser and there was no one to take his place. Around noon, after many delays, the National Assembly was finally gaveled to order. Nasser, as mentioned, could not attend, so Sadat, the Assembly president, delivered a statement on his behalf, whose essence was retraction of the resignation:

> I have decided to remain in my post and to stay where the people want me to stay, until the period is over when we can all eliminate the traces of the aggression.… Now, my brother citizens, link your arms together and let us begin to [realize] our urgent task.[12]

The second shock struck along with the first. On June 9, at a meeting attended by Nasser, Amer, and War Minister Badran, Mohieddin said that they all shared responsibility for the defeat and its ramifications, and not just Nasser (even though, while the war raged, the latter had accepted full responsibility for the fiasco); hence all of them should resign. Badran objected and said that only Nasser should resign. He did so, as we have seen, but with an unexpected twist. Although Amer, as first vice-president, should have stepped into his shoes, Badran was astonished to hear that instead the choice had fallen on Mohieddin, the second vice-president.

This slight deepened the rift between Nasser and the military High Command, especially Amer and Badran. On June 11, after Nasser withdrew his resignation, he began a purge of his opponents in the senior echelons of the armed forces. The first to be forced out, not surprisingly, were Amer and Badran, followed by army commander Gen. Abd al-Mohsen Kamal Murtagui, Air Force Commander Lt. Gen. Mohamed Sedky Mahmoud, Admiral Suleiman Ezzat, and other top officers, mainly those who had been Amer's protégés. Nasser published a list of new appointments, including Gen. Mahmoud Fawzi as Commander of the Armed Forces, Gen. Abd al-Munim Riad as Chief of Staff, and Gen. Madhkur Abu al-Ezz as Commander of the Air Force. This amounted to a clean sweep of the veteran command echelon, identified with Amer, and its replacement by Nasser loyalists.

This was not the end of the affair. Amer, Badran, and many of their colleagues resolved to take steps against the regime, in order to put a halt to the arrests of senior figures in the officer corps and force Nasser to return them to their commands. Badran began organizing his supporters in secret and stockpiling weapons in one of Amer's residences, in the Cairo suburb of Giza. The house soon became a veritable fortress; as Badran later testified at his trial, there was enough weaponry to defend an entire city. Initially, the conspirators planned to abduct Nasser, but when they realized this was impossible they decided on a military coup. On August 25, 1967, two days before the plot was to be launched, Amer, Badran, and 50 other senior officers and government figures were arrested and charged with plotting to overthrow the government. After protracted interrogation in the presence of Nasser, Mohieddin, and Sadat, as well as a long stretch of house arrest, Amer committed suicide on September 14. The precise circumstances of his death remain unclear today.[13]

The third shock was produced by the ensuing show trials of the commanders of the 1967 war. Even though the people had suppressed the trauma of defeat during the turbulence that immediately followed it and Nasser had regained their confidence, the masses could not forget the "June defeat" (*naksa ḥuzaran*). Nasser needed to provide a swift response to the public's demands. As a result, 50 senior officers and members of the ruling elite went on trial on January 22, 1968. The indictments cited crimes related to national security and included charges of plotting to overthrow the regime. The accused denied these charges and exploited the trial to attack the regime and its head. They claimed that Nasser led a corrupt government that systematically suppressed the Egyptian people and their freedom. Rage and frustration spread among the citizens, on top of the feelings of inferiority and helplessness that followed the Six Day War. In late February, the masses took to the streets for the first protests of their kind in the history of the Nasser regime, demonstrating against their venerated leader.[14]

On February 20, the Cairo court-martial found four senior officers of the Air Force responsible for its collapse in the initial hours of the war and sentenced them to prison terms of ten to 15 years. Two others were acquitted of all charges. The next day, many workers, incited by activists of the Arab Socialist Union, poured out of the military industries in Helwan to protest the light sentences.

However, these workers had an ulterior motive: they were afraid that the regime might try to restore the military's primacy in Egyptian society that it had enjoyed before the defeat in 1967.[15]

Soon workers from other factories in the area joined the protest. Violence broke out when police units summoned to restore order opened fire on the demonstrators. Inspired by the events in Helwan, students took to the streets of Cairo and Alexandria on February 24.[16] At first there were mainly denunciations of the "traitors," meaning the convicted Air Force officers; but as the protests grew more heated, the students, rather astonishingly, changed their tune and began protesting against Nasser and his regime. In particular, they demanded new trials for the officers, the start of a process of democratization in Egypt, free parliamentary elections, the elimination of press censorship, and freedom of expression. In an attempt to calm the situation, the students' representatives met with Sadat, the president of the National Assembly, in the Assembly building. At the meeting, the students criticized the heads of the regime and their hedonistic lifestyles, at a time when so many citizens were impoverished. No compromise was forthcoming. That night the Minister of Interior published an order banning demonstrations "for whatever reason." Despite the official ban, the students continued their protests the next day. The security forces intervened and, just as in Helwan, opened fire on the demonstrators. On February 26, after two days of stormy protests, the Egyptian authorities decided to close down the universities and other institutions of higher education. It was also decided to quash the verdicts and grant the Air Force officers a new trial. This put an end to the protests.[17]

Something in Nasser's steel regime had cracked. The February 1968 riots were ignited by recognition of the severe blow to Egypt's status among the Arab states as well as the damage to the Egyptians' self-image. Moreover, their belief that they could experience progress and become part of the modern world had been undermined. The July 1952 Free Officers' coup had been a source of pride and hope for a brighter future in Egypt—a future that included prosperity, success, and respect; but the military's utter collapse on the battlefield, 15 years later, burst the bubble of the Egyptian dream. Suddenly it seemed that all of the revolution's achievements had come to naught. The vision of pan-Arab nationalism and greatness, under Egypt's scepter, an idea that bordered on messianic fervor, was disintegrating. The loss of the Sinai Peninsula and control of the Suez Canal, and the evacuation of the cities on its bank, became a sort of monument to Egyptian weakness; while the situation persisted, it highlighted the dead-end into which Egypt had run itself.[18]

The difficult situation soon gave rise to slogans parroted by the country's leaders and people: "wiping out the results of the aggression" and "what was taken by force can be recovered only by force." These slogans came to epitomize the Egyptian-Nasserist aspiration to solve the problem of the 1967 fiasco—to eradicate the failure by force of arms and turn the wheel back, to the extent possible, to the status quo ante.

Egypt needed change and Nasser knew it. He also understood that he would not be able to unite the Egyptian masses around himself unless he promised to

provide the changes they demanded, or at least offered a plan that would realize his own aspirations in the guise of large-scale action for the country's sake. In other words, whereas the people wanted democracy and the elimination of restrictions on individual liberties, the Egyptian president sought to channel his policies in a different direction.

A month after the riots broke out, on March 30, 1968, Nasser presented the Egyptian people with his guidelines for "eliminating the results of the aggression." His action plan had two main elements: First, concentrating all the forces at Egypt's disposal—military, economic, and ideological—for a war against the Zionist enemy, "in order to liberate the land and achieve victory"; second, mobilizing the Egyptian people, with all its abilities and strength, "for the roles of liberation and victory and for the hopes for after the liberation and the victory." Likewise, Nasser wanted to unite the Egyptian nation under his Arab Socialist Union party by holding new elections and establishing a new government. Sadat wrote later that he had seen through this plan from the outset and understood that it was no more than a ploy to divert the masses' attention and to "neutralize the people's feelings of discontent."[19]

Eliminating the results of the aggression: defining goals

In the aftermath of the defeat in the Six Day War, Egypt faced a three-fold challenge that would determine its future in the Middle East—in the superpower arena, in the pan-Arab arena, and in the Egyptian domestic arena. In the first, Egypt had to choose between a policy of non-alignment versus siding with the Western or the Eastern bloc. In the pan-Arab domain, it needed to restore its lost status and encourage, even more in the past, the belief in its ability to unite the Arabs and lead them to progress. Finally, on the domestic front, the leadership in Cairo had to direct more resources and effort than in the past to the citizens in general and to the men in uniform in particular. Otherwise, the vision of the July 1952 revolution would collapse, along with the people's faith in themselves and their ability to confront the Zionist enemy. Constrained by these circumstances, Nasser had to revise the country's order of priorities and adopt an overarching strategy to deal with all three arenas.

The "liberation of Palestine" had been on the table for a decade, between the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai in 1957 and June 4, 1967, alongside Egypt's pressing national problems. Nevertheless, on several occasions, Nasser had halted military initiatives to solve the Palestine problem, mainly by Syria. After June 1967 and the Israeli reoccupation of the Sinai, the Palestine problem became even more closely linked to the Egyptian issue. In his speeches, Nasser kept returning to the need to restore the Palestinians' rights to them, supported the campaign by the *fedayeen*,[20] and emphasized Egypt's obligation to play a key role in solving the issue of the refugees and the question of Jerusalem.

Under the surface, however, the Egyptian leadership distinguished the territories occupied in 1967, which demanded an immediate solution, from those lost in 1948, whose recovery could be deferred to a later date. In the fall of 1968,

Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad emphasized to Secretary of State Dean Rusk that Sinai was the key issue on the Egyptian agenda. After the defeat, Cairo needed to come up with a new strategy that would permit it to deal first with the catastrophic results of the defeat, and only then to make progress towards a solution of the Palestine problem. Still, great importance attached to Egypt's ability, by both diplomatic and military means, to keep Israel from consolidating its hold on the newly occupied territories. But as we will see later, the picture was much more complex when Nasser deployed both methods in pursuit of his objectives.[21]

The diplomatic alternative

When the fighting ended, and after he withdrew his resignation, Nasser found himself at a critical juncture, with at least two options he could pursue: an arrangement like that of 1957 or a peace agreement with Israel. First, we will consider the feasibility of the former option. As will be remembered, Israel, in league with France and Great Britain, attacked Egypt on October 29, 1956. After five days of fighting, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conquered the entire Sinai Peninsula and Gaza District. But a delay in the timetable of the British and French operation and last-minute vacillation caused the operation to fail on the diplomatic front. The Americans were outraged at the conspiracy fomented behind their backs and the Soviet Union threatened to intervene. In the wake of international pressure and censure by the UN Security Council, Israel was forced to withdraw from the territory it had occupied.

Ten years later, after Israel had again overrun the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza District in a lightning war, Egypt faced an almost identical situation. This time, however, Israel did not have wavering partners; what is more, the international situation was vastly different from that of 1957. A decade after Nasser's great diplomatic victory, Egypt was unable to restart the "international steamroller"—essentially an "American steamroller"—and force a complete Israeli pullback. Unlike Eisenhower in 1957, the Johnson administration of 1967 did not view Nasser as a victim to be rescued but as a party who should pay the price for his rash decisions and actions. Johnson believed it would be wrong to reprise the temporary and hasty settlement of 1957. A number of additional factors contributed to this decision. First, Washington observed how Nasser had won increased prestige in the Arab world after 1957 (thanks to the American diplomatic support he had received) and how the Egyptian president had then taken advantage of his status to harm American interests in the Middle East and threaten the pro-Western countries in the region. Now, ten years after the mistake of 1957, the United States had learned its lesson and was not particularly eager to damage its relations with Israel in order to benefit Egypt. So, the American approach to Nasser after the June 1967 war was identical to the Israeli approach, which held that "Nasser is the main source of trouble in the Middle East and any regime that replaced him would be an improvement."[22]

Second, the bind in which Egypt found itself was to a certain extent the Soviet Union's fault, and the American administration wanted to exploit that for

its own purposes. Therefore, if Nasser wanted to begin a diplomatic process, he would have to seek out the Americans, meet their conditions, and renounce the Soviets' ineffectual support. Finally, Washington knew that Cairo now understood that the United States was the key to an agreement in the Middle East. After 1967, Nasser became increasingly aware (and even admitted) that there could be no just and lasting peace in the Middle East without American involvement. Moreover, the State Department believed that the Egyptians were interested in renewing their ties with the United States because they realized that only the Americans could produce a settlement in the region. According to a senior official at its Egyptian desk, Cairo knew that the key to a settlement lay in American hands and that the main thing was to exert pressure on the Israeli leadership. [23]

Israel was indeed concerned about a possible change of the prevailing attitude of the American administration, especially after Johnson's announcement in March 1968 that he would not seek re-election. Israel detected an attempt by the United States to draw closer to the Soviet Union and improve relations between the two superpowers, even at the price of American concessions in the Middle East. For example, the Israeli ambassador in Washington, Yitzhak Rabin, reported that the American administration and public at large might view the political stalemate—in fact, the ongoing crisis—as an Israeli failure and, by extension, an American failure. As he noted in his periodic report in June 1968, the United States had come to the conclusion that the Arab defeat in June 1967 had not produced a single favorable outcome so far as American interests were concerned. First, despite the military defeat, not a single hostile Arab regime had collapsed, nor was there any sign of this in the future. On the contrary, the only regime that seemed to be in danger was the pro-Western regime of King Hussein in Jordan, whose fall would deal a severe blow to the Americans. Second, there was no change in the attitude of the Arab world, and especially of the Egyptian president, towards Israel, or any desire to reach a diplomatic settlement with it. Third, the fiasco of the defeat of its Arab clients had not led the Soviet Union to pull back from the Middle East, but rather to deepen its penetration, expand its influence, and formulate new goals for the region. Finally, many officials in Washington were concerned that the American support for Israel and the overlap of the two countries' positions would harm the United States' interests in the Middle East, especially in countries that were susceptible to American influence.[24]

Washington took pains to make it clear to the Arabs, and especially to Nasser, that they would be making a mistake if they thought that the United States had the ability to get Israel to change its policy. An Israeli diplomat reported that John McCloy, the chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations and a special advisor to President Johnson, told him that he had informed Arab leaders, in his meetings with them, that "Israel has its own will. And after 1957, unilateral pressure is no longer acceptable. American public opinion will not stand for such pressure unless the Arabs are forced to take complementary steps, which means seeking peace and security."[25]

Nasser's second option was to reach a diplomatic agreement with Israel. Slightly less than two weeks after the end of the war, Nasser was offered a

chance to sign a peace accord and recover the Sinai in exchange. On June 16–19, the Israeli Government debated a number of matters related to the ramifications of the war's outcome, including peace feelers to the defeated Arab states. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan held that Israel should go very far to achieve peace, "based mainly on maximum territorial concessions." At the end of those discussions, the Government voted to make Egypt an offer based on land for peace. Two days later, Foreign Minister Abba Eban sent an official proposal to the Americans, who were asked to be the go-between with Egypt, for a peace agreement that would be "based on international borders and Israel's security needs."[26]

Another element in the proposal was that the treaty would include an Egyptian commitment to free passage through the Suez Canal, the Straits of Tiran, and the Gulf of Suez, and demilitarization of the Sinai Peninsula. Until the treaty was signed, Israel would continue to occupy the territories it now held. But Cairo turned down the Israeli proposal, for two main reasons that reflected the situation in the Middle East after June 1967. The first had to do with what it did not include: there would be a full Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, but not from the Gaza District, East Jerusalem, or the West Bank. Egypt would recover the territory it had lost in the war. To put this another way, Israel wanted to disengage its strongest foe from the Palestinian issue and Jerusalem and, as Cairo saw it, split the Arab camp. Had Egypt agreed, it would have doomed itself to long years of isolation and the total loss of its primacy in the Arab world.[27]

Another reason for the Egyptian cold shoulder related to the very demand for a peace agreement in exchange for withdrawal. Signing a peace treaty with the "Zionist enemy" would be tantamount to acknowledging the military defeat; that is, capitulation to the victorious enemy's terms out of weakness. This negativity was reinforced by Nasser's firm conviction that Israel was more interested in seeing Egypt cowed than in reaching a diplomatic accord with it. Thus, the Egyptian refusal to accept the Israeli offer of peace was in fact a refusal to accept the outcome of the war. It was true that Egypt had lost in the "third round" against Israel, but it had not accepted the results. Another battle had been lost, but the war was not over. As long as Egypt was not forced to sign an agreement, it would not acquiesce in the current situation. So the rejection of the proposal was an Egyptian declaration that Israel might have won a military victory, but not a political one.[28]

Nasser also had a third option—to reach an accord with Israel through the United Nations. On November 22, 1967, after long weeks of deliberations and consultations (primarily between the United States and the Soviet Union), the Security Council adopted Resolution 242. It was endorsed by the Israelis, Egyptians, and Jordanians and rejected by Iraq and Syria; the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) complained that it ignored the Palestinian problem. The resolution was based on the need for "a just and lasting peace" in the Middle East within "secure and recognized boundaries." In addition, the Security Council called for "a termination of all claims or states of belligerency," "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict," "acknowledgement

of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area," "guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways," and "a just settlement of the refugee problem."[29]

However, another obstacle soon cropped up and complicated the UN mediation efforts: the Israelis and Arabs could and did interpret Resolution 242 in different ways. Egypt and Jordan held to the French-language version of the resolution, according to which Israel had to withdraw "from *the* territories occupied," meaning all the land that Israel had conquered in the recent conflict. Israel, on the other hand, held to the official English version of the resolution, which called for a withdrawal "from territories occupied," that is, *some* of the territories, meaning that it would not be required to withdraw to the lines of June 4, 1967. For Israel, the withdrawal demanded by the Arabs meant giving up an important strategic and defensive asset, and this would require an equally valuable concession by the Arabs. On the other hand, the Arabs did not view withdrawal as a concession by Israel, because the latter had conquered territories that belonged to them. Cairo demanded an Israeli withdrawal as a condition for fulfilling the other sections of Resolution 242 and even as a precondition for holding negotiations about an agreement. Jerusalem, on the other hand, insisted on direct negotiations with Egypt, since that would constitute indirect Egyptian recognition of its existence and reduce the chances that the Soviets and the Americans would impose a settlement.[30]

The Security Council resolution addressed not only the actions that the parties had to take in order to reach an agreement between them, but also the mechanism for doing so. The last two sections of the resolution called on Secretary General U Thant to appoint a special envoy to travel to the Middle East and try to promote an agreement between the two sides. U Thant selected Dr. Gunnar Jarring, the Swedish ambassador in Moscow; he made his first trip to the region in late 1967.[31]

Despite the Israeli and Egyptian declarations that they welcomed the special envoy's mission, and their statements that they would assist his sincere efforts in every way possible, the two states chose to drag their feet and did not budge from their well-known positions. Israel stood by its demand for direct negotiations with Egypt, at whose conclusion the sides would sign a peace treaty. Nasser demanded an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from all the conquered territories and never specified what concession his country would make in return for the Israeli step. Jarring's mission failed.[32]

The second diplomatic alternative for the recovery of Sinai was the channel opened between Washington and Cairo. On the American side, it was important to hold meetings with the Egyptians, because the American election campaign was at its height and Secretary of State Dean Rusk wanted to lay the groundwork for his successor or the new administration and possibly even to achieve peace in the Middle East. According to him, the situation in the region had reached the point at which conclusive decisions had to be made, "since [where] there is no peace there apparently is war."[33] Our discussion of the American proposal and the talks will focus on the two meetings between Secretary Rusk and Egyptian Foreign Minister Riad in late 1968.

On October 1 and again on November 2, 1968, Rusk and Riad met in New York to discuss the Middle East crisis and various ways of resolving the conflict. In practice, this was the Johnson administration's last attempt to achieve an agreement between Israel and Egypt, or at least to end the stalemate between the two countries. Even though they did not succeed in getting the political process off dead-center, these two meetings were of great importance: For the first time since President Johnson's five-point speech of June 19, 1967, on which Resolution 242 was based in part, Washington sketched out a clear and comprehensive framework for negotiations and an agreement between Israel and Egypt. On its side, Cairo presented the principles on which it wanted to base any settlement with Israel and even what it saw as an appropriate way to solve the refugee problem. As in the past, each side was lavish with its declarations of good intentions; in practice, however, the Egyptians failed to take a single positive and confidence-building step. We can surmise that, as with the issue of restoring relations, Cairo preferred to wait until the installation of a new administration in Washington at the end of January 1969 and see what course it would follow.[34]

During the first meeting, at the Waldorf Astoria on the afternoon of October 1, Riad complained about the diplomatic stalemate and expressed his disappointment at the failure to implement the Security Council resolution. He made it plain that his country supported the resolution and was prepared to implement it, but warned that if no solution were found to the crisis in the near future, extremist elements would take control of the Arab world. He asserted that "after two experiments [1956 and 1967] it [is] clear a piece of paper signed by the Israelis was worthless." Hence there was no need for negotiations between the two sides, because in June 1967 Israel had violated the armistice agreement of 1949 and shown itself to be "treacherous." Instead, noted Riad, Egypt "was prepared to sign identical, separate documents that would have a binding effect." After this statement of the acceptable framework for negotiations with Israel, Riad turned to his American colleague and presented the Egyptian principles for an agreement:

1 Egypt was willing to forego the state of belligerency with Israel in return for an Israeli withdrawal from the territories it had conquered.
2 Egypt agreed to the stationing of United Nations observers in Sinai, to monitor its demilitarization.
3 Egypt agreed to the holding of a referendum in which the Palestinian refugees would be asked to choose between receiving compensation or returning to their homes. Riad said that the vast majority of the refugees would opt for compensation. Hence preparations should be made for this through massive economic investment to develop the West Bank so that the refugees could be settled there.
4 Egypt agreed to the passage of Israeli cargoes through the Suez Canal if Israel withdrew partially, but Israeli-flag vessels would not be permitted until after the refugee issue had been resolved.[35]

In his response, the Secretary of State related to the last two points. Rusk noted that funding the resettlement of the refugees was not a problem, but he attacked the idea of a referendum on the grounds that pressure would be exerted on refugees to choose return rather than compensation. To the question of whether Egypt would agree that the referendum be supervised by a neutral body, Riad responded in the affirmative, but emphasized that the refugees' return included their absorption and resettlement in the West Bank, an area that required American and international funds for its development. Rusk also demurred at Riad's linkage between the passage of Israeli ships through the Suez Canal and a solution to the refugee problem.[36]

About a month after their first meeting, Rusk and Riad again met in New York for a more comprehensive discussion; the result was a seven-point document that the Secretary of State drew up and passed along to the Israelis. It is worth noting that, according to Walt Rostow, President Johnson's National Security Advisor, and Joseph J. Sisco, the Assistant Secretary of State for international organization affairs, the plan was released without any discussion of its fundamental principles "and without President Johnson's approval or authorization." In practice, said Sisco, it was Rusk's "personal initiative."[37]

During the second meeting between Rusk and Riad, the Egyptian Foreign Minister again complained about the continued political stalemate and the lack of progress on implementing Security Council Resolution 242. He added that his country was not really happy with the resolution but nonetheless accepted it because it proposed a way to resolve the conflict. Riad also conveyed to his American counterpart the Egyptian demand for a guarantee of the independence and security of all countries in the region and not just Israel, and emphasized that, alongside the refugee question and free passage through the Suez Canal for Israeli ships, the main issues for both sides were related to territory and security.[38]

In response, Rusk noted that the United States had and continued to support the territorial integrity and political independence of all countries in the Middle East. He did ask, however, that his Egyptian counterpart look at the issue from the American point of view as well. He said that the

> US [had] pressed Israel to withdraw from Sinai in 1957 and with inter alia [the] closing of straits in 1967 [the] US [was] kicked in [the] shin. Likewise [the] US would have supported [the] original Palestine [resolution] of 1948, but it had been resisted by arms and slipped out of [the] window.[39]

Here, and especially with reference to the events of 1957, Rusk sought to prove to Riad that the United States had not always given Israel total support and had exerted pressure on Israel and made decisions to which that country and its leaders were opposed. On the other hand, the Secretary of State added, it was the Egyptians and their mistaken political decisions, ten years after the Sinai Campaign, that deterred the current American administration from rushing to pressure Israel, as the Eisenhower administration had done in 1957.

Rusk also emphasized to Riad that the Egyptians should not link a solution of the refugee problem to freedom of navigation in the Canal, because the Security Council resolution did not do so. Moreover, Egypt should stop insisting so strongly on Israeli withdrawal as a precondition for negotiations without clarifying the goal of the withdrawal and where it would lead. Since the United States believed that "withdrawal must lead to peace," it would not pressure Israel to withdraw until the components of peace and the possibility of stitching them together into an agreement became clear.[40]

Another significant point of contention between the American Secretary of State and the Egyptian Foreign Minister was the American desire to allow each Arab country the option of conducting separate negotiations with Israel. For the United States, Egypt was the key country: if Nasser, its leader and the symbol of pan-Arabism, agreed to a diplomatic settlement with Israel, it would pave the way for peace between Israel and rest of the Arab world. But Riad totally rejected this idea, which he saw as "betrayal"; Egypt could not agree to a situation in which Israel withdrew from Sinai as part of an agreement but Jordan and Syria, which had also lost land to Israel during the 1967 war, were left out in the cold: "It would be immoral for [the] UAR[41] to agree leaving behind Jordan, with half of [that] country occupied, and Syria."[42]

Towards the end of the meeting, after the two sides had clarified their positions regarding the conditions for negotiations and an agreement between Israel and Egypt, Rusk presented the American interpretation of Resolution 242 insofar as it related to Egypt, in seven points:

1 Withdrawal: Israeli withdrawal from UAR territory.
2 State of War: A formal termination of the state of war.
3 Suez Canal: Suez Canal to be open to all ships of all flags (which flows from [the] end of the state of war).
4 Refugee Problem: Solution of [the] refugee problem on the basis of the refugees' personal and secret choice on where to live. (Rusk added the clarification that this included the choice of returning to Israel, "but that means Israel not Palestine since [the] latter does not exist having been replaced by Israel and Jordan." Rusk noted further, with regard to the refugees, that the idea was not to conduct a referendum among them, but rather to give refugees a list of 15 countries, including Israel, thereby allowing them to choose the country they wanted to live in. Riad did not oppose the suggestion.)
5 Sharm el-Sheikh: An international presence at Sharm el-Sheikh, which could not be removed without the consent of the Security Council or General Assembly.
6 A general understanding about the level of arms in the area so as to avoid an arms race.
7 A bilateral agreement: Egypt and Israel would sign a formal document.[43]

Rusk made it plain to his Egyptian counterpart that the Israeli withdrawal applied only to Egyptian territory and that the question of the Gaza District

remained open. A short discussion about the fate of the latter ensued. The Secretary of State assumed that it would be possible to reach an agreement with Jordan on the future of Gaza. When Riad wondered why Jordan, Rusk replied that "some say they [the Jordanian] want this and [the] UAR has no desire surely for [the] Gaza slum." Rusk proposed further that Gaza be addressed as part of the refugee problem. In response, Riad said that Gaza had been under Egyptian rule and emphasized that the "UAR had been there when Israel attacked [in June 1967]. UAR must see Gaza free of Israeli occupation." After the Israeli withdrawal, the Arabs themselves would agree among themselves about a solution for the district. To emphasize Arab unity, Riad returned to the issue of a separate agreement and emphasized that Israel must withdraw from all the conquered Arab territories and not only Sinai. "This [the withdrawal] would help achieve peace […] [The] UAR could not move to [a] settlement unless [it was] assured Israel would withdraw from all Arab territories."[44]

In Riad's account, Rusk told him at the end of the meeting, just before he left the room where the two had met, that "Johnson's administration ends at the end of next month, so do not expect it to put pressure on Israel. Moreover, do not ever believe that any future American administration will put pressure on Israel." In his memoirs, Riad wrote that the Secretary of State's parting words continued to echo in his ears many years after that meeting.[45]

As noted, the October–November 1968 talks were a last-ditch effort by the Johnson administration to propose a set of principles to which Egypt and Israel could agree and that could serve as the basis for progress towards a diplomatic settlement. However, both Jerusalem and Cairo piled obstacles in the way. The Israeli leadership was concerned that the new American plan would end in an imposed agreement and frustrate its desire for direct negotiations with Cairo. Nevertheless, despite his grave concerns, Foreign Minister Eban submitted a written response to the State Department to the effect that Israel was interested in permanent peace and was willing "to deploy its forces along agreed lines," which, so far as it was concerned, meant recognized and secure borders. His statement coincided to some extent with a decision by the Israeli Government in October 1968 (in effect retracting the peace proposal of June 19, 1967), which envisioned a continuous strip of Israeli territory running down to Sharm el-Sheikh, along with a number of border rectifications along the Rafah–Taba line, as a condition for an agreement with Egypt. As noted, this decision was incompatible with the American proposal, which called for an Israeli withdrawal "from Egyptian territory" and was also opposed to "annexation of Arab territories [by Israel] through war."[46]

On the other hand, Cairo was vehemently opposed to Rusk's proposal, primarily the idea of separate agreements between Israel and the various Arab countries. The Egyptian leadership also continued to link free passage through the Suez Canal to a solution of the refugee problem and dragged its feet on replying to Rusk's proposal and Eban's document. In the end, after a number of weeks, Egypt submitted its reply to the seven-point plan, in which it reiterated its hardline positions and in practice rejected all sections of the

proposal. Egypt simply repeated that it continued to adhere to the Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967, and that all that remained was to set a schedule for its implementation. Nevertheless, the Egyptian leadership may have felt that it had chalked up a success of sorts, given that, for the first time, the Americans had presented a position that did not entirely coincide with the Israelis' and even diverged from the official Israeli stance that insisted on direct negotiations between the parties to the conflict. We can assume that Washington's new approach, when a new president was about to enter the White House, merely reinforced the Egyptian view that it would be wise to wait to see whether the Nixon administration would conduct a more balanced policy in the Middle East, more attuned to the Arab demands.[47]

Though he had rejected the American initiative advanced by Rusk, Nasser, in an interview with *Newsweek* two months later, listed the Egyptian conditions for an agreement and what Egypt would give in return for an Israeli withdrawal: a declaration of an end to the state of belligerency with Israel; recognition of the right of every state to live in peace; recognition of the territorial integrity of all states in the Middle East, including Israel, within secure and recognized borders; freedom of passage in international waters; and a just resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem.[48]

The *Newsweek* interview offered nothing new. It was an attempt by Nasser to present himself to the new American administration in a more positive light. With this in mind, he stated positions that would appeal to Western ears, especially with regard to a resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict. But his declarations cannot be taken seriously, because only a few weeks earlier he had rejected Rusk's outline of an agreement with Israel, even where it coincided with the political line highlighted in the interview. In fact, other statements by Nasser during the same interview made it clear how remote such an agreement remained. He insisted that an Israeli withdrawal was the only step that could advance peace and rejected the possibility of conducting direct negotiations with Israel before it removed its forces from the Sinai.

In addition, he ruled out a referendum by the Palestinian refugees and stressed that so far as he was concerned, a just solution meant the right of return or compensation. Nasser stated his support for "the resistance of those brave fighters who want to liberate their lands" and refused to demilitarize all of Sinai[49] and allow troops of the four powers to be posted there as part of an agreement for the Israeli withdrawal from the peninsula. What is more, when asked about his concept of a permanent solution to the conflict, Nasser said that the establishment of a multinational state would be appropriate, implicitly expressing his unwillingness to recognize Israel.

> The only way is [for Israel to become a country] that is not based on religion, but on all religions—a nation of Jews, Moslems and Christians.… But as long as the Israelis insist on depriving the Palestinians of their rights, the crisis will be with us [for 10, 20, 30, and 40 more years].[50]

The military option

Having passed up the Israeli peace proposal, Egypt was left with the military option. Nasser thought that a successful military campaign against Israel, liberating the conquered territories and demonstrating the superiority of the Egyptian forces over the Zionist army, would extricate Egypt from the rut into which it had sunk after the 1967 war. Indeed, the belligerent Egyptian attitude, which included frequent use of slogans like "eliminating the results of aggression" or "what was taken by force can only be returned by force," left many Egyptians and Israelis with the impression that another war was just around the corner. According to a foreign observer, after the defeat in June 1967, "the issue of Israel has become an obsession with him [Nasser]. He took the defeat as a personal failure and will not rest until he can record some sort of victory over Israel."[51] In a conversation with McCloy, Nasser said that Israel had to implement Security Council Resolution 242. Given that Israel was not doing so, however, and that Jarring had not been able to force it to comply with the resolution, "there is virtually no chance of an agreement and there is no way to avoid war."[52]

But the results of the previous round of fighting could not be gainsaid. First of all, Egypt had no suitable reply to Israeli air power and the "military punishment" inflicted by the IDF, which left the Egyptian home front exposed and at the Israelis' mercy. Second, it was essential to overcome the loss of matériel and counter the Egyptian military's low morale. The latter was so extreme that no officers were to be seen on the streets in Cairo and rumors spread that they had been ordered "not to appear in Cairo in uniform because the military was unpopular."[53]

So the possibility that the Egyptian armed forces, acting alone, could retake the territories that Syria, Jordan, and Egypt had lost in the war, or at least liberate the Sinai Peninsula, was a pipedream. Nasser recognized Egypt's inability to launch a war against Israel, primarily because its forces had yet to replenish the equipment lost in June 1967 and because of the shortage of fighter pilots. Though he sought to heat up the fighting along the Suez Canal and in the Sinai Peninsula, the Egyptian president never considered ordering a crossing of the Canal before the Egyptian military was prepared for such a mission. Looking back, Abdel Magid Farid, the Secretary General of the President's Office, would dismiss Nasser's idea of reconquering the Sinai as a "fantasy."[54]

On the other hand, the top military brass, too, was wise enough to understand that their forces lacked the capability to operate against Israel. It is true that Saad al-din al-Shazly, the commander of the Special Forces in 1968–9 and Chief of Staff during the October 1973 war, asserted that by September 1968, despite the Israeli military superiority, the Egyptian ground forces, "at least, were sufficiently recovered to challenge the enemy encamped along the east bank of our canal." But he did not mention recapturing the Sinai Peninsula as among the goals of the War of Attrition.[55] This view is seconded by Mohamed Abdel Ghani el-Gamasy, the chief of operations on the Canal front during the War of Attrition and Shazly's successor in 1973. In his memoirs, Gamasy admits the Israeli

superiority in the years after the June 1967 war. Like Shazly, he never hints that Egypt had any idea of taking back all of the Sinai. Rather, the goals of the War of Attrition were to inflict heavy damage on Israeli personnel and equipment, while those of the October War were to cross the Canal and destroy the Israeli line of fortifications (the Bar–Lev Line).[56]

Another example of Egypt's helplessness was revealed at the Rabat Conference, held in the Moroccan capital on December 20, 1969. There Egypt sought (but failed) to unite the Arab nation in a military campaign against Israel. But it was in fact the Egyptian War Minister, Gen. Mahmoud Fawzi, who made it clear to all participants in the summit meeting that the Egyptian aspiration was unrealistic. He said that, in his estimation, it would take at least three more years, during which the Arab armies would have to make enormous sacrifices, until they were on a par with Israel's might in 1969, without taking account of the possibility that Israel would grow even stronger during those three years. Fawzi's estimate proved accurate; nearly four more years passed before Egypt and Syria began a full-scale military operation against Israel. Even then, however, Sadat's limited objectives in the Yom Kippur War (occupying a narrow strip of land on the eastern side of the Suez Canal) demonstrated, better than anything else, that, six years after the Six Day War, recovering the entire Sinai Peninsula was still not in the cards.[57]

A military operation to promote a political arrangement

The inevitable conclusion is that Egypt had no choice but to accept its impotence, but that was not the case. For years Nasser highlighted the parallel in the relations between Israel and the United States, on the one hand, and those between Egypt and the Soviet Union, on the other hand. The client–patron relationship between Cairo and Moscow was astonishingly similar to that between Jerusalem and Washington; Nasser decided to rely on it. He knew that Soviet military, economic, and diplomatic support for Egypt would augment American support for Israel. A Soviet–Egyptian weapons deal would merely lead to increased American arming of the IDF. An Arab economic boycott, backed by Moscow, would be met by greater American aid to Israel. Even Security Council resolutions submitted by the Soviet Union and the Arabs would be vetoed by the Americans and go nowhere.

In this situation, Nasser realized that as long as the American administration stood behind Israel, Egypt would be powerless to change the face of the post-1967 Middle East. Consequently, he resolved to try to work through the agent with the strongest influence on Israel—the United States—which could force it to withdraw in response to constraints that neither country could withstand. As soon as he identified the United States as Israel's major prop, it became his primary objective and the focus of Egypt's efforts to reverse the outcome of the 1967 war.[58] But how could he get Washington to decide that it should force Israel to withdraw? The answer lay in the link between military might and political strength.

After the 1967 war, Nasser emphasized the link between military action and diplomatic maneuvering in more than one speech. On March 12, 1968, for example, he said that "it is natural that we should build up our forces so as to convince our enemy that we are capable of and prepared to recover our territory by force. This in itself will give political talks another value." On January 20, 1969, as the diplomatic stalemate continued, and Egypt's doubts about its ability to alter the situation increased, he again mentioned his preference for upgrading the armed forces. He reiterated the country's refusal to surrender "any Arab territory" or to "sit under any circumstances with an enemy who occupied our land." He also downplayed the possibility of reaching a diplomatic solution, "unless the enemy realizes we are able to force him to retreat through fighting."[59]

The Egyptian press, too, discussed the need to negotiate with Israel from a position of strength. The editor of *al-Ahram*, Nasser's confidant Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, wrote about this at length in his newspaper on January 3 and 16, 1969. In effect, Nasser's speeches and the *al-Ahram* editorials were intended to allow the president maximum maneuvering room in the circumstances. He could continue to rebuild and rearm the military against a possible renewal of fighting but not voice an explicit pledge to go to war again. At the same time, he could leave the diplomatic option open. Should an opportunity arise for a settlement he could live with, he would adopt it, claiming that it was Egypt's military might that had compelled Israel to change its mind.[60]

From this we learn that Nasser adhered to the concept that the threat of the military option would ultimately produce a diplomatic breakthrough. However, because he knew that he could not liberate the Sinai with a single swift military campaign, the possible scope of military operations was limited. This is why he defined multiple objectives, whose attainment would demonstrate to all observers Egypt's refusal to accept the status quo and advance the country another step towards the final goal—the liberation of Sinai from Israeli control. On February 16, 1969, he told his ministers that Egypt should escalate its campaign against Israel, chiefly by intensifying the commando operations in the Sinai. As part of a war of attrition, these would have a strong impact on the enemy's deployment and morale. The raids would force the Israeli leadership to call up the reserves on a large scale and keep them in uniform for a protracted period—contrary to its military doctrine—thereby stretching its military and economic capacity to the breaking point.[61]

About two months later, on April 15, War Minister Fawzi submitted to the government "an urgent plan for the [Suez] front," which enumerated the objectives of the War of Attrition, as approved by Nasser. The Armed Forces High Command laid out its basic principles. The first of these was to initiate bloody clashes with the enemy, with the goal of causing it maximum casualties. The plan emphasized personnel losses rather than damage to equipment, because Israel, as Egypt perceived it, attached great importance to its manpower. Major losses among the troops would unsettle its military command. The second principle was to step up the frequency of reconnaissance missions into enemy-held territory, in the air, on land, and at sea. The third principle was "to create a

genuine atmosphere of battle" for the Egyptian soldiers and condition them to bloodshed, so they could gain experience in advance of the next round of fighting. No less important was the fourth objective—sending patrols deep into Sinai in order to undermine Israel's confidence in the Bar–Lev fortifications and prove to the Zionist enemy that there was no way it could prevent penetration behind its lines. These operations would be accompanied by psychological warfare targeting the Israeli forces in Sinai. Finally, Egyptian pilots must exploit every opportunity to engage in aerial combat against the Israel Air Force.[62]

Through these limited objectives Nasser hoped to attract international attention, especially that of the Americans; he thought this might help persuade Washington to modify its Middle East policy in a way that would provide Egypt with diplomatic capital. The military operations would set the diplomatic process in motion, exploiting Israel's dependence on its American patron to Egypt's advantage. The State Department's fear of war meant it would do almost anything to avoid a regional confrontation that would lead to hostilities between the superpowers. With regard to the Middle East, the American focus was on dousing Egypt's attempt to set the region on fire and trigger a third world war.[63]

Nasser built his strategy on this fear of a nuclear confrontation. The goal was to get the United States to understand that the situation in the Middle East endangered its vital interests in the region. As long as Israel preserved its superiority there would be no reason for American intervention; but the moment the situation became volatile and might induce Soviet involvement, the United States would no longer be able to stand by idly. It would have to reassess its policy in the Middle East and avoid a confrontation with the Soviet Union. Neither the Americans nor the international community wanted to see a face-off between the superpowers, so they could not allow an unstable situation or severe crisis in the Middle East to continue for long. Hence the Egyptian leadership's chief objective was to modify the Americans' priorities in the region. But here Nasser faced another challenge: would his military plans succeed in altering the American position vis-à-vis Israel with regard to the conflict with the Arabs? In the event, the Egyptian president did not have to exert himself. The answer, as we shall soon see, came from Washington itself.

Notes

1 "Impressions of Prof. Morroe Berger's Visit to Egypt," May 17, 1968, ISA, FM 4158/5.
2 "An Egyptian fellow defines Nasser," May 23, 1973, ISA, FM 5378/7.
3 Several countries, most of them in the Third World, that at least officially were not affiliated with either the Eastern Bloc led by the Soviet Union or the Western Bloc, led by the United States.
4 Ramadan, *Taḥtim al-Alahah Qaṣa Ḥarb Yuniye 1967*, 60 and 193.
5 Ayalon, *Firestorm in the Desert*, 355–6; "State 062097," April 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; Gordon, *Nasser: Hero of the Arab Nation*, 97; Farid, *Nasser: The Final Years*, 73–4.
6 Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 184.
7 Nutting, *Nasser*, 423–4.

8 Gamasy, *The October War*, 73; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 40.
9 Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 179–80; Gamasy, *The October War*, 73.
10 Dishon, *MER* 3: 553–4.
11 Ibid.; Gamasy, *The October War*, 72–3; Gordon, *Nasser*, 97–8.
12 Beattie, *Egypt during the Nasser Years*, 210–11; *Al-Ahram*, June 11, 1967; Ramadan, *Taḥtim al-Alahah*, 203.
13 In February 1968 the State Department continued to believe that Amer had committed suicide. See "Egypt," February 14, 1968, ISA, FM, 4157/5; *Al-Ahram*, September 4, 1967; Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 188–94; Kabha, *Harb al-Istanzaf*, 62–4; Gordon, *Nasser*, 104–5; Beattie, *Egypt During the Nasser Years*, 211–13; Korn, *Stalemate*, 79–80.
14 Blanga, "Turmoil in Egypt," 367–8; Kapeliuk, "Student Unrest," 170–5.
15 *Al-Ahram*, February 22, 1968; Blanga, "Turmoil in Egypt," 367–8; Abdalla, *The Student Movement and National Politics*, 149–51.
16 *Al-Ahram*, February 25, 1968.
17 Kabha, *Harb al-Istanzaf*, 66. From Sadat's own testimony, it seems that at the end of his meeting with the student representatives, "they all went home." As noted, this description is inaccurate. See Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, 195–6. The Soviet media reported on a conspiracy by the Muslim Brotherhood, in collaboration with the Americans. See Kass, *Soviet Involvement in the Middle East*, 111–13; Abdalla, *The Student Movement*, 149–59.
18 Shai, "Egypt on the Eve of the Yom Kippur War," 16; "Egypt," May 28, 1969, ISA, FM, 6555/13.
19 Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, pp. 195–6; Nasser, *Al-Majmuah al-Kamila*, vol. 1, 450–63; Beattie, *Egypt during the Nasser Years*, 215–17; Fawzi, *Ḥarb al-Thalath Sanawat*, 215.
20 The *fedayeen* ("those who sacrifice themselves") were Arab irregulars (guerrillas or terrorists), most of them trained and equipped by Egyptian intelligence, who engaged in hostile actions on the border and infiltrated Israel to commit acts of sabotage and murder.
21 Sharnoff, *Nasser's Peace*, 113; "No. 76," October 10, 1969, ISA, FM, 4158/5; Meital, *Egypt's Struggle for Peace*, 25–9, 80–1; "Jarring Mission," January 2, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1816 Pol, 27 A/I.
22 "US Attitude towards Nasser," June 16, 1969, ISA, FM, 4158/6. For more on Johnson's view, see. Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 303.
23 "Egypt," February 14, 1968, ISA, FM, 4157/5.
24 "Periodic Summary, April 3–July 10," July 10, 1968, ISA, FM 4157/5.
25 "Conversation with McCloy," May 15, 1968, ISA, FM 4156/1.
26 Syria received a proposal whose substance was similar to that offered to Egypt, with demilitarization of the Golan Heights and a commitment on its part not to interfere with the flow of the Jordan tributaries into Israel. It should be noted that the discussion of a peace proposal to Jordan was deferred to a later date. On the discussions by the Government, Dayan's proposals, and the counterproposals, see Dayan, *Story of My Life*, 488–92; Pedatzur, *The Triumph of Embarrassment*, 54–6.
27 Schueftan, *Attrition*, 42–3; Pedatzur, *The Triumph of Embarrassment*, 55–6; Eban, *Autobiography*, 435–6.
28 *Al-Ahram*, July 24, 1968; Schueftan, *Attrition*, 43.
29 For the text of the resolution, see https://undocs.org/S/RES/242 (1967).
30 Sharnoff, *Nasser's Peace*, 179–99; Oren, *Six Days of War*, 323–7.
31 Jarring's mission was divided into two parts: a round of talks that lasted from late 1967 until mid-1968, and a second round that began in summer 1970 and ended in failure in early 1972.
32 Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 345–6.
33 "Middle East: Jarring Mission," January 2, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1816 Pol, 27 A/I.

34 "Telegram From Secretary of State Rusk to the Department of State," October 2, 1968, *FRUS*, 1964–68, Vol. XX, No. 269, 534–8; "No. 76," October 10, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 90–1.
35 "Telegram from Secretary of State Rusk to the Department of State," October 2, 1968, *FRUS*, 1964–68, Vol. XX, 534–8; "No. 76," October 10, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5.
36 "Telegram From Secretary of State Rusk to the Department of State," October 2, 1968, *FRUS*, 1964–68, Vol. XX, 534–8; "No. 76," October 10, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 90–1.
37 Ephraim Evron, the Deputy Director General of the Israel Foreign Ministry, heard this on two separate occasions. The first was during a conversation with Rusk on April 23, 1971, and the second in his meeting with Sisco on July 30, 1971. Rostow maintained that "no importance should be attached to it [the Seven-Point Plan]." Sisco added that "he himself thought the plan was extremely poor." See "Rusk's Seven-Point Plan," February 13, 1972, ISA, FM, 5294/8.
38 "Middle East: Jarring Mission," January 2, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1816 Pol, 27 A/I.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 The United Arab Republic was a sovereign union between Egypt and Syria. The union began in February 1958 and existed until September 1961, when Syria seceded. Egypt continued to be known officially as the United Arab Republic until 1971.
42 Despite Egypt's desire to continue to display responsibility for "its Arab sister states," in the very same discussion, when Secretary of State Rusk agreed to provide details of how the United States interpreted Resolution 242, but only for the Egyptians, Foreign Minister Riad retracted his words and said that he was not the spokesperson for all the Arabs and not even for the Palestinians, only for Egypt. See "Middle East: Jarring Mission," January 2, 1969, NA RG 59, Box 1816 Pol, 27 A/I.
43 Ibid.; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 90–1. Israel saw the Rusk plan as a "rather pathetic maneuver." For details of the plan and the Israeli reaction, see "Egypt's Answer to the US Seven-Point Plan," December 11, 1968, ISA, FM, 4155/11; "The Seven-Point Plan," December 8, 1968, ISA, FM, 4155/11.
44 "Middle East: Jarring Mission," January 2, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1816 Pol, 27 A/I.
45 According to the American document, "Secretary [of State] said he hoped Riad would understand that US could not exert 100% influence in Israel when UAR did not give US any influence in UAR" (ibid.). For Riad's version, see Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 92.
46 "The Seven-Point Plan," December 8, 1968, ISA, FM, 4155/11; Pedatzur, *The Triumph of Embarrassment*, 69–76; Gad Yaacobi, *On the Razor's Edge*, 160.
47 Nasser attacked the American approach of separate agreements in his speech to the Arab Socialist Union on December 4, 1968; see "Memorandum of Conversation, Arab–Israel Conflict," January 2, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1816 Pol, 27 A/I; Dishon, *MER* 4: 207; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 90–1. Ignoring the American request, Foreign Minister Eban gave instructions to have the Israel Embassy in Paris or London leak the Egyptian response to the Rusk proposal, in order to expose Cairo's true face for all to see. See "Egypt's Answer to the US Seven-Point Plan," December 11, 1968, ISA, FM, 4155/11.
48 The interview, conducted in late January 1969, was published in *Newsweek* on February 3 (issue dated February 10). It is important to note that the Arabic-language version published by the Middle East News Agency on February 3 differed from the English and omitted Nasser's "concessions" and "conciliatory approach." For the Arabic text, see Gamal Abdel Nasser Speeches, "The interview given by President Gamal Abdel Nasser to News Week Magazine," February 3, 1969, http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1250&lang=en [Arabic]; For the INR's analysis of the two versions by the N, see "Carrying Water on Both Shoulders: Cairo's Version of Nasser's Newsweek Interview," February 6, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.

49 Nasser agreed to demilitarization of territory on both sides of the Israel–Egypt border, meaning both in Sinai and in the Negev.
50 "Carrying Water on Both Shoulders: Cairo's Version of Nasser's Newsweek Interview," February 6, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.
51 "Impressions of Prof. Morroe Berger's Visit to Egypt," May 17, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5; Fawzi, *Ḥarb al-Thalath Sanawat*, 215.
52 "Conversation with McCloy," May 15, 1968, ISA, FM 4156/1.
53 "Impressions of Prof. Morroe Berger's Visit," May 17, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5.
54 Farid, *Nasser: The Final Years*, 132–5; James, "Egyptian Decision-Making in the War of Attrition," 98.
55 Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez*, 7–12.
56 Gamasy, *The October War*, 97.
57 For the speech by War Minister Fawzi, see "Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, the White House, Assessment of the Rabat Arab Conference," January 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2042, Political Affair and Relations Arab.
58 Schueftan, *Attrition*, 45–6; Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Israeli–Egyptian War of Attrition*, 44.
59 Nasser's radio address on March 12, 1968, quoted in Dishon, *MER*. 4: 207; speech on January 20, 1969, in "Nasser's Present Attitude Toward a Political Settlement: How to Get Over the Hump," January 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Israeli–Egyptian War of Attrition*, 44.
60 *Al-Ahram*, January 3 and 16, 1969; "Nasser's Present Attitude Toward a Political Settlement: How to Get Over the Hump," January 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
61 Farid, *Nasser*, 134–5.
62 Ibid., 135–6; Badri, Magdoub, and Zohdy, *The Ramadan War 1973*, 12.
63 "State 062431," April 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "UAR—Shoot Now, Pay Later," March 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "UAR: Nasser, in a Bind, May Strike Out Against Israel," May 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, 34; Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Israeli–Egyptian War of Attrition*, 47–53; James, "Egyptian Decision-Making in the War of Attrition," 98.

2 Nasser is waiting for Nixon[1]

First attempts to achieve an accord

> The President has a lot of nerve and wants to achieve a full peace if possible. His decisions will in no event be a result of lack of nerve.
>
> William P. Rogers[2]

US–Egypt relations and a new administration in Washington

At 7:10 on the morning of Monday, June 5, 1967, Israel Air Force planes took off for their targets deep in Egyptian territory. The June 1967 war began with a first strike on Egyptian military airfields (Operation *Moked*); its success meant that Israel had put most of its main enemy's air power out of commission for the rest of the war. Within half an hour, only Israeli planes were operating in Egyptian skies. The Egyptians, in shock, refused to believe that the operation had been carried out by Israel alone.[3] To limit their embarrassment and explain the Israeli success, on the second day of the war the Egyptian media began trumpeting charges of a tripartite British–American–Israeli cabal. Great Britain and the United States, or so it was claimed, were full partners in the Israeli aggression; it was their planes that had bombed and destroyed the Egyptian airfields. The United States denied the accusations, but to no avail. Later that day, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Iraq, Algeria, and Egypt announced the severing of diplomatic ties with Washington.[4]

Cairo soon learned that breaking off relations harmed its interests more than it helped. Informal contacts on the renewal of bilateral relations were underway within eight months. However, because it was the Egyptians who were courting the Americans, the latter set three conditions for the resumption of relations: Egypt had to retract its "great lie" about the involvement of American planes in war; the Egyptians had to initiate the process of renewing relations; and Egypt had to pay compensation for the damage to the American Embassy and the USIA library caused by Egyptian demonstrators during the war.

The Egyptian response was not long in coming.[5] In an interview with *Look* magazine, Nasser asserted that the Egyptian charge of American air attacks was based on a misunderstanding and erroneous information provided by the Jordanians.[6] This statement provided ample room for interpretation in both Cairo

and Washington; several senior State Department officials deemed it sufficient for the resumption of relations. The Egyptian president was perceived as having taken a significant step towards mending fences with the United States.[7] In fact, some in Washington believed that the Egyptian leadership would initiate a process to renew ties. According to them, Cairo realized that no political agreement could be reached in the region without American intervention. As a direct result, they argued, if Nasser was interested in turning back the clock and regaining the territory Egypt had lost, he should first of all reach a rapprochement with the United States.

After the war and the severing of ties with Washington and London, Cairo was isolated from the West. Relations with Great Britain were restored in a matter of weeks, but the decline of British influence in the Middle East made it plain to Egypt that only the Americans could represent Western interests in the region and effect the change that Egypt desired. On the other hand, the benefit that would accrue to the Americans from the renewal of ties with Egypt would enable them to exert pressure on Nasser, lead him towards compromise, and facilitate the resumption of ties with other Arab countries. Moreover, a step in Nasser's direction would serve American interests in Egypt and the Arab world, because it would moderate extremist elements and curb the Soviet penetration of the Middle East.[8]

But just as the process of restoring ties was about to shift into high gear, the Egyptians suddenly took a step backwards and began making demands of their own. In return for bowing to Washington's insistence that Cairo retract its statement about the participation of American warplanes in the June 5 attack, Egypt asked for an American declaration regarding "the need for an Israeli withdrawal [from the occupied territories]" and maintained, obliquely, that an improvement of the relations between the two states depended on how willing the Americans were to follow a balanced policy towards the Arabs. Another factor behind the Egyptian stall was President Johnson's announcement, on March 31, 1968, that he would not run for re-election. Nasser, who had attacked the Johnson administration on more than one occasion, preferred to wait for new developments in Washington and see who the next president would be. In May 1968, he told Johnson's emissary that he took personal responsibility for the non-resumption of ties and that he could not pursue the matter at present, preferring to wait for another opportunity. In the end, both the Americans and the Egyptians decided to wait until after the American elections.[9]

The results of the presidential election in November brought a new wave of hope to both Americans and Egyptians, and to the Arabs in general.[10] The Americans, drowning in the quagmire of Vietnam, opted for new leadership that might be able to find a solution to the conflict in Asia. The Egyptians hoped to turn over a new leaf in the relations between the two countries, followed by a change in the status quo created after the June 1967 war. The election of the Republican Richard Nixon gave them the feeling that better days were coming for the Middle East. The Arabs hoped that the new administration would evince a greater understanding of their demands than its predecessor, which they believed was steadfastly pro-Israel.[11]

Many positive messages about the resumption of ties between the two countries were transmitted to Washington in anticipation of the change of administration. In early January 1969, the Egyptians dropped hints that they were disappointed with the Soviets and did not want to be entirely dependent on Moscow.[12] A report by the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) noted that in private conversations Nasser had been expressing his doubts about Soviet intentions in Egypt. Its evaluation was that good bilateral relations with the United States could serve the Egyptian president as a means of balancing Soviet influence.[13]

The report continued that the renewal of relations between Cairo and Washington could provide Nasser with a way out of his most serious problem—the deadlock in the diplomatic process with Israel. The Egyptian president's impression from Nixon's first press conference was that the latter understood the implications of the Middle East situation for the entire world; hence he and the rest of the Cairo leadership believed that the new administration would be more willing than its predecessor to force Israel to display greater flexibility in the terms of an agreement with Egypt. Full diplomatic relations would allow Egypt to sound its voice more effectively in Washington and encourage the American administration to resolve the Middle East crisis through an agreement that would be acceptable to the Arabs.[14]

Donald C. Bergus, the head of the American Interests Section in Egypt, reported to Washington that the change of administration in the United States and the visit by former Pennsylvania governor William Scranton, Nixon's special envoy to the region, had lifted spirits in Egypt. That country had somewhat moderated its bitterness and anger towards the United States, especially regarding the American military aid to Israel, and now hoped that it would be possible to find a solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict. However, Bergus wrote, patience and time would be needed to build trust with Nasser, or perhaps his successor, and to repair relations and restore them to the level of 1959 to 1963.[15] The change in the Egyptian attitude and position led Bergus to recommend to the State Department, on February 1, that it institute a new policy towards Egypt. He called for re-examining the main points of the Egyptian position and refraining from anything that would amplify the enmity and suspicion that had built up, especially after the June 1967 war. Bergus wrote that in recent months Egypt had moved very close to the position outlined by Secretary Rusk in the Seven Points document of November 1968. This movement persuaded Bergus that a "workable UAR–Israel settlement is achievable," because the current gaps between the two countries, like those between Washington and Cairo, were primarily psychological, rather than substantive, and therefore bridgeable.[16]

However, despite this positive assessment, Bergus foresaw that the resumption of relations would be a long process and require great patience. It would be even longer before the relationship with Nasser could be repaired and reach the degree of mutual trust that had existed between 1959 and 1963. In fact, that might prove impossible as long as Nasser was in power.[17]

The Egyptian President also sent signals to the new administration. On the day of Nixon's inauguration, January 20, 1969, Nasser addressed the new National Assembly in Cairo. He sounded all the standard refrains of all his speeches, such as the need to build up the Egyptian armed forces, the refusal to surrender territory, and the refusal to sit down and negotiate with the Zionist occupier, but avoided attacks on the United States. In the INR's assessment, the main reason for this was his hope that the Nixon administration would display a more positive attitude towards the Arabs than its predecessor. At this stage, with a new president entering the White House, Nasser wanted to leave the door open for relations with the Americans or at least wait until he felt more certain about Nixon's attitude before deciding on the direction of his future course of action vis-à-vis the United States.[18]

The exchange of notes between Washington and Cairo

Nasser gave hints of his intentions and hopes in a series of notes addressed to Nixon in late 1968 and early 1969. Immediately after the election results became known, Nasser dispatched a letter of congratulations to the president-elect. He wrote of his great admiration for the American nation and of his expectations that the change of administration would usher in a new era in which the United States displayed responsibility and assumed a central role in the resolution of the Middle East crisis.[19] Three months later, on January 5, 1969, after Scranton's visit to Cairo, Nasser sent a second note to Nixon, as part of his response to the visit by the special envoy. He wrote that he drew encouragement from the fact that Nixon had expressed concern about developments in the Middle East and especially about the future of the region. The message conveyed by this note was the same as that in the previous one; nevertheless, it displayed, for the first time, the Egyptian leader's intentions, his expectations of the new administration, and his disappointment with the previous administration.[20] For our purposes, it is important to analyze Nasser's positions as he expressed them at length in this letter to Nixon, especially with regard to the renewal of relations between Cairo and Washington and a resolution of the Middle East crisis.

It is clear that Nasser sought to take advantage of Nixon's arrival in the White House and especially the friendly atmosphere that prevailed after Scranton's visit to Cairo. The Egyptian president expressed his desire to continue the talks between the two countries and for a resumption of diplomatic relations between Egypt and the United States. He accordingly emphasized the great importance of the Scranton mission to the Middle East, both as a step towards the renewal of ties and as an expression of serious American attention to solving the crisis in the region.[21] Scranton himself came away with the impression that there was a genuine desire in Egypt to achieve a durable peace in the Middle East. He called on the incoming administration to display a "more balanced" Middle East policy, meaning one that was less pro-Israel.[22] The reference to the special envoy's recommendations and Nasser's hope that the new administration would make a clear statement of its policy lines constituted a

broad hint that an American declaration of a "balanced" position on the Middle East would serve Nixon in his diplomatic maneuvers, both in the Middle East and globally, and significantly advance the renewal of relations not only with Egypt but with other Arab countries as well. Alongside his good intentions, though, Nasser also sounded a two-fold warning. First, the Middle East issue was one of the principal dangers to world peace and needed to be resolved before it veered totally out of control. Second, relations should be renewed quickly, "before it was too late." According to Nasser, the two peoples, the Americans and Egyptians, had a real desire for durable peace in the Middle East. He would be very sorry if the current opportunity was allowed to slip away.[23]

Here it is important to note that the new Secretary of State, William P. Rogers, believed that Nasser's letter to Nixon was "a curious amalgam of conciliation and criticism."[24] In many passages the Egyptian president tried to maintain a cordial tone, since his goal was to initiate a dialogue with the new administration; but he also leveled harsh criticism of American policy and on several occasions cast aspersions on the outgoing administration. For example, Nasser reminded (and simultaneously flattered) Nixon of his visit to Cairo as a private citizen in 1963. At the end of that visit, conducted in a friendly atmosphere, Nixon had convened a press conference and said that he was profoundly impressed by President Nasser, Egypt's development efforts, and its educational system.[25]

Nasser added that President Eisenhower, too, had displayed a positive American stance towards Egypt and the Arabs in general during the Suez crisis of 1956.[26] He wrote that the American position then had contributed to world peace and won the United States international acclaim and major credit with the Arabs. It was a similar attitude that Nasser was now seeking from the United States, and not economic aid—"a sufficient measure of understanding and not any measure of American aid." That had been the case in 1963, Nasser reminded his incoming American counterpart, and remained so now. However—and here the Egyptian president turned to criticism—all the credit that the Americans had enjoyed in the past was lost after the June war, "in a manner that calls for deep regret." This was because American policy was perceived as supporting Israel and its policies, whether intentionally or not, and as opposed to the "Arab cause of independence and unity." Here, Nasser explained, lay the American failure: a stand on the Middle East conflict that was supportive of Israel and often reached "an extent that almost amounts to a total denial of every Arab right" had led directly to the tension between the United States and the Arabs. That did not mean that the Arabs wanted the United States to take their side against Israel, but the Arabs were bitter about the discriminatory American attitude, Nasser wrote, in a not-so-subtle request for a more even-handed policy.[27]

Nasser reserved the main thrust of his criticism for the section of the note in which he reviewed the relations between the United States and Egypt during the June 1967 crisis. He wrote that the Johnson administration bore "at least morally a great responsibility in the events of June 1967." He cited two reasons: the first was its diplomatic efforts, which included a call for Egypt to show patience and

self-restraint, on the one hand, but failed to denounce the Israeli aggression, on the other hand. Second, it was thanks to American encouragement and support that the Security Council had passed, "for the first time in the history of the United Nations," a resolution that did not demand a withdrawal to the lines that prevailed before the outbreak of hostilities. Therefore, Nasser wrote, many in Egypt came to believe that the Israel Air Force was not acting alone when it attacked the Egyptian airfields. What more, American planes flew over the Egyptian lines throughout the fighting, and this amplified Egypt's suspicions about the United States.[28]

Likewise, as a result of the American diplomatic maneuvers at the United Nations to resolve the crisis, Egypt (whether justifiably or not) perceived the United States as placing its full political weight behind Israel. Moreover, it was clear that the administration in Washington was willing to sacrifice its entire relationship with the Arabs, without any explanation or logic. This action by the American leadership merely heightened the estrangement felt by the Egyptian people; had it taken a more balanced position, the United States could have advanced peace in the Middle East more forcefully. Because the American administration had not adopted such a position, the crisis became more acute and its effects were still felt. Despite the Egyptian desire to find a way to renew relations with the United States, "the prevailing circumstances did not give anyone the justification for doing so." The picture could be different, though. All Washington had to do, Nasser wrote, was to proclaim a policy whose goal was a just peace or, alternatively, to call on all sides to implement the Security Council resolution. However, the American position had ignored reality and continued to do so. It did not propose new alternatives to solve the problem and did not allow new opportunities to emerge.[29]

All through the note, Nasser linked the Middle East issue and the conditions necessary to resolve the conflict, on the one hand, with the tenor of relations between Egypt and the United States, on the other. To facilitate a distinction between these items, we need to survey the Egyptian president's approach to a resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict. In general, Nasser sought to explain the Arab and Egyptian position towards Israel and the causes of the bad blood between the two countries. According to him, after many years of close cultural and economic relationships between the Arabs and Jews, when the Jews lived in Arab countries in peace and without discrimination, it was the Zionist movement that had caused a deterioration of the relations and had even sought to abrogate the Palestinian people's right to its land:

> The Arab people of Palestine, who are one of the peoples of the Arab nation, have an inalienable right in Palestine—a right which no mythical pretensions such as those put forward by Zionists can eliminate. It is a right that no big power can dispose of by deed and grant to other parties, as in the Balfour Declaration. It is a right which no aggressive force can suppress.[30]

In his letter, Nasser expressed his sincere faith that it was possible for Jews and Arabs to live together peacefully on the soil of Palestine, given that the two

peoples had lived together for decades before the "Zionist racist tendencies ran wild." But fraternal relations could not be imposed on the two peoples, because "'imposing peace' is a deceptive phrase which in fact means launching war," so a peace agreement must be based on justice.[31] Here Nasser noted Egypt's rejection of the proposal that each Arab country that is a party to the conflict sign a separate agreement with Israel. As noted, this proposal had been floated in the talks between Secretary of State Rusk and Foreign Minister Riad in late November 1968. But Nasser rejected the American initiative on the grounds that "it overlooks the unity of history, struggle, and fate of the Arab nation, and seeks to push it back decades."[32]

Nevertheless, wrote Nasser, Egypt's actions were motivated by a genuine and sincere desire to preserve any chance for peace and it had accepted Security Council Resolution 242. It had made it clear, however, both to the superpowers and to Israel, that it rejected two ideas. The first was surrendering Arab land: Egypt could not agree, "and … no one can ask of us," to give up any occupied Arab territory. The second was holding direct negotiations with Israel. The Egyptian rejection resulted from its sincere conviction that no country in the world would agree to conduct negotiations with an enemy that was occupying its land. "That would not be peace, but surrender," and it would also not be possible to paint the peace agreement in rosier colors. Nasser continued that Israel, on the other hand, refused to implement the UN resolution and had wasted an entire year of mediation attempts with evasions and explanations without results or benefit, because Israel held fast to a policy of territorial expansion.[33]

In his memorandum to President Nixon, Secretary of State Rogers identified the friendly message that Nasser sought to pass along. As remarked above, the desire to renew relations with the United States came through clearly both in the congratulatory note and in the conversation with Governor Scranton, along with Nasser's interest in concluding a peace agreement. However, according to Rogers, the Egyptian president did not provide details of the peace he foresaw. Moreover, with regard to the resumption of relations with the United States, Nasser had indeed expressed interest in the subject but still held back from explicitly asking to renew them and apologizing and expressing regret for the false accusation he had spread about American involvement in the June 1967 war. In addition, noted the Secretary of State, Nasser's letter still "holds the US morally responsible for the events of June 1967" and even repeated the canard that American aircraft had flown over the Egyptian lines during the war.[34]

Rogers did not dismiss the possibility that Nasser was concerned about fierce criticism both at home and abroad if he apologized to the United States or made an official request to renew relations. This might be why, in his note, he made both countries responsible for a resumption of ties. Behind this claim, though (Rogers wrote), lay an ulterior motive. Nasser viewed American–Egyptian negotiations as a prerequisite for the restoration of diplomatic ties between Washington and Cairo. In his note, he expressed the hope that the United States would act affirmatively on the Arabs' behalf, so as to justify the renewal of relations. In other words: Nasser was waiting for Nixon to take the first step.[35]

The Secretary of State's conclusion was that "this is not the kind of letter on which resumptions of relations can reasonably be based." Alongside the advantages of restored ties with Egypt—balancing the Soviet penetration of and exploiting the opportunity to play a central and influential role in Egypt with regards to diplomatic moves towards peace—the State Department did not think it appropriate to be seen as urgently interested in renewed relations. Nasser's congratulatory note did not impress the State Department at all. This is why, as we will see shortly, the American response did not contain any new political ideas, but only a positive message. The United States would be willing to renew relations with Egypt if the Egyptian president was indeed ready for this. The United States effectively left the door open to continued dialogue between the two countries and returned the ball to Nasser's court. At the same time, Washington made it plain once again that it would not overlook the Egyptian charges of American involvement in the 1967 war.[36]

In Nixon's reply to Nasser, the American president followed the State Department's recommendation that he take advantage of the Egyptian overture to pass along a friendly message about the renewal of relations and to clarify the American position on the Middle East crisis. Nixon began his note by stating his full agreement with the Egyptian view that the Middle East crisis was one of the gravest problems on the international agenda and a threat to world peace. This was why he was committed to making every effort to help the parties and the United Nations special envoy reach a peace agreement and formulate shared, acceptable, and useful understandings based on Security Council Resolution 242. But, Nixon added, this culmination was possible only if the sides set aside their suspicion and distrust, ended their mutual recriminations, and concentrated their efforts on the future.[37]

Another topic raised in Nixon's reply to Nasser was the renewal of diplomatic relations. Nixon welcomed his Egyptian counterpart's view that the desire for mutual understanding between the two peoples, the Egyptian and American, was stronger than all the doubts and suspicions that had accumulated over the years. He agreed with Nasser that the future of the relations between the Arabs and the Americans depended on common efforts by both sides to further this goal and stated that the United States was ready to repair its relations with Egypt "whenever conditions are appropriate." Therefore, and in response to the accusations made by the Egyptian president in his letter, Nixon noted that "the time has come to look forward, not backward."[38]

Despite the exchange of letters and confidence-building declarations by Washington and Cairo, the month of January was about to end without any real attempt to mend the fences between the countries or work towards a Middle East agreement compatible with Nasser's approach. Egypt kept proclaiming its desire for renewed ties, especially to the leaders of its Arab neighbors, while at the same time continuing to demand concrete proof of a more pro-Arab American policy. Nasser was disappointed with Nixon's reply because it did not coincide with his expectations and did not offer the proof he needed, given the barrage of Egyptian and pan-Arab criticism, to justify his desire to renew ties with the

United States. In a conversation with the Jordanian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Nasser told them that he would continue searching for a positive indication from the Americans and emphasized the need for such a sign before he could do anything to restore relations with Washington.[39]

The link between a positive American declaration—what the Egyptian leadership referred to as an "impartial stance" or "even-handed approach"—and the restoration of ties between Egypt and the United States was not made only on the personal level vis-à-vis Nixon, the Jordanians, or the Lebanese.[40] In late January 1969, in the *Newsweek* interview mentioned in Chapter 1, Nasser referred to his expectations of the new administration and to the issue of renewing relations. As a first step, Nasser demanded a declaration of "a fair policy," meaning an official American statement that it rejected the Israeli occupation. When asked what the renewal of relations between Washington and Cairo depended on, Nasser did not hesitate: "On the point I just made. If the new administration says it does not agree with this occupation, this will change the whole policy."[41] Thus far, however, the American leadership had stood behind Israel, the Egyptian president noted, and had not tried to adopt a balanced approach. He added that although the United States had indeed agreed to the principles set forth in the Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967, it insisted that the Israeli withdrawal would take place only after an agreement was achieved, an idea that ran utterly in opposition to the Arab position; it also continued to supply Israel with warplanes and other military equipment.[42]

Continuing his critical line against the American administration, Nasser returned to the events of June 1967 and attacked the Johnson administration's attitude then. For example, he claimed that the United States had refused to incorporate into its cease-fire proposal a clause demanding an Israeli withdrawal to the June 4 lines, in effect encouraging the Israeli aggression and occupation. Moreover, Washington continued to support the Israeli position and opposed any proposal to censure the Israeli invasion. This step, the Egyptian president said, corroborated the impression held by many Egyptians that American policy supported the Israeli occupation. It was not a matter of American pressure on Israel, Nasser emphasized, but the need to clarify the administration's diplomatic approach and to present a position that was fair and equitable to all parties.[43]

But while the Egyptians waited for a positive sign from the Americans, the latter expected Nasser and his aides to take the first step towards rebuilding ties. Because the line that guided the United States throughout was that the initiative to restore diplomatic relations had to come from the side that had severed them in the first place, it was Cairo's responsibility to initiate the process. In addition, Washington dismissed the Egyptian expectation of a dramatic change in American policy towards the Arabs in exchange (or as a prize) for renewed ties. So the diplomatic ball was batted from one court to the other, as each side waited for the other's responses and initiatives and sometimes ignored those that were forthcoming.[44]

How did the Soviet Union react to the American–Egyptian efforts to resume relations? Here the versions are contradictory. The Egyptian Foreign Ministry

hinted to Bergus that the Soviets were not opposed to the process. The State Department added that the Soviets estimated that a restoration of ties would strengthen Nasser's position in Egypt and would not harm their own status there. According to a State Department document submitted to the White House on this issue, Washington should not expect that renewed relations with Cairo would curtail Russian influence in Egypt. The main advantage of such a move would be an open door to the highest echelons in the Egyptian government, which could bring Washington only profit in all matters related to its diplomatic standing in the Middle East.[45]

The Kremlin's response was in fact quite different. During his visit to Cairo in December 1968, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko told Nasser that the Soviet Union had grave reservations about the Egyptians' desire to forge new ties with the Americans. According to him, Moscow took a dim view of the Egyptian inclination to view the renewal of diplomatic relations with the United States and the possibility of economic cooperation in a positive light. Gromyko added that such a process would seriously damage the relations between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Nasser's reaction was direct and realistic and reflected his urgent need to extract Egypt from the cul de sac it had found itself since June 1967. The Egyptian president made it clear to the Soviet Foreign Minister that he desperately needed a political solution to the conflict with Israel, whether it came by way of Washington, Moscow, or the United Nations. Were no solution found and the impasse continued, Nasser said, he would have to renew active hostilities, even if this ran counter to the wishes of the Soviet Union. This was because a continuation of the status quo posed a danger to his regime and placed him in a "cowardly position" before the Egyptian people and before the Arab world.[46]

All the same, the Soviet concern was premature. Despite the exchange of letters between Nasser and Nixon and the messages conveyed via the media or diplomatic channels, there were no signs of a new American–Egyptian process to renew ties between the two countries. February, too, passed with no movement on the diplomatic front. On the military front, however, there was an escalation in the number of incidents across the Suez Canal, building up in early March to artillery exchanges that in effect marked the beginning of the War of Attrition. Then, however, an additional diplomatic opportunity fell into Nasser's lap and he sought to take advantage of it, even if not in the best way possible.

Visitors from the Middle East

In early April 1969, Mahmoud Fawzi, Nasser's special advisor for foreign affairs, came to Washington to represent Egypt at the funeral of former President Eisenhower. Along with this final show of respect for the American president who had defended Arab interests in 1956, Fawzi arranged a series of meetings in Washington and New York with President Nixon, Secretary of State Rogers, and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, to discuss the future of relations between the United States and Egypt and the future of the political process in the

Middle East. In American eyes, Nasser's special envoy—who was "a fine gentleman" and "a professional"—raised expectations of someone who could produce progress on the resumption of relations between the United States and Egypt.[47] Already in the early stage of the talks, however, and even though Fawzi was given a number of opportunities to raise the issue of renewing ties, including hints that, in the American view, "the door was open for a gesture," it became clear that the Egyptians were not prepared to discuss the issue and that perhaps he was not authorized to speak about it.[48] "The time was not yet ripe," Fawzi told Nixon, according to Kissinger's recollections. This brought an end to the efforts of re-establishing relations between Washington and Cairo.[49]

On the contrary, as a result of these talks, the Americans realized that repeatedly bringing up the topic of renewed relations had created the wrong impression. The Egyptians thought the Americans were even more eager to resume ties than they themselves were. Because this had not been the Americans' intention, senior State Department officials made sure to convey the message that the United States would not raise the issue again and that Egypt would have to make the first move.[50]

In addition to the question of renewing relations, the discussions also focused on the Middle East crisis. On this issue, too, Fawzi brought no new political initiatives with him. In his various meetings with Nixon, Kissinger, Rogers, and Charles Yost (the American ambassador to the United Nations), he reiterated Egypt's position and insisted on the Arab interpretation of Security Council Resolution 242. He also repeated the Egyptian commitment to a restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people. He expressed a readiness for peace, but emphasized the Egyptian refusal to sign a "peace treaty" with Israel. He repeated the Egyptian demand for a clear American declaration regarding an Israeli withdrawal to the lines of June 4, 1967. And he once again demanded parity in the American treatment of his country and Israel. But his uncompromising stance undermined the chances of a favorable response to his requests, given that Nasser's advisor never offered new political ideas or showed any willingness whatsoever to move closer to the American position.[51]

The Americans repeated their opposition to the Egyptian linkage of the renewal of diplomatic relations with an American declaration requiring Israeli withdrawal.[52] The political line followed by the United States conditioned the resumption of ties on positive developments in the Middle East diplomatic process and also insisted—in keeping with Roger's testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 27—that an Israeli withdrawal was necessary for peace, aside from limited rectifications of the June 4 lines, as might be "required for mutual security and [which] should not reflect the weight of conquest."[53] Moreover, explained Fawzi's hosts, the question of withdrawal was linked to an explicit Arab commitment to peace, which had not yet been heard. Thus despite his claim that by accepting Resolution 242 Egypt had in fact fulfilled the American demands, the United States refused to see that as a clear commitment for peace. What is more, Egypt, as noted, held firm to its refusal to conclude a binding peace agreement with Israel.[54]

Another contributor to the failure of the talks was Fawzi's claim that Moscow was pressing Cairo to make progress in the political process. It is clear that the Soviet leadership rightly understood that in the military and political conditions that prevailed following June 1967 it had no ability to assist its client. The Soviets' fear, therefore, was of a stalemate in the diplomatic process that would necessarily lead to a decline in their status in the Arab world. However, especially in light of Fawzi's uncompromising stance on the renewal of relations, Washington had no interest in helping the Soviets rehabilitate their position in the Middle East. This reluctance was reinforced by the Soviets' increased military and civilian presence in Egypt and profound influence on its regional foreign policy. Kissinger concluded that, from a strategic standpoint, the United States would best be served by a continued stalemate in the Middle East, because the decline in the Soviet Union's prestige would lead to a change in the Egyptian position, both in its attitude towards Washington and in its attitude towards an agreement with Israel. At the same time, the State Department, which was softer on Egypt than the National Security Advisor was, but still viewed the Egyptian bargaining position as inferior, continued its efforts to cut the Middle East knot. Secretary of State Rogers worked on a plan that would serve American interests and satisfy most of the demands put forth by both sides—that is, a balanced policy, as the United States saw it. This plan—the first Rogers Plan—was released in December 1969.[55]

Nasser's special envoy came away with the impression that his meetings with the senior architects of American foreign policy were conducted in very harsh tones. Fawzi had strong recollections of every meeting, but one in particular remained etched in his memory. When he talked with the Secretary of State about the conditions for an agreement in the Middle East, Fawzi asked Rogers to offer "reasonable proposals for the Arabs." Hearing the request, Rogers said without hesitation that the Arabs should remember that they had lost the last war and had to pay the price. Fawzi took this comment as humiliating. It was a main factor in his recommendation three months later, at the convention of the Arab Socialist Union (the sole legal political party in Egypt), on July 28, 1969, that it reject a new American proposal and step up the military efforts against Israel.[56]

But Fawzi's recollections are not supported by American documents. The only mention of Rogers' offensive remark seems to be in Abdul Magid Farid's N*asser: The Final Years*. On the other hand, Bergus reported to Washington that after Fawzi returned home he asked him (Bergus) to convey his heartfelt thanks to Nixon and Secretary of State Rogers for his warm and friendly reception during his stay in the United States. He also expressed his hope that the two shared his feelings that the talks were helpful and would contribute to advancing the political process in the future. In another conversation, between Bergus and Nasser's advisor Hassan Sabri al-Khouli, the latter said that Fawzi's report to Nasser and other senior members of the Egyptian leadership about his trip to Washington was encouraging and hopeful.[57]

Kissinger voiced serious criticism of Fawzi's conduct during his visit and of Egypt's double game. According to the National Security Advisor, even before

the change of administration, the Egyptian president had sent upbeat messages to the United States about his desire to renew relations. Sometimes there were urgent signals, usually motivated by his desire not to be totally dependent on the Soviets. However, he had never clarified his real intentions and in effect was trying to get everything he wanted without giving anything in return. Nasser continued to be a riddle to State Department officials and Kissinger. Even ten years after Nasser's death, Kissinger remained unable to pin down just what the Egyptian leader had been thinking. How did Nasser expect to effect a change in the Nixon administration's stance without renewing diplomatic ties with the United States or presenting the Arab world with a friendlier position vis-à-vis the United States?[58]

Moreover, even when the United States floated ideas to bring the parties to the conflict to an agreement, some of which followed lines that were acceptable to Nasser, the latter changed his mind and rejected them.[59] Had he been more flexible in his positions or made some political gesture towards the United States (instead of demanding that the Americans make the first move), his reward (according to Kissinger) would have been vigorous American involvement in the peace process. But Nasser wanted to maintain his position as the leader of the Arab world and also to blackmail the Nixon administration into a reversal of its Middle East policy, although he had nothing to threaten it with. "He gloried in his radicalism," wrote Kissinger in his memoirs,

> which he thought essential to his pan-Arab ambitions and for this he must have felt compelled to remain in perpetual confrontation with us in the Middle East and the Third World, even at the cost of jeopardizing our willingness to move in his direction.[60]

In addition to the talks with Fawzi, senior administration figures, including Nixon and Rogers, met with King Hussein of Jordan during his official visit to Washington on April 8–10, 1969. The atmosphere was more pleasant than during Fawzi's visit, because Hussein, the "little king" (his designation by State Department personnel) was well known for his gracious and cordial manners. During his stay, Hussein repeatedly emphasized that he also spoke for Nasser about the Middle East situation and about the resumption of relations between Washington and Cairo. In fact, Nasser had empowered the king to reveal "some of Nasser's most closely guarded thoughts," and notably those about his relations with the Soviets.[61]

As will be recalled, the Egyptian president had reservations about the Soviets' activities in Egypt. He wanted to inform Nixon, through Hussein, that he did not wish to be totally dependent on the Soviet Union and thus needed the American president's help. Even though he did not specify what kind of help he had in mind, it was clear to the Americans that he wanted the United States to proclaim a more even-handed policy or to hold back the sale of Phantom warplanes to Israel. So in the context of the testy relations between Egypt and the Soviet Union, Hussein raised the question of the resumption of relations and emphasized

Nasser's eagerness for this.[62] Another point that came up was the Middle East crisis in general. The king emphasized that both he and Nasser accepted Security Council Resolution 242 and were willing to sign any document with Israel except a peace treaty.

The climax of Hussein's visit to Washington was an address at the National Press Club on April 11, two days after his meeting with Nixon. The king shared with his audience a six-point plan for peace in the Middle East. He said President Nasser had authorized him to speak on his behalf as well; so this was a joint Egyptian–Jordanian proposal. To some extent, Hussein's plan was a more detailed version of Resolution 242 and included the following: the end of all belligerency; respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of all states in the area; recognition of the right of all to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats and acts of war; guarantees for all of freedom of navigation through the Gulf of Aqaba and the Suez Canal; guarantees of the territorial inviolability of all states in the area through whatever measures necessary, including the establishment of demilitarized zones; and acceptance of a just settlement of the refugee problem.[63]

In addition to these six points, Hussein expressed a willingness for minor border rectifications between Jordan and Israel, as stated by Secretary of State Rogers in his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.[64] But Hussein's compromise stand did not help him in his talks with senior administration officials. First, it was not compatible with Jordan's inferior negotiating position; the country was shackled by its senior partner, Egypt, and consequently could not present an independent approach to a resolution of the conflict with Israel. Second, his conciliatory statements, including those spoken on Nasser's behalf about the renewal of relations, were hollow, because Fawzi had already made his country's stand and intentions very clear to Nixon. What is more, Cairo never issued an official communiqué affirming its inclusion in the Jordanian proposal or that Hussein spoke for Nasser as well. The latter in fact evaded any explicit statement that Egypt approved the six-point plan. In an interview with Clifton Daniels of the *New York Times*,[65] he said that he and the king had agreed on implementation of Resolution 242, meaning that Hussein's proposal was not a new plan but only a reiteration of the resolution.[66]

Starting point: Jarring, Israel, and Egypt

Nixon's arrival in the White House in January 1969 filled Egypt with hopes of a speedy resumption of diplomatic relations with the United States. That in turn would lead to an accord with Israel. The United States showed goodwill on the topic and Nixon announced a new political direction at his very first press conference after his inauguration:

> I believe we need new initiatives and new leadership on the part of the United States in order to cool off the situation in the Mideast. I consider it a powder keg, very explosive. It needs to be defused. I am open to any suggestions that

> may cool it off and reduce the possibility of another explosion, because the next explosion in the Mideast, I think, could involve very well a confrontation between the nuclear powers, which we want to avoid.[67]

In early February, the State Department and National Security Council began deliberations aimed at defining the outline of American policy in the Middle East. There were also talks with Israeli and Egyptian diplomats to learn the two countries' stands on a regional settlement. These efforts came in tandem with the continuing deterioration of the situation along the Suez Canal in the first three months of 1969. This forced the United States to ramp up its involvement somewhat and employ diplomacy to calm the situation, both through preparations for consultations among the United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France (the "Forum of Four") and through "contacts with Egypt and Israel."[68]

Israel saw things differently. As the situation at the Canal heated up, it adhered to the stance that there would be no withdrawal of its forces before the start of negotiations with Egypt: consent to a pullback in reaction to Egyptian military pressure would be perceived as a surrender and weaken Israel's political position. What is more, as the violence intensified, so did the fear that the powers might impose a settlement. Consequently, Israel opposed the very idea of the Forum of Four and took a stern confrontational position on the subject. On more than one occasion Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli ambassador in Washington, was asked to clarify Israel's position on four-power talks. He replied that experience had shown that such diktats or imposed settlements in the region during the 1950s and 1960s, such as the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 and the arm-twisting that forced Israel to evacuate Sinai in 1957, had proven abject failures.

Rabin further stressed that the Security Council resolution called for a withdrawal to secure and recognized boundaries, not from all the territories occupied. This was compatible with a continued Israeli presence at the Straits of Tiran and a land link to Israel, with most of the Sinai demilitarized and returned to Egypt. He added that Israeli was not interested in international arrangements or an American–Soviet guarantee. The straits had twice been a casus belli, in 1956 and 1967; Israel was determined to avoid a repetition in which Egypt could close the straits again and impose a blockade on Israel. Israel wanted a contractual peace and a territorial settlement that ensured its security, along with international guarantees to support and reinforce the agreement concluded by the parties themselves.[69]

Israel's position about an agreement with the Arabs remained unchanged after the death of Prime Minister Levi Eshkol on February 26, 1969. In fact, the State Department had not expected any real change in Israeli policy. This estimate proved to have been correct when American diplomats paid a condolence call on acting Prime Minister Yigal Allon. He said that the situation of "no peace and no war" would continue for the present, in part because the Arabs would not initiate hostilities in the near future. Israel's position, chiefly its opposition to a settlement based on guarantees or an imposed agreement, grew more inflexible after Golda Meir became Prime Minister on March 17 and

declared that peace with the Arabs could be achieved only if they were willing to sign a peace treaty with Israel. According to Meir, a peace agreement signed by the two sides, Israel and Egypt, would be a document of greater value than a document signed by Nixon, Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin, and UN Secretary General U Thant.[70]

Egypt held fast to its position, too, as presented to Secretary of State Rusk in the waning days of the Johnson administration. In talks that Nasser and Foreign Minister Riad conducted with foreign ambassadors and senior American diplomats in January 1969, they reaffirmed the Egyptian line that had been stated so many times in the past. Egypt, they said, was interested in a diplomatic solution to the Middle East crisis, welcomed international peace initiatives, and would allow free passage through the Suez Canal to all countries, including Israel, as part of a package deal.

However, Egypt continued to set a number of preconditions for this. Foreign Minister Riad stressed that the refugee problem must be solved and that Egypt would not agree to surrender territory to Israel. The border between Egypt and Israel was not negotiable; Israel must evacuate all of Sinai in advance of any agreement. Riad also conveyed his country's refusal to conduct direct negotiations with Israel or sign a joint document with it. Egypt, he said, would sign a document that stipulated its obligations under an accord and its willingness to meet them. Egypt would convey the signed document to the Security Council; clearly, Israel would have to do the same thing and demonstrate the same level of commitment. Such an undertaking, said Riad, would be better than a bilateral agreement, and more binding as well. As for the issue of relations with Israel, he repeated that Egypt's policy was for peace with Israel, but not friendly relations; hence there would be no need for an exchange of ambassadors between the two country.[71]

The political process at the start of 1969 was dominated by the new American administration's need to study the terrain of the Middle East conflict and learn the parties' positions. By that spring there was a whiff of change in the air. Jarring, the UN special mediator in the Middle East, resumed his mission. The United States unveiled a new position and even embarked on diplomatic initiatives to solve the crisis in the region, in partnership with the Soviet Union. Finally, after protracted preliminary consultations, the Forum of Four (and the Forum of Two, the United States and the Soviet Union, within it) met to hash out a solution for the region. The diplomatic efforts were accompanied by continued fighting, especially across the Suez Canal, but also on the border between Israel and Jordan, which became a daily occurrence. The roar of the cannons in March presaged a change of direction, both diplomatic and military.

In early March, Jarring submitted a document with a list of almost identical questions to Israel, Egypt, and Jordan. They were asked to review it and reply as quickly as possible. After he received this information, Jarring estimated, it would be possible to focus the diplomatic efforts, perhaps in Geneva or on Cyprus, and try to develop a process that would lead to an agreement. Once again he failed, because the three countries hunkered down in their well-known

positions and made no attempt to move the negotiations forward.[72] Riad said that "as long as Israel refuses [to] withdraw from occupied territory, meeting in Geneva or Cyprus with Jarring will lead nowhere."[73]

Riad emphasized that Resolution 242 must be implemented according to a firm timetable, and that only its implementation under the supervision of the Security Council and with guarantees provided by it would lead to peace. Israel must implement the resolution and withdraw its forces from all territories occupied as a result of its aggression on June 5, 1967. But Israel continued to refuse to comply with the resolution and in fact was working against it. By contrast, Egypt had accepted its terms, proclaimed its willingness to implement it, and even expressed its desire to cooperate fully with Jarring. Israel's position, Riad replied, had created a situation that endangered the future of peace and security in the Middle East. Consequently, Egypt called on the Security Council to take the steps required to restrain the aggressor, to force it to withdraw from the territories it occupied, and to implement the peace arrangement stated in Resolution 242.[74]

The Egyptians were quick to submit their reply to Jarring, but Israel took its time and did not answer until early April, when the special mediator visited Jerusalem.[75] Israel had nothing new to say and repeated its well-known positions, again emphasizing the importance it attached to an agreement achieved as a result of direct negotiations between it and the Arabs. It was the parties themselves who must agree on the terms of the agreement, including borders, and of course they must all sign the document. Israel added that a peace agreement must be drafted in legal language, defined contractually, and be mutually binding under international law.

Israel stated further that, subject to the principle of mutuality, it was willing to declare an end to all claims on and the state of war with any country with which it established peaceful relations. Israel was willing to recognize and respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of its Arab neighbors. Israel also agreed on the right of the Arab states to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force. As for the refugees, Jarring was told that their situation was the result of Arab aggression against Israel and had been perpetuated by the Arabs' refusal to make peace. However, Israel was willing to assign priority, in the form of regional and international cooperation, to finding an agreed-upon solution to the problem of the refugees, whose goal would be the formulation of a five-year plan to solve the problem as part of a lasting peace and the refugees' integration into productive life.[76]

The American principles

While Jarring pursued his mission, the State Department drafted the basic principles of American policy for dealing with the Middle East situation. The outline, which guided State Department officials in their talks with representatives of the other powers and Israel, can be summarized as follows: First, the State Department saw Resolution 242 and the Jarring mission as the focus of the efforts to achieve peace between Israel and the Arabs. Second, out of a desire to help

Jarring, whose efforts had not yet produced any real results, achieve an agreement between the hostile parties, the American administration would consider cooperation with the other powers. However, these consultations could not be a substitute for his mission, because the United States did not believe in an imposed settlement. Third, the United States would engage in active consultations, both bilateral (the Forum of Two) and multilateral (the Forum of Four). The key to progress in the political process was and remained a firm commitment by the Arabs, and especially Egypt, to a lasting peace.[77]

Even before Rogers published the American policy guidelines, Foreign Minister Eban was informed of its details when he visited Washington in mid-March. He wasted no time stating his objections, arguing that the American position ran contrary to Israel's interests and might lead to a major public confrontation between the governments of Israel and the United States. Eban told Rogers:

> The idea that the U.S. should submit a document of this kind to the other three powers or to anyone else is profoundly shocking. I request formally and solemnly that this not be done and I ask that this request be made known to the President.[78]

During the course of his visit, he again made it clear that the new borders to be drawn must deviate significantly from the 1949 cease-fire lines.[79] Nor was Israel willing to evacuate Sharm el-Sheikh, only to have to go to war again at some point in the future to ensure free passage through the Straits of Tiran. As for the Palestinian issue, Israel rejected the idea that there were two distinct peoples, the Jordanians and the Palestinians. That might have been true 20 years earlier, but today the two populations had mingled and most Jordanians were Palestinians. Rogers saw things in a different light. According to him, the American principles did reflect Israel's basic ideas, but more than that protected them. Rogers added that the United States was not asking for Israel's consent to the guidelines, but might take the Israeli position into account in its overall considerations.[80]

Despite the Israeli protest, the State Department continued to work out its position and drafted a working paper, which was submitted to Egypt, Israel, and representatives of the other members of the Forum of Four on March 24. Once again, the United States emphasized that were the document accepted it could be forwarded to Jarring as a position paper of all four powers, and this would help him in his talks with the parties. The working paper included the following main points:

- The parties must agree among themselves about all elements of the agreement before implementation of any part of the package began.
- The negotiations between the parties would be indirect, under the auspices of Ambassador Jarring. But it would no agreement could be reached without direct contact between Israel and the Arabs at some stage of the process.

- The goal of the negotiations was a just and lasting peace, based on an agreement between Israel and the Arabs. The agreement must be contractual, mutually binding, and include international guarantees of its terms.
- A just and lasting peace agreed to by the parties would require Israel to withdraw to secure and recognized boundaries; "rectifications from pre-existing lines should be confined to those required for mutual security and should not reflect the weight of conquest." The issue of Israeli withdrawal was intimately linked to the Arabs' contractual commitment to peace and the provision of guarantees. In addition, special arrangements might be considered for Gaza.
- Certain critical areas should be demilitarized.
- Jordan would have a civilian, economic, and religious standing in Jerusalem, which would remain united. Arrangements would be made to guarantee the interests of all religions in the city.
- An overall settlement must provide a solution to the refugee problem. They should be given a free choice between "resettlement with compensation" and "repatriation," on terms and under supervision acceptable to the two sides.
- Israeli vessels must be guaranteed freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal and Straits of Tiran. In addition, "special arrangements" would be required for Sharm el-Sheikh.[81]

Another important stage in the consolidation of the American policy came when Rogers presented the main points of the working paper to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 27. From this time on, they served as the basis of the State Department's initiative, and found practical expression in December 1969 in the Secretary of State's peace initiative, the "Rogers Plan." Rogers told the committee that finding a path that would lead to peace in the Middle East was one of the main problems on his agenda. The Middle East had been in a state of "suspended hostility" since the June 1967 war. There would be serious consequences if the present situation continued at full intensity, because another war was liable to come with "the risk of outside involvement."

Rogers was continuing the line stated by Nixon at his late January press conference, namely, that there was a real risk of a superpower confrontation if no agreement was reached between Israel and the Arabs. Consequently, Rogers said, it was "a direct interest of the United States" to exert maximum influence in order to bring about a lasting peace on the basis of Resolution 242. For this reason, one of the first decisions taken by the new administration had been to agree to participate actively in the diplomatic efforts of the Forum of Four and support Jarring's mission and his efforts to conclude a just and lasting contractual peace between Israel and the Arabs.[82]

Speaking to the senators, Rogers emphasized the American support for Resolution 242 and that the resolution was the foundation of American policy for resolving the conflict. He said that a peace agreement would require Israel to withdraw "from territories occupied in [the] Arab–Israeli war of 1967," the

termination of all claims or states of belligerency, acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every state in the area and its right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries. He also stressed Israel's right to free navigation through the Straits of Tiran and Suez Canal and called for a just solution of the refugee problem. According to him, "there can be no real peace without a genuine solution to this intractable problem, now made more tragic by the displacement of even more people as a result in the 1967 war."[83]

In addition to this expression of full support for Resolution 242, Rogers added backing for Jarring. Jarring's mission was to promote an agreement between the two sides, "and this can only mean agreement between the parties and among the parties." This was important for achieving a just and lasting accord, Rogers said. He stressed, "we for our part are not interested in imposing a peace." He explained, however, that because Jarring had been unable to produce any significant progress in the political process, the United States was committed to assisting his mission, because "our interests would be ill-served in the absence of the settlement."[84]

The Americans' compromise position was far from satisfying the Egyptians, whose reaction fell into two parts: a reference to the American working paper on the one hand and to Rogers' Senate testimony on the other. Shortly after the Secretary of State's appearance before the Foreign Relations Committee, Nasser addressed the national congress of the Arab Socialist Union and expressed his disappointment with American policy. The United States, he said, continued to back Israel without reservation and supply it with weapons, despite the friendly messages that Washington had transmitted to the Arabs and despite the American interests in the Arab world. However, Nasser sounded encouraged by the American willingness to cooperate with the other powers in the Forum of Four. According to him, the situation in the region had created pressure on the powers to work together, because "the crisis in the Middle East does not allow any further delay. It is truly miraculous that the crisis has remained static all this time, without blowing up." However, if the four powers did not find a way to implement Security Council Resolution 242, the situation in the Middle East would be dangerous, he warned. At the same time, he also believed that a solution to the conflict should be left to the countries in the region.[85]

Similar things were said in exchanges between State Department officials and their Egyptian counterparts. The Egyptians rejected the American working paper on the grounds that it supported the Israeli positions and ignored Egypt's, while leaving the Arab demands open to negotiation. For example, the Egyptians wanted an explicit American statement that the Israeli withdrawal must be to the lines of June 4, 1967, and a clear definition of the Palestinian refugees' right of return. In addition, the Egyptians rejected direct negotiations with Israel and were not willing to sign a contractual agreement with it. Another reservation had to do with the status of Jerusalem. And they stubbornly linked the issue of free passage through the Suez Canal and Straits of Tiran to the refugee problem.[86]

Although the American working paper was not well received in Egypt, Cairo found a number of constructive and encouraging elements in Rogers' statement to the Foreign Relations Committee and saw it as a counterweight to the negative items in the working paper. The Egyptians attached great importance to Rogers' reference to the withdrawal clause in Resolution 242 and took him to have supported their demand that the withdrawal be to the June 4 lines. The Secretary of State had not made withdrawal conditional on an Arab contractual commitment to peace or stipulated that it must be to borders agreed on by the parties. Cairo drew encouragement from the fact that both the working paper and Rogers' statement held that any modifications to the previous boundaries (the 1949 armistice lines) must be the minimum that was absolutely essential for the two sides' security and not reflect the weight of conquest. Finally, Rogers had emphasized the need to take account of the individual preferences of each refugee.[87] The Egyptians were indeed far from being satisfied with the American line, but the fact that there was daylight between the State Department's new stance and the Israelis' position struck them as a great achievement.

What is more, Cairo exploited the new wind blowing from the State Department and the military escalation at the Suez Canal in an attempt to leverage the diplomatic process to its advantage. Egypt made it clear that it was willing to implement Resolution 242 and reach an agreement with Israel, but would not wait forever to do so. Foreign Minister Riad said that despite Israel's military superiority, Egypt would not bow to the Israeli pressure on the Suez front, would not acquiesce to Israel's intention to turn the current cease-fire lines into a permanent boundary, and would not conduct direct negotiations with it. He added that Egypt had the right to defend itself and to liberate its occupied territory. Egypt was willing to accept a situation of mutual destruction, if that was the only way to reach a settlement. The Egyptian leadership would deal with an Israeli response, however hard it might be. As long as the fighting continued on the Canal front, the Middle East issue would remain on the global agenda, the Israelis too would suffer losses, and Egypt would demonstrate to all that it would not make concessions and would not accept the loss of its territory.[88]

As we will see in the coming chapters, during May and June 1969, the United States continued its efforts to achieve a peaceful solution in the Middle East. Washington held that the tension along the Canal interfered with the progress of the Forum of Four and Forum of Two and the attempts to achieve an agreement between the sides. Consequently, the State Department dispatched messages to Israel and Egypt, calling on them to stop the shooting and cooperate with the United Nations observers so as to tone down the situation. The Americans emphasized to the Egyptians that they were not seeking a cease-fire in order to perpetuate the status quo, that is, the Israeli occupation of Sinai. It was hinted to Egypt that Israel too desired calm (a similar message about the Egyptians' willingness to gradually lower the level of hostilities at the Canal was sent to Jerusalem), along with the assessment that Egypt's profit would be outweighed by its losses were the military confrontation with Israel to continue.[89]

In fact, in mid-May, Washington continued to receive urgent messages from Cairo about the seriousness of the situation and the need for speedy action to calm the situation along the Canal. In an interview with *Time* magazine, Nasser went so far as to state that he was willing "to accept the reality of Israel" and sign a non-aggression pact with it. From conversations with senior echelons of the regime, however, the Americans learned that there were divisions within the Egyptian government. On the one hand, there were some who believed that another war was imperative, for both domestic and foreign reasons that were fateful for the country's future. On the other hand, there were some in the leadership, including Foreign Minister Riad, who were acutely aware of Egypt's weakness and were consequently trying to take a moderate political line.[90]

It is quite doubtful whether the Americans read the Egyptian line correctly, as will be explained in the next chapter. But already now it can be stated that for many months, and especially after Nixon entered the White House, Cairo transmitted its sense of pressure and urgency to Washington, hoping that the crisis atmosphere would penetrate the American administration and force it to find a rapid solution to the territorial conflict with Israel. The United States was indeed afraid of a full-scale war in the region that might lead to a confrontation between the superpowers; this found expression both in Nixon's first press conference and in Rogers' testimony to the Foreign Relations Committee.

But it is also doubtful that the Egyptian threats of escalation, including the exchanges of artillery fire across the Canal, had any influence on the administration's political assessments. The United States in 1969 was sunk deep in the quagmire of Vietnam and assigned priority to resolution of that problem, as well as to bettering its relations with the Soviet Union—chiefly with regard to moderating the arms race—and China. Hence we should attribute the American working paper and Rogers' statement to the Foreign Relations Committee as part of the evolution of America's policy in the Middle East and not as a response to the crisis fomented by Egypt that pushed the State Department to find a swift solution to the conflict. Although the National Security Council devoted its February 1, 1969, session to the Middle East crisis, there was still no real fear of war that year. This view was shared by the Americans and the Israelis.

The Israeli government did not expect war in 1969, Ambassador Rabin told Rogers, because it was beyond the Arabs' capacity. The Soviet Union, too, knew that it had much to lose from another war in the Middle East, given that a resumption of full-scale fighting would leave it with only two options: stand by and watch the Arabs' collapse, which would undermine the Soviets' standing in the region; or intervene in support of the Arabs, which would be problematic from both the military and political perspectives.[91] Like Rabin, in April 1969 Assistant Secretary of State Sisco estimated that there would not be a new war in the next two years. Israel remained stronger than the Arabs and could defeat them again. He added that the Soviet Union was interested in continuing the talks with the new administration and bringing them to a successful conclusion, and did not want to find itself facing the options of intervening in the Arab–Israeli conflict or being seen once

again as a paper tiger.[92] Even after the violence across the Canal grew much worse, Sisco told Rabin in May that Nasser had not succeeded in terrifying the four powers, and certainly not the United States, so as to induce them to make some rapid diplomatic maneuver.[93]

We can learn about these intentions from statements by the head of the Egyptian Interests Section in Washington, Dr. Ashraf Ghorbal. In his exchanges with State Department officials, he repeatedly warned that time was rapidly running out; in the absence of progress towards a solution, domestic pressure would mount in Egypt and there would be a new outbreak of violence in the Middle East as a whole, and across the Canal in particular. Egypt, he said, was expecting a change in American policy, especially with regard to an Israeli withdrawal. Ghorbal added that his country needed some tangible demonstration that peace could be achieved. The situation was fateful, he emphasized. The United States would have to bear the guilt for the absence of peace and security in the region, because it backed Israel totally and pushed away the Arabs, who favored a compromise and wanted to draw closer to it. As he saw it, a proof of American support for the Arabs' position would be a call for restraint by Israel, and not only by the Arabs, and especially a call for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 242 and an Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. Egypt could not agree to the conversion of the current cease-fire lines into permanent boundaries, as had happened to the cease-fire lines at the end of the 1948 war.[94]

Notes

1 This paraphrases the title of an Israeli hit song of the waiting period before the start of the June 1967 war, "Nasser is Waiting for Rabin," which made fun of the Egyptian president's belligerent statement that he was waiting for Rabin, the IDF Chief of Staff.
2 "The New US Administration and Middle East Questions: Conversation between Secretary of State Rogers and Ambassador Rabin, March 6, 1969," ISA, FM, 4156/1.
3 Oren, *Six Days of War*, 170–8.
4 *Al-Gomhuria*, June 7, 1967; *al-Ahram*, June 7, 1967; Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 299.
5 "No. 75," February 9, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5; "No. 262," March 20, 1968, ISA, FM 4158/5.
6 *Look Magazine*, March 19, 1968 (published on March 5).
7 "Middle East News Agency (MENA)," March 3, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5; "No. 20," March 4, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5; "No. 65," March 5, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5; "No. 143," March 20, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5; "Memorandum of Conversation, Resumption of Relations," May 7, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 2557 Pol, 17 UAR–US.
8 "No. 75," February 9, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5; "Egypt," February 14, 1968, ISA, FM, 4157/5; "No. 65," March 5, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5.
9 "Conversation with McCloy," May 15, 1968, ISA, FM, 4156/1; "No. 262," March 20, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5; "No. 120," December 18, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5.
10 On Johnson's last full day in office, a headline in *al-Ahram* reported that "Johnson ended his days in power with extreme offense to Arabs and UN." According to the article, for Egypt the situation could only get better (*al-Ahram*, January 19, 1969).
11 "No. 120," December 18, 1968, ISA, FM, 4158/5; "State 12332," January 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 012842," January 27, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.

12 "Moscow 001," January 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1816 USNA.
13 "UAR: Nasser Ponders Relations with the US," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
14 Ibid.
15 "Cairo 9," January 2, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1816 USNA.
16 "Cairo 239," February 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 USNA.
17 "Cairo 9," January 2, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1816 USNA.
18 Nasser, *Al-Majmuah al-Kamila*, vol. 2, 1–22.
19 Dishon, *MER* 4: 79.
20 "Memorandum for the Secretary, Presidential Response to Nasser Letter," January 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
21 Ibid.
22 "No. 220," December 11, 1968, ISA, FM, 4155/11; "No. 856," December 18, 1968, ISA, FM, 4155/11. The call for a "balanced" American policy set off a serious storm in Israel. The Israeli Foreign Ministry saw Scranton's views as "problematic," while the United States ambassador to Israel, Walworth Barbour, tried to soften the envoy's words and called the statement "unfortunate." However, Scranton came to the Middle East with positions that were already on the public record. On November 20, 1968 (the article reached the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem in early December), the American media reported his criticism of the Johnson administration. Scranton asserted that NATO and US policy towards the Middle East was "not uniform and not clear" and saw the cease-fire between Israel and the Arabs as "extremely volcanic and the most important problem today in the world." See "William Scranton," December 5, 1968, ISA, FM, 4155/11. On the Scranton mission and the Israeli reaction, see "No. 220," December 11, 1968, ISA, FM, 4155/11; "No. 856," December 18, 1968, ISA, FM, 4155/11.
23 "Memorandum for the Secretary, Presidential Response to Nasser Letter," January 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
24 "Memorandum for the President, Nasser Letter of January 5, 1969," January 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
25 "Memorandum for the Secretary, Presidential Response to Nasser Letter," January 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
26 Note that this was a self-serving presentation, which left out the many crises that had erupted in the Middle East before and after 1956 and had generated suspicion and led to estrangement between Washington and Cairo.
27 "Memorandum for the Secretary, Presidential Response to Nasser Letter," January 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 With this comment, Nasser effectively rejected the Israeli peace proposal of June 19, 1967. According to him, the Israeli proposal came from a position of superiority and the government of Israel was in fact seeking to impose a peace agreement on Egypt and subdue it once again, this time in the diplomatic arena.
32 "Memorandum for the Secretary, Presidential Response to Nasser Letter," January 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
33 Ibid.
34 For Rogers' analysis, see "Memorandum for the President, Nasser Letter of January 5, 1969," January 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I. With regard to Nasser's attempt to explain the origin of the allegations regarding the American attack, Rogers wrote that on June 8, President Johnson give Kosygin a note to pass on to Egypt; but the note related to reconnaissance flights carried out by American planes "15 miles" off the Egyptian coast, in order to investigate the Israeli attack on the USS *Liberty*. See "Memorandum for the Secretary, Presidential Response to Nasser Letter," January 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.

35 "Memorandum for the President, Nasser Letter of January 5, 1969," January 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
36 Ibid.
37 "Memorandum for the Secretary, Presidential Response to Nasser Letter," January 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
38 Ibid.
39 "Nasser's Present Attitude Toward a Political Settlement: How to Get Over the Hump," January 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "UAR President Nasser Bends an Ear to Catch 'Sweet Nothings' from the US," February 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I; "Beirut 1642," February 21, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I.
40 "Beirut 1642," February 21, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I.
41 *Newsweek*, February 10, 1969.
42 "Carrying Water on Both Shoulders: Cairo's Version of Nasser's Newsweek Interview," February 6, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.
43 Ibid.
44 "Memorandum of Conversation, US–UAR Relations: Settlement Prospects," January 27, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; Arab-ISR: "Memorandum of Conversation, Tour d'Horizon Re Middle East," February 5, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I.
45 "No. 15," February 4, 1969, ISA, FM 4158/6.
46 "State 292534," December 26, 1968, NA, RG 59, Box 1816 Pol, 27 A/I.
47 *Al-Ahram*, April 4, 1969; "Cairo 976," April 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 2553 Pol, 2 UAR; Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 360.
48 "State 057357," April 15, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 82," April 17, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/2; *al-Ahram*, April 5, 1969.
49 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 361.
50 "State 079131," May 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
51 Ibid.; *al-Ahram*, April 4, 1969; "Memorandum of Conversation, Fawzi Visit," April 4, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "USUN 1053," April 7, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Your Meeting with Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi," April 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
52 Besides expressing a desire to renew relations, the Egyptians continued to demand that the American come up with "something substantive to justify resumption." See "State 079131," May 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
53 "Statement by the Honorable William P. Rogers," March 27, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.
54 "USUN 1053," April 7, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 055422," April 11, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Your Meeting with Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi," April 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, The President and Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi," April 15, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
55 "State 057357," April 15, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Fawzi Visit," April 4, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Your Meeting with Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi," April 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 360–1.
56 Farid, *Nasser*, 139.
57 Ibid.; "Cairo 972," April 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 1037," April 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
58 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 360–1.
59 "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," April 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
60 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 361.
61 Thus Zaid Rifa'i, Hussein's private secretary, in strictest confidence to Harrison M. Symmes, the American ambassador to Jordan: "Amman 1552," March 31, 1969, NA,

RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; *New York Times*, April 8, 1969; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 358–63; Nolte, "American Policy in the Middle East," 113.

62 "Amman 1552," March 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; *New York Times*, April 8, 1969; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 358–63.

63 *New York Times*, April 11, 1969; "Middle East: King Hussein's Peace Offer and the Initial Response," April 28, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I. Quotation available at www.jta.org/1969/04/11/archive/hussein-offers-6-point-peace-plan-hinged-on-withdrawal-says-nasser-approves.

64 "Statement by the Honorable William P. Rogers," March 27, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 919," April 12, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 920," April 12, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 362–3.

65 *New York Times*, April 21, 1969.

66 "Nasser Sidles Up to Husayn's 'Six Points,'" April 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

67 *The American Presidency Project*, "Richard Nixon (1969–74), The President's News Conference," January 27, 1969; at www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=1942.

68 "Nixon's First Press Conference," January 27, 1970, ISA, FM, 4157/8; "Memorandum of Conversation, Four-Power Talks," February 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I; Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation*, 135.

69 "Memorandum of Conversation, Middle East Developments," February 3, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I.

70 "Rome 679," February 6, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Tel Aviv 752," March 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Tel Aviv 1027," March 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.

71 "Belgrade 136," January 17, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 015715," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.

72 "State 053075," April 8, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.

73 "Cairo 534," March 6, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.

74 Ibid.; "State 36582," March 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.

75 "State 036403," March 8, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "USUN 996," April 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.

76 Israel proposed the convening of a conference to be attended by the countries of the Middle East, the governments that were providing economic assistance to the refugees, and the UN agencies specializing in the matter. See "Tel Aviv 1244," April 2, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.

77 "State 41269," March 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol 27 A/I.

78 *FRUS*, 1969–72, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 13, n. 8, "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel," March 13, 1969, 45–9.

79 Thus in the document ("State 39513," March 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol 27 A/I), but the intention was probably to the 1949 armistice lines.

80 "State 39513," March 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol 27 A/I; "State 040566," March 15, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol 27 A/I; "State 41269," March 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol 27 A/I; Eban, *Autobiography*, 463–4.

81 "State 044730," March 21, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1833 Pol 27-14 A/I; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 17, "Telegram From the Department of State to the Mission to the United Nations," March 22, 1969, 59–60.

82 "Statement by the Honorable William P. Rogers," March 27, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 "Cairo 761," March 28, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 2553 Pol 2 UAR; "Cairo 769," March 29, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol 27-14 A/I; Schueftan, *Attrition*, 165–6.

86 "No. 16," April 3, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/2; "No. 66," April 14, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/2; "No. 82," April 17, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/2; "Cairo 769," March 29, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol 27 A/I; "USUN 912," March 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol 27-14 A/I.
87 "No. 82," April 17, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/2; "Cairo 772," March 29, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol 27-14 A/I; "State 053085," April 8, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol 27-14 A/I.
88 "Situation in Canal Area," April 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
89 "Cairo 1098," May 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 1226," May 15, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 077731," May 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 1240," May 17, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 079131," May 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
90 *Time Magazine*, May 16, 1969; "Algiers 767," May 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 1194," May 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 1226," May 15, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 78781," May 17, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
91 "Memorandum of Conversation, Middle East Developments," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 276," January 31, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/1.
92 "Memorandum of Conversation, Egypt and the Near East Situation," April 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
93 "State 069861," May 5, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
94 "State 078782," May 17, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 079131," May 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, UAR Intentions Along Canal," May 20, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Arab–Israel," June 3, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1821 Pol, 27 A/I.

3 Why are they shooting?

> As [the] Arab[s] become more frustrated, they concede they have nothing to lose and therefore must fight, regardless of costs. Increasingly, Arabs feel that only [a] radical solution will achieve success.
>
> Abdul Hamid Sharaf, Jordanian Ambassador in Washington[1]

Cairo is impatient

As previously mentioned, the Egyptian leadership's expectations had risen since Nixon entered the White House. There was hope that the new administration would end the stalemate that had prevailed in the Middle East since 1967. But as time passed, the Egyptians realized that the change they were hoping for was not coming. They did not hide their displeasure and hinted at what might happen if things did not change. In an interview with *Newsweek* in early February 1969, Nasser spoke of Egypt's military build-up and linked it to Israel's preparations for another war. He claimed Egypt did not want another war and yearned for peace because it wanted to develop its economy, but needed to look to its defense. He added that, in his opinion, there would be no solution to the crisis until the Israelis were convinced that the Egyptians were strong enough to push them out of the occupied territories.[2]

In addition, in several conversations with American interlocutors, Ashraf Ghorbal, the head of the Egyptian Interests Section in Washington, vented Egypt's complaint that the new administration, like the previous one, had "had seriously damaged [the] cause of peace in [the] Middle East by dragging its feet and letting matters take their course, instead of making the decisions which would shape the events." "President Nixon," he told Richard B. Parker, who headed the Egypt desk in the State Department, "was putting himself in a position such that events would shape his decisions."[3]

In addition to the sense of urgency that he tried to convey, Ghorbal asserted that the latest events in the Middle East could have critical consequences. Time was running out and something must be done soon in order to change the current situation. Ghorbal said that he was making constant efforts to keep Cairo's nerves from snapping and did not know how much longer this unstable equilibrium could be kept under control.[4]

The Egyptian statements and actions did not faze the Americans, whose reaction was moderate and restrained. Parker told Ghorbal that the new administration was holding internal consultations and assessing the situation in the Middle East, and added—a typically American note—that the administration was unlikely to engage in dramatic action because that was not its style. That style might not be as exciting as the Arabs liked, but it allowed decisions to be made in a more rational manner.[5] A few months later, when artillery battles were raging at the Suez Canal, Donald Bergus, the senior American diplomat in Cairo, told the Egyptian Foreign Minister that the United States "was not impressed" by the tension along the Canal. America's advice to Egypt was to allow the superpowers' efforts to advance peace to bear fruit rather than try to scare them by increasing the danger and inflaming the conflict.[6]

In January 1969, a few days before the changeover in the White House, the reports of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) in the State Department reflected the Egyptian regime's impatience and the strain it was under. A special report by a senior INR official stated that the stalemate between Israel and the Arabs had exposed Egypt to both domestic and foreign pressure. On the foreign front, Nasser understood that he would not be able to retain his position as leader of the Arab world if he reached an agreement with Israel, because it would appear to be "a sell-out of Arab interests."[7] On the other hand, the situation inside Egypt, according to the report, might deteriorate if no way out of the impasse was found at a time when the Egyptian public was showing great sympathy for the terrorist groups. That could undermine Nasser's position in Egypt; hence, according to the special report, the Egyptian president felt he needed to achieve some kind of settlement and present it to his people as a political victory. The Israeli position and the solution Israel proposed, however, made that option all but impossible. The report added that, because of the impasse, Nasser might agree to a settlement imposed by the superpowers. Despite his aversion to the idea, that might be his only escape from his political problems.[8]

It is important to point out that, despite the Egyptian warnings that war was imminent and the entire region was about to flare up again, neither the Americans nor the Israelis took the threat seriously. Even after the shooting in the Suez Canal area became a daily event, the prevailing view was that the conflict would not spread and that all-out war was unlikely to break out. So there were no analyses of what would happen if it did. The main American question was why the Egyptians, despite Israel's clear superiority, were instigating exchanges of fire, trying to drag Israel into conflict, and risking a strong Israeli reaction that was likely to deal a fatal blow both to the Egyptian armed forces and to the Egyptian economy.[9]

The fighting erupts

The hostilities along the Suez Canal intensified in late January and early February—mainly Egyptian snipers firing at Israeli soldiers on the eastern bank of the Canal. The incidents increased significantly at the beginning of March, but Israel reacted with restraint and merely sent warning signals and complained to the UN

observers in the area. From the Egyptian point of view, the hostilities highlighted the need for a political process that would lead to a settlement. Ghorbal explained that Egypt desired implementation of Resolution 242 and a peaceful settlement, but the soldiers at the front were growing impatient with the stalemate.[10]

Even so, the Americans remained unable to assess Egypt's motives correctly or understand the logic behind its military actions. On March 8, despite repeated Israeli warnings, heavy gunfire broke out along the Suez Canal; in the records of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), that day marks the beginning of the War of Attrition. The shooting was triggered in part by the downing of an Egyptian MiG 21 that was conducting a reconnaissance flight east of the Canal. The Egyptians responded by shelling the Israeli positions there. The shooting and artillery fire continued the next day. The Egyptian Chief of Staff, Abd al-Munim Riad, was killed in one of the bombardments, which claimed another 45 Egyptian casualties, most of them high-ranking officers.[11]

In the first stages of the fighting, Egypt was vague about its intentions and did not make any official belligerent declarations. It refused to take responsibility for the artillery fire, although, behind the scenes, senior members of the Egyptian government, including Nasser and Foreign Minister Riad, were saying that tension at the Canal was necessary to attract international attention, and particularly that of the United States, to the Middle East. To bring the urgency of the Middle East situation to the fore, Egypt wanted to show that if political efforts failed, the Arabs would have no alternative but to employ "other means." As far as the Egyptians were concerned, only an increase in Egypt's military might and the growth of the Palestinian resistance in the occupied territories would influence Israel to move towards a settlement.[12]

The government spokesman, Mohammad Hassan al-Zayyat, finally broke the Egyptian leadership's official silence at a news conference on March 12. He stated that Egypt had the right to act in self-defense and to prevent the construction of Israeli fortifications along the east bank of the Suez Canal. He claimed that Israel had placed rockets at the Canal that threatened the Egyptian positions. If Israel did not implement the UN resolution, "there would be no wisdom in implementing the cease-fire decision because the freezing of the cease-fire lines would mean the continuation of the aggression."[13]

The search for the real motive

When the fighting broke out at the Suez Canal, American government officials and intelligence agents could not figure out what had motivated the Egyptians to start shooting. It is important to emphasize that from the outset it was quite clear to American intelligence that Egypt was to blame, even though Cairo refused to take responsibility for the artillery fire. The INR report shows that the Egyptian leadership tried, through Zayyat's remarks at the news conference, to deflect the question of "who fired the first shot" and justify its current military action as "preventive defense." It also emerges from the report, however, that a week after

the outbreak of hostilities, and more specifically after the Egyptian announcement, the Americans could still not fathom the policies and the motives behind Egypt's military activity at the Canal.[14]

However, the report made another assumption that was more serious and complex: it was possible that several factors had influenced Egyptian policy. The main motive and direct explanation for the Egyptian military initiative along the Suez Canal was the deep Egyptian conviction that Israel aimed to tighten its grip on Sinai in order to remain there for the long duration. The frustrated Egyptians regarded the Israeli fortifications along the east bank of the Canal, built in response to the escalation in the fall of 1968, as a provocation. The fortifications humiliated and irked them and confirmed what they believed to be the Israeli intention—to maintain the status quo along the Canal. There is no doubt that this had a significant influence on decision-making in Cairo.[15]

The report states that Nasser was caught between being "painfully aware" that the Egyptian army would be unable, "for at least several years," to conduct a successful military operation that would lead to an Israeli withdrawal, and the pressure by some Egyptian leaders who disagreed with him and demanded a military solution, which they saw as the only way to expel the IDF from Sinai. A different kind of pressure on Nasser came from the *fedayeen*, who enjoyed much support "among vocal segments of the Egyptian public" for their actions against Israel and were furious at the Egyptian president's inability to undertake an effective operation, similar to some of theirs.[16]

In view of all those facts, Nasser seemed to be convinced that it would demand too great an effort and take too long to find an appropriate way to contend with Israel successfully. To his chagrin, he could not wait that long because, as time passed, his regime was threatened. In addition, the INR report claimed, the growing resentment in the Arab world and the stalemate between the Israelis and the Egyptians, when Israel had no interest in restarting the process, seems to have convinced Nasser that he urgently needed to do something to alter the status quo with Israel, whether by military or any other means. The only explanation the INR could offer for the Egyptian military operations along the Canal was that they were "an effort to impart an appearance of imminent danger to a situation that is essentially under control." For that reason, the INR floated three possible interpretations of the March 1969 clashes. First, they were a way for the frustrated Egyptians to let off steam and were likely to continue even if they elicited a strong reaction from Israel. A limited military operation would "take some of the sting out of Egyptian and other Arab criticism of Nasser's regime." A second interpretation was that the Egyptian military action was meant to evaluate Egypt's ability to lead the Arab struggle against Zionist expansion and occupation. A third interpretation focused on Nasser's hope that the clashes along the Canal would deliver a message to the world in general, and the superpowers in particular, about the sense of urgency felt by the Egyptian government. The intelligence report concluded that were Nasser unable to force Israel to retreat, he would continue to be under pressure to take action. It was therefore safe to assume that the "Egyptian initiatives along the

Canal are … likely to continue sporadically." Nasser was willing to risk the obvious Israeli reaction to such tactics, said the report, but it could not be assessed whether he would be able to withstand Israeli retaliation.[17]

Nasser continued the same tactics. In April, there was an escalation, not only between Israel and Egypt, but also with Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Towards the end of that month, the UN Secretary General sent a note to the State Department stating that "a virtual state of active war now exists" along the Suez Canal. The Americans finally began to see things more clearly. On April 22, the State Department Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs concluded that Egypt had instigated most of the violence along the Canal as part of a policy that had four goals: to show that the status quo was untenable, to trigger a crisis that would goad the superpowers into imposing a peace settlement, to boost Egyptian morale, and to reassert Egypt's position as the leader of the Arab world. For the first time since the hostilities began, the Americans correctly understood the Nasser regime's goals. Even now, however, they were unable to see that the violent chain of events along the Canal did not constitute a series of sporadic events but was a de facto war, and consequently did not modify their policies accordingly.[18]

While Nasser was trying to heat up the region and draw world attention to the Middle East crisis, the Americans expressed their fear that there would be a substantial military escalation if the Egyptians continued to shoot. In fact, on March 12, Egypt had announced that it would no longer adhere to the cease-fire. But the Americans, fixated on the lead-up to the June war, were principally concerned that something might happen that would lead to the evacuation of the UN observers posted at the Suez Canal, followed by a total collapse of the cease-fire. Cairo would indeed have achieved its goals then, because it would have drawn the superpowers' attention to the region. The Americans, however, concluded that a military escalation would achieve the opposite of what Nasser intended.[19]

In American eyes, a severe deterioration of the situation could have three negative consequences. First of all, it would delay or even thwart any attempt by the Forum of the Four to set a political process in motion. Second, it would mean a further hardening of the Israeli government's position about withdrawal and a settlement with the Arabs. Finally, it would increase the odds that the political stalemate would continue for an unlimited period. Washington concluded that if Egypt failed to achieve the first two goals mentioned above, it would not achieve the other two either. That would increase Cairo's need to resort to violence, which in turn would lead to what the Americans expected would be another Egyptian military defeat.[20]

Based on this logic, on April 22, the State Department issued a communiqué that expressed American concern about the military escalation in the Middle East. At a press conference the next day, the Egyptian government spokesman referred to the latest events at the Suez Canal, to the Secretary General's special report, and to the American declarations. Zayyat claimed that "the cease-fire decisions cannot remain in force forever," because that would mean Egyptian acceptance of Israeli dictates and turn the cease-fire lines into permanent borders.

In addition, the spokesman blamed Israel for violating the cease-fire, claiming that Israel had initiated a series of aggressive acts against Egypt and had built fortifications along the Canal to use as a springboard for future hostilities. Consequently, he explained, Egypt could not be required to continue to observe the cease-fire while Israel was violating it. "Something should be done to rectify this situation. It is obvious what should be done. The aggressors should withdraw from the lands which he attacked." Zayyat considered the Secretary General's concern to be justified. The Americans had "good cause for anxiety" about the situation, because the occupation was ongoing and Israel was continuing to ignore the United Nations resolution.[21]

Nasser took a more belligerent attitude in his May Day speech at Helwan. He stated that Israel wanted to turn the cease-fire lines into a permanent border by building fortifications there; the Egyptian artillery fire was meant to destroy those fortifications and thwart the Israeli plans. Nasser promised that if Israel did not retreat from the occupied Arab lands, Egypt would continue to fight to its last soldier. He emphasized that "we still have a long way to go … more efforts and sacrifices." However, he added (perhaps trying to demonstrate responsibility and caution, or in recognition of the bitter truth that his country was not prepared for a new confrontation with Israel), Egypt would not do anything hasty and would act only when it was ready.[22]

The Americans tracked the Egyptian statements and sought information to help them understand the Egyptian frame of mind. Bergus's memorandum of April 29 shed light on developments on the western side of the Suez Canal. He reported from Cairo about the domestic reasons that pushed Nasser to employ the military option, but focused on the deteriorating relations between the armed forces and the regime. Bergus ascribed the escalation to the rivalry between the military and civil establishments and not to Nasser's pursuit of political objectives with a planned strategy. He added that he had heard from a number of sources about junior officers who had complained to Nasser about the lack of Egyptian action in the last two years while Israel was fortifying its positions on the eastern bank of the Canal. He also mentioned comments by senior Egyptian government officials about "military fanaticism" that was difficult to control and that a settlement would be reached only after sufficient damage had been inflicted on both warring parties. These declarations reflected a loss of control on the one hand and a venting of frustration on the other. Bergus therefore assumed that Nasser might decide to take the risk and escalate the situation in order to placate his soldiers. But he also wrote that others within the Egyptian leadership believed that the tension between Israel and Egypt was high enough already and that it was in Egypt's interest to cool things down. Bergus's memorandum concluded with a recommendation to emphasize to Egyptian leaders thought to be moderate the American belief that Egypt would lose out if the tension continued or increased.[23]

Assistant Secretary of State Sisco made his own attempt to find out why Nasser had initiated tension along the Canal. He told the Jordanian ambassador in Washington that, according to the UN observers, Egypt had instigated most of

the shooting incidents, and he wondered why the Egyptians were initiating military action for which they were paying dearly—not to mention the political consequences they were risking. The ambassador responded that the Egyptians were acting like a boxer pushed into the corner of the ring. Given the lack of a settlement, Cairo felt an urgent need to do something. As the Arabs grew more frustrated, he said, they conceded they had nothing to lose and therefore must fight, regardless of the cost. The Arabs increasingly felt that only a radical solution could yield success.[24]

Bergus's and Sisco's reports were supported by INR analyses in May and June 1969. As Egypt entered the third year after the Six Day War, Nasser found himself under attack on all sides and faced growing demands, both at home and from the Arab world in general, to find a solution to the impasse. In light of the lack of progress, the Egyptian president was re-evaluating his political options. The INR predicted some of his possible reactions, including limited military action in the coming months.[25]

After the fighting along the Suez Canal had been going on for more than three months, the INR reported that Nasser's lack of military action in the two years since the war, combined with the political stalemate, had created a credibility gap between his words and deeds; Egyptians were frustrated and angry. Ever since the summer of 1967, the self-confidence that the Egyptians had felt since the Free Officers revolution in 1952 had been dwindling fast, to be replaced by despair and hopelessness. Hence the general opinion throughout Egypt was that a solution to the impasse between Israel and the Arabs was urgently needed. That was the first priority, because the stalemate had become a burden to Egypt and a major obstacle to a better future.[26]

It is true that Nasser shared his fears about the domestic situation in Egypt with the Americans on several occasions. At the end of March 1969, for example, he told Robert B. Anderson, the former secretary of the treasury and Nixon's emissary to Egypt, that he was worried about the popular mood and the approaching anniversary of the Six Day War. He also disclosed his concern about the atmosphere among the students who had demonstrated against the regime the year before and who no longer acclaimed the July Revolution. He said the students admired the regimes in North Korea, North Vietnam, and Cuba because they had challenged and stood up to the United States. They considered Egypt, on the other hand, to be a failure in that regard.[27]

The INR identified several figures in the Egyptian leadership and armed forces who believed that military action was the only way to reach a settlement. In the INR's estimation, Egypt felt it necessary to continue down the path of military force due to the domestic pressure, exerted both by frustrated citizens and by the embittered troops; it was clear that the armed forces had the greatest influence of all. The reports could not pinpoint a contender for leadership, but the army was thought to be capable of instigating a coup and deposing Nasser. Nasser was also worried about the renewal of riots, similar to those that had occurred in February and November 1968. The domestic pressure led him to believe that he could not remain in power if the stalemate continued and if he

did not modify the policies he had followed since the end of the June 1967 war. On the other hand, he was aware that his maneuvering room was extremely limited, as were his political and military alternatives.[28]

That insight helped the INR evaluate, better than before, what political and military steps Egypt was likely to take. It appeared that Nasser would continue to seek a political settlement that would help him escape the tangle he was in. But there were two problems. First, according to previous State Department conclusions, time was of the essence for Nasser, and the Forum of Four's progress was too slow for the Egyptians; a solution appeared to be very far away, "and certainly not soon enough to save Nasser from painful decisions to cope with his problems." Second, the INR predicted that even were a way found to reach a settlement, Nasser would continue to refuse to make "political concessions," despite possible Soviet pressure to accept a compromise. In any case, Egypt demanded that its terms be accepted as a precondition for a settlement and stated it was not willing to make any "painful concessions." In addition (as we will see later), Nasser was willing to pay the high price that an Israeli military response would exact, rather than compromise. He hoped that the crisis, and the danger it entailed, would be apparent to all and lead to international pressure on Israel to retreat from the territories it had occupied in June 1967.[29]

From the military angle, it was believed that Nasser would continue limited military actions because of his political and military limitations. There were several advantages to this path: it was easy to follow; it would not lead to all-out war; it could help him deal with domestic and foreign pressure, at least temporarily; and, most of all, it would make the superpowers appreciate the danger created by the lack of an agreement. The INR special reports concluded that Nasser would try to present the threat of a stalemate in the Arab–Israeli talks in a more dramatic and impressive manner than before. His aim was to pressure the United States and the Soviet Union to take some kind of action that would help him deal with the rising domestic and foreign pressure. Alongside the advantages of limited military action, there was also a great disadvantage. The Egyptian military operations caused an escalation along the Suez Canal and triggered a vicious circle of action and reaction. But the Egyptians would not achieve the hoped-for results. Once the exchanges of fire, commando raids, and bombing became a daily affair, the violence would lose the effect the Egyptians wanted it to have and would necessarily lead to further escalation and a much greater show of force by both countries.[30]

Furthermore, the INR claimed, the Egyptian president's declarations about bolstering his armed forces were likely to yield a similar result. That is to say, the gap between his belligerent statements about his army's readiness and his true intentions (a military operation would be a rash step for him to take, the Americans believed) was likely to redound to his detriment. Because the stalemate had to be broken, because the armed forces were itching for action, and because of the Egyptians' general loss of hope that a settlement could be reached, Nasser might find himself under heavy pressure to use his military to attain Egypt's political goals. Hence the Egyptian president was likely to be

lured into a "military adventure" despite the danger of Israeli retaliation. The INR concluded that Nasser would do what he thought right—in other words, whatever would keep him in power. If the stranglehold in which the stalemate placed him did not ease up, he was likely to feel an urgent need to launch a military campaign out of desperation, and not with the conviction that the campaign would succeed. The real danger was that Nasser might damn the consequences and decide that the military option was the least dangerous for him.[31]

The Israeli preparations

In addition to trying to decipher the Egyptian motives for the military operations along the Canal, the Americans also wanted to know what the Israelis thought of them and, more specifically, how Israel was likely to react to the escalation. Note that Israel, too, was mistaken in its appraisal of the hostilities along the Suez Canal and stated repeatedly, and for obvious reasons, that the Arabs were planning to start another war. Israel found the best arguments to justify its assertions. Those assertions, combined with the information provided by the Americans, caused both Americans and Israelis to misjudge the mood in Egypt and on the Suez front. Quite some time would pass before the two countries changed their view of the situation and, subsequently, their policies.

When Rabin and Rogers met in late January 1969, the Israeli ambassador congratulated the new Secretary of State on his appointment and shared some of Israel's thoughts and appraisals with him. Rabin regarded the January escalation and the diplomatic activity on the Middle East as the consequence of Soviet, French, and Arab efforts and totally dismissed the danger of war breaking out in the area in the foreseeable future (the coming year). There were two reasons for his assertion: First, the Six Day War had been a warning signal to the Arabs, who knew that they did not have the power to contend with Israel in the short term; second, the Soviets did not want another war, having seen that the Arabs could not defeat Israel.[32]

According to Rabin, the Soviets knew that the Arabs had limited military and political capacities. Hence, they preferred to foster a crisis situation through which they could achieve a settlement that helped Nasser achieve his political goals without having to compromise. The Soviet version of an agreement was based, of course, on the formula of "no peace and no war." When the American administration stood fast and rejected the Soviet suggestions, the USSR began doing its best to create an explosive atmosphere with overtones of global conflict. The Soviets hoped that this would put pressure on the new American administration to accept the Russian proposal for a settlement between Egypt and Israel. Therefore, according to Rabin, the Soviets were to blame for the deterioration in the situation along the Suez Canal; in other words, it was not an Egyptian initiative but a plan devised by the Soviet Union that had created the tension and threatened to bring the area to the brink of war.[33]

Rabin's opinion represented that of the Israeli Foreign Ministry. On January 29, just before the session of the National Security Council to consider a new

policy for the Middle East and just before the aforementioned meeting between Rabin and Rogers, Moshe Bitan, the Deputy Director General of the Foreign Ministry, sent the ambassador an urgent memorandum advising him of the diplomatic activity required in the coming days. The Americans feared that the Middle Eastern powder keg would set off a nuclear confrontation between the superpowers. Because they saw the status quo as a danger to world peace, they could not accept it and wished to bring about an accord between the two sides. Israel knew that American policy based on that fear was likely to lead to an American–Soviet agreement that would suit the Arabs and endanger Israel's security.[34]

Bitan instructed Rabin to pass on several arguments to the relevant people in the new American administration (in the State Department, Pentagon, and National Security Council) and in Congress, so that the Nixon administration could devise an action plan with a true understanding of the situation on the ground, and not in a panic. The Middle East had been understood to be on the verge of an eruption that would inevitably drag the United States and the Soviet Union into conflict; but the situation was actually just the opposite. Bitan asserted that it was the Soviet Union that had created the impression of impending danger through a disinformation campaign, launched just before Nixon entered the White House, about Israel's aggressive military intentions and preparations for war. In addition, he wrote, the Soviet Union had an interest in creating "an artificial atmosphere of panic" because it wanted to turn the Middle East into an "American–Soviet condominium." Should the Soviets succeed in convincing the Americans that the situation in the Middle East was explosive, it would be a major breakthrough for them: the key to the Arab–Israeli conflict would be held by the superpowers. Therefore, said Bitan, the United States should not play into the hands of the Soviet Union, which sought to take advantage of the administration's inexperience by creating false impressions about peace moves and by diverting the United States from its current stance before the new team had a chance to make an in-depth evaluation of the situation.[35]

Israel continued to believe that war would not break out in the near future even after the continuing Egyptian harassment along the Suez Canal in February and March 1969 turned into full-fledged fighting. Israel estimated that Egypt was not ready for a war and was unable to contend with Israel's military superiority. Israel also believed that the American objection to Egyptian military actions had a strong impact on the Egyptian decision-makers. When the three weeks of sniper fire was replaced by artillery fire, Rabin explained to Sisco that the former had been part of a policy to raise the temperature along the Canal in a controlled fashion, and that even the current situation would not deteriorate into an unmanageable conflagration.[36]

There were intensive discussions in the State Department and in the National Security Council, as well as with various Israeli representatives, about the deterioration along the Suez Canal in April and May 1969. In mid-April, there was a series of meetings on the subject with Maj. Gen. Aharon Yariv, the head of the IDF Intelligence Corps, during his visit to Washington. In Yariv's opinion the

military actions in March had bolstered Egyptian confidence but they would not escalate the situation further. He maintained that the motive behind the military operation was Nasser's desire to lift Egyptian morale and create an "emotional safety valve" for the Egyptian people.[37]

Yariv added that, for the time being, the Egyptians were incapable of carrying out a military operation against the east bank of the Suez Canal. In a year's time or later, though, they would try to make a 3-to-4-kilometer incursion into Sinai in order to occupy the high ground, but would not try to take back the entire Sinai Peninsula. Such a limited operation would provide Egypt with the psychological and military successes it so badly needed and prove to the Arab world that it was possible to defeat Israel. Should Nasser decide to attack, it would not be because the Egyptian armed forces could achieve his aims but because the Egyptian leadership urgently needed a victory.[38]

After Yariv delivered his appraisal of the situation at the Canal to the Americans, the conversation moved to the question of Israel's goals in the next war against Egypt. In retrospect, that conversation was quite peculiar and is a good illustration of Israel's and the IDF's overconfidence after June 1967. The head of IDF Intelligence explained that Israel's main goal in the next war would be Nasser's downfall, because any regime would be better than the current one. He said that Israel was doing what it could to achieve that now, in order to show the Egyptian people and armed forces the scale of their defeat. He also spoke of the disagreement among the senior IDF echelons about whether they should cross the Canal and advance towards the main Egyptian cities, or employ other tactics. One of the ideas was the possibility of deploying forces along the Canal so that they could move towards Port Said, Cairo, and perhaps even Alexandria. Those forces would not enter the cities but would pull up outside them. Thus, if Nasser had not yet lost control, the IDF's mere presence would quickly bring about his overthrow. Yariv was vague about the political and international consequences of the idea, as well as about whether Israel would want to keep its forces in Egypt in order to influence the new government that succeeded Nasser's regime.[39]

Another discussion of Egyptian motives and aims took place between senior Foreign Ministry officials and Sisco in early May 1969. Bitan, Ambassador Rabin, and the Israeli Minister in Washington, Shlomo Argov, shared with Sisco their assessment of the recent military activity along the Suez Canal, which was the same as the Americans'. Bitan, like Bergus before him, held that the latest round had been triggered by the pressure that several senior officers were putting on Nasser. Nasser was not dissuaded by the strong Israeli reaction because "he is not that rational. They never are," said Bitan. Rabin, who agreed with Bitan, added his own analysis and, for the first time, read Nasser's political and military plans correctly.[40]

The Egyptian military actions, Rabin said, were aimed at supporting Nasser's political agenda. Nasser knew that military action alone could not bring about a solution. So it was logical that his purpose was not to start a war, but to play a game of brinksmanship. Rabin added said that he was convinced that Nasser had

decided to continue and even to escalate military operations and thereby to bring about total destruction along the Canal. When Sisco asked Rabin what price Nasser was willing to pay, he replied that the Egyptian president had created a refugee problem when he decided to evacuate about a quarter of a million people from the Canal area and abandoned the industries there. He was no longer evaluating the damage and was prepared to sacrifice an entire city together with its factories, inflicting great injustice and suffering on his people, in order to attain his political goals.[41]

Notes

1 Conversation between the Jordanian ambassador and Sisco; see "State 067991," May 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
2 *Newsweek*, February 10, 1969. For the Egyptian version of the interview and the consequent American analysis, see "Carrying Water on Both Shoulders: Cairo's Version of Nasser's Newsweek Interview," February 6, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.
3 "Memorandum of Conversation, Middle East Situation," February 7, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Four-Power Talks: Arab/Israeli Settlement," February 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 032369," March 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.
4 "Memorandum of Conversation, Four-Power Talks: Arab/Israeli Settlement," February 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I.
5 Ibid.
6 "Telegram to Missions 441," May 16, 1969, ISA, FM 4157/5.
7 "Nasser's Present Attitude Toward a Political Settlement: How to Get Over the Hump," January 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
8 Ibid.
9 "Memorandum of Conversation, Middle East Developments," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Egypt and the Near East Situation," April 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
10 "Jerusalem 125," February 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Jerusalem 084," February 12, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I; "Jerusalem 089," February 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I; "Jerusalem 135," March 5, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.
11 On March 10, Bergus reported to the State Department that certain members of the Israeli government were sorry about Riad's death. He said that the Israeli ambassador in Washington, Rabin, had spoken with him and with Parker (the Egypt Desk in the State Department) in September 1968 and told them that the Israeli government expected anti-Nasserite elements in the Egyptian armed forces to unite under Riad and undermine the Nasser regime. See "Cairo 567," March 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I. Confirmation of Bergus's statement can be found in Rabin's conversation with Sisco on March 19, 1969. Rabin said that "Israel should perhaps regret [the] death [of] Gen. Riad, about whom opposition to Nasser might have coalesced." See "State 037852," March 12, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.
12 "Jidda 767," March 7, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 594," March 11, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 621," March 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.
13 "State 066167," April 29, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation*, 135.
14 "UAR—Shoot Now, Pay Later," March 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 631," March 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.
15 "UAR—Shoot Now, Pay Later," March 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 "Tel Aviv A-269, Chronology for April 1969," NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 062431," April 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
19 The document itself is about the possible evacuation of the UN observers should they suffer casualties, with "all the psychological implications this would have" for the cease-fire. This seems to hint at American fears of a June 1967 scenario. Then too the UN observers were pulled out of Sinai, which led to a rapid deterioration in the situation that culminated in war between Israel and Egypt. See "State 062431," April 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
20 Ibid.
21 "USUN 1256," April 29, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "The UAR and the Cease-Fire Agreement," April 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
22 Nasser, *Al-Majmuah al-Kamila*, vol. 2, 127–253; "Cairo 1120," May 3, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 2553 Pol, 2 UAR.
23 "Cairo 1067," April 29, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
24 "State 067991," May 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
25 "UAR: Nasser, in a Bind, May Strike Out Against Israel," May 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "Arab–Israel: Third Year of Impasse Bleakly," June 12, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
26 Ibid.
27 "State 047841," March 27, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.
28 "UAR: Nasser, in a Bind, May Strike Out Against Israel," May 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I; "Arab–Israel: Third Year of Impasse Bleakly," June 12, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
29 "UAR: Nasser, in a Bind, May Strike Out Against Israel," May 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 "No. 276," January 31, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/1.
33 Ibid.
34 "No. 402," January 29, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/1; "Israel–US Relations," Argov to Bitan, March 26, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/2.
35 "No. 402," January 29, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/1.
36 "No. 79," March 10, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/1; "State 037852," March 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I.
37 "State 082607," May 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
38 "I-22550/69, Memorandum for the Record, Views of Israeli Chief of Intelligence on Problems," May 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
39 Ibid.
40 "State 069861," May 5, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
41 Ibid.

4 A table for four

De Gaulle and the multi-power diplomatic initiatives to resolve the Middle East crisis

> An imposed settlement would be a new Yalta and turn the Middle East into one large Berlin.
>
> Yitzhak Rabin[1]

Algeria as a parable for the Middle East crisis

The present chapter tells the story of an unknown episode in the diplomatic history of the Arab–Israeli conflict. The Arab defeat in June 1967 and its aftermath, followed by the outbreak of the War of Attrition in March 1969, returned the unstable situation in the Middle East to the top of the international agenda and elicited calls for a display of global responsibility that would put an end to the continuing violence. The fear was that the daily incidents would lead to another war between Israel and the Arabs that would suck in the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, and lead to a military confrontation between them. In light of the worsening situation and French President Charles de Gaulle's apprehensions that "an 'Algerian situation' would develop in the Middle East," on January 16, 1969, the French government conveyed to the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain a proposal for joint meetings of their officials to discuss the crisis in the Middle East.[2]

The conference participants would be the four powers' United Nations representatives, along with the UN Secretary General. The goal was to support that organization's efforts and "contribute to the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle-East, specifically by defining the terms of implementation of Council Resolution No. 242."[3] The French emphasized that Gunnar Jarring, the UN special envoy to the region, should continue his efforts. They expressed their hope that the proposed discussions would reduce the diplomatic gaps between the four powers, especially with regard to the interpretation of Resolution 242, and that at the end of the day it would be possible to bring the warring parties to conclude an agreement. Without external involvement and assistance, the French claimed, Israel and the Arabs would not be able to settle their dispute.[4]

The French proposal to create a framework for cooperation among the four powers was first floated even before the June 1967 war broke out, but had gone

nowhere then. The French tried their luck again in late 1968; they won Soviet support, but the Americans rejected the idea. Senior State Department officials believed that the proposal did not coincide with the American position that the parties to the conflict were responsible for reaching an agreement to end it. In addition, the lame-duck Johnson administration felt bound to defer a decision about the French plan to the new president. So de Gaulle raised the issue when Richard Nixon visited Paris in early 1969 and the latter responded positively. In their talks, de Gaulle maintained that only an imposed solution was feasible in the Middle East, and rejected Nixon's idea of a separate American–Soviet effort alongside the talks among the four powers.[5]

To promote the idea of the Forum of Four, the French also approached the UN Secretary General. U Thant applauded the proposal because he viewed it as a way to jump-start the Jarring mission and provide impetus to the Swedish diplomat's efforts. In the plan sketched out by Thant, the four powers would begin with informal meetings and agree to exert maximum pressure to get their clients to define their positions as clearly as possible. If the Israelis and Arabs refused to play along, the powers would be forced to roll up their sleeves and propose the building blocks of an agreement, which Jarring would then convey to the two sides. If the special envoy found that no progress had been made, the four powers would continue their regular meetings in order to provide a Jarring with "greater ammunition" in advance of another round of talks.[6]

One point that stands out here with regard to the French presentation of the idea for the Forum of Four to the Americans and the UN Secretary General is the different perceptions of the talks' foci and goals. For the French, the core of the deliberations would involve only the four powers; what is more, Paris—unlike the Americans and Thant—looked favorably on the possibility of forcing an agreement on the sides. The Americans preferred bilateral talks with the Soviets and ruled out an imposed settlement; Thant viewed the four-power talks as a diplomatic maneuver that which would provide Jarring with much-needed support.

Nixon's positive reaction to de Gaulle's Forum of Four Plan encountered reservations on the part of Secretary of State William P. Rogers. Rogers questioned the sincerity of the French intentions and maintained that their plan was fundamentally unbalanced. It leaned towards the Soviets and even revived diplomatic principles that the Soviet Union had enunciated in the past, instead of supporting the Jarring mission. American acceptance of the French proposal, in full knowledge that it was based on the Soviets' concept of an agreement and had their support, would be viewed as adoption of an unbalanced approach to resolving the conflict. Rogers noted further that de Gaulle's main motive for advancing his plan was prestige. Whereas the original idea had been to conduct the talks at the level of foreign ministers, now, clearly in order to get the ball rolling, de Gaulle had decided to be satisfied with the four powers' representatives at the Security Council.[7]

Rogers also knew that the French proposal placed the United States "in an awkward position," because the Soviet Union,[8] UN Secretary General, and

Jarring viewed it positively, and the British, too, were inclined to accept it. A negative reaction by the United States might paint it as the spoilsport that frustrated the attempt to find a solution to the conflict in the Middle East. But a positive reaction would raise a host of problems. First, the joint sessions would provide the Soviets, French, and British an opportunity to coordinate and align their positions and increase their pressure on the Americans to force Israel to make far-reaching concessions. When Israel refused to bend, the United States would find itself in the awkward position of a country that was unable to influence its client.[9]

Second, the French offer took the work of reaching an agreement away from Israel and the Arabs and transferred it to the Forum of Four. That is, the powers' representatives would discuss the parameters of the agreement while almost totally ignoring the warring parties' views. Because both Thant and Jarring supported the idea of the meetings but were not interested in attending them, there would not be any intermediate level between Israel and the Arabs and the Four. Third, the United States might encounter fierce Israeli opposition to its very participation in the Forum of Four. The Israeli leadership saw the American acceptance of that format as a first step towards an imposed settlement and as an undermining the fundamental notion that the parties themselves need to work towards achieving a peace agreement.[10]

Despite all these drawbacks, Rogers also noted the advantages that could accrue to the United States from such meetings. The talks would make the Great Powers' interests in the Middle East more transparent and help narrow the gaps between the four powers, on the one hand, and Israel and the Arabs, on the other. Similarly, a favorable response to the French proposal would contribute to a positive atmosphere between President Nixon and de Gaulle. What is more, it was important for the new American administration to adopt a positive stance towards solving the Middle East conflict early on. Finally, the airing of the American and Soviet positions, which were not always the same as those of Israel and the Arabs, in the Forum of Four would help blur the impression that the superpowers were merely their client states' mouthpieces.[11]

Weighing all these considerations, Rogers presented Nixon with a balanced recommendation as to the pluses and minuses of accepting the French proposal. The Secretary of State suggested informing Paris that Washington would be willing to accept the proposal and that it shared President de Gaulle's concern about the continuing crisis in the Middle East. Likewise, the United States accepted the notion that the four powers had a special responsibility to help the parties reach a fair and lasting peace agreement. However, Rogers emphasized, the meetings must take place at the Security Council and abide by the principles of Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967. The discussions should focus on ways to assist Jarring and his efforts to achieve an agreement. For this reason, the Secretary of State suggested starting with a round of bilateral meetings among the four countries' representatives. He believed that such discussions would help consolidate the powers' areas of agreement and make the subsequent meetings of the Forum of Four more productive.[12]

National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger shared Rogers' considerations, but he believed that the French proposal should be welcomed, even though four-party talks would have absolutely no chance of success. First, like Rogers, Kissinger was concerned about a tripartite bloc that would isolate the United States and pressure it to be more flexible. Second, he was apprehensive that the Soviet leadership would try to take credit for any progress towards resolving the conflict as a way to show the Arabs that they could force the Americans to accept their terms. Third, if the four powers did reach an agreement, Washington would be forced to exert pressure on Israel, its Middle East ally, on behalf of Egypt—a country that had severed relations with the United States of its own accord and continued to evince a hostile attitude towards it.[13]

As noted, despite the many arguments against de Gaulle's proposal, Kissinger understood that Nixon could not reject it, because that would harm the American efforts to improve ties with France. Hence Kissinger recommended that Nixon accept de Gaulle's offer, on condition that American–Soviet consultations take place at the same time. Because the bilateral talks would carry greater weight, the French and British would hesitate about siding with the Soviets and would instead strive for a balanced position in the quadripartite talks. Moreover, Kissinger hoped that the dialogue with Soviet representatives would make it possible to link the Middle East talks with those on Vietnam, an issue that was of higher priority for the president. He hoped that Soviet concessions on Vietnam would be paid for by an American maneuver in the Middle East.[14]

The Israeli and Egyptian responses to de Gaulle's proposal

Egypt viewed the new diplomatic efforts by the Americans, Soviets, and French in a positive light. Nixon was afraid that the Middle Eastern powder keg would blow up.[15] The calls within the American administration for a more balanced policy towards the Arab–Israeli conflict and the European desire to be more involved in the region aroused Egyptian hopes of change, albeit tempered by skepticism. Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad stated that his country welcomed the French initiative, on condition that the Forum of Four met at the United Nations and focused on the implementation of Resolution 242. He emphasized the need to implement the withdrawal clause of that resolution and stressed that "Egyptian boundaries are not subject to negotiations."[16]

The Egyptian government spokesman, Mohammed Hassan al-Zayyat, who was soon appointed to head his country's UN delegation, also called for the Forum of Four to meet at the United Nations, adding that it was incumbent on the Security Council to use all necessary means, including sanctions, to ensure compliance with its decisions. But he strongly opposed the idea that the Great Powers would dictate the underlying principles of an Egyptian settlement with Israel. In his speech to the national conference of the Arab Socialist Union in late March 1969, Nasser, too, referred to the Forum of Four and said that the destiny of the Middle East lay with the countries of the region; no power could force the Arabs to accept an agreement they could not abide. Unlike Rogers and

Kissinger, he was afraid that it would be the United States that influenced the other powers to accept its positions and even freeze the diplomatic process. The result would be a stalemate that was bad for Egypt, while Israel would be able to continue entrenching itself in Sinai and resisting a settlement.[17]

In contrast to the Egyptian reaction, the American willingness to participate in the Forum of Four stirred immediate opposition in Israel. Prime Minister Meir, Foreign Minister Eban, and Ambassador Rabin in Washington set to work in earnest to dissuade the Americans from joining the French initiative. In a series of meetings between Meir and the United States ambassador to Israel, Walworth Barbour, the Prime Minister did not mince words in her criticism of the American consent to de Gaulle's plan and strenuously objected to any discussion of substantive issues by the Forum of Four. She was furious that the United States, Israel's greatest friend, was prepared to negotiate Israel's borders and security with its enemies and adversaries rather than forcing the Arabs to sit down for direct talks with Israel. Meir was apprehensive that the discussions of material issues by American and Soviet representatives might lead to an agreement that harmed Israel. She was afraid that the powers wanted to use the Middle East as a guinea pig for their rivalry. She also noted that the four powers would encounter serious difficulty, even with UN participation, if they tried to promote a peace agreement before the Arabs changed their attitude vis-à-vis Israel. She did not understand how there was "any hope for a change in the Arabs' position if the recent steps free them of the need to modify their approach." Furthermore, Nasser's positive view of the Forum of Four idea was motivated by a desire to gain through diplomacy what he had failed to gain through war.[18]

Eban opened another diplomatic front. In a letter to Jarring and in talks with Rogers, Assistant Secretary Joseph Sisco, and Ambassador Barbour, Eban stressed that the real goal of the French proposal was to set a new agenda for dealing with the Middle East crisis. But instead of its contributing to stability, the regional tensions and imbalance that had prevailed before and were one of the main causes of the June 1967 war would reappear. Moreover, France was not known for its friendly attitude towards Israel and its interpretation of Resolution 242 was similar to the Soviet Union's; hence de Gaulle's proposal actually rested on Soviet foundations that were detrimental to Israel's interests. The result was that the United States might find itself under pressure by two other members of the Forum of Four (and perhaps all three) to compromise on Israel's positions and security needs in order to achieve a diplomatic agreement.[19]

Eban preferred to second Jarring's efforts and emphasized that the diplomatic initiative should remain in the hands of Israel and the Arabs; only direct negotiations between them could lead to a solution of the conflict. If the four powers did meet in the end, he hoped that the talks "would not be too formal" and would not entrench the Soviets' position in the Middle East or rehabilitate that of France, as the latter was trying to achieve by its diplomatic initiative.[20] Rogers, Sisco, and Barbour sought to reassure Eban and explained that the United States would not accede to proposals that could harm Israel and had no

intention of pursuing an imposed settlement. However, the American administration could not ignore constructive proposals for a diplomatic agreement; it was certainly possible that the talks and consultations would focus on issues material to the conflict. Eban's response was firm and unequivocal. In a meeting with Barbour and Sisco in Jerusalem, he made it clear that the Israeli government was not afraid of the powers' proposals but would not agree to them if they conflicted with its interests. Nor did he believe that the "Americans would dispatch troops to force Israel to accept the Powers' diktats." But the French proposals were incompatible with Israel's security needs as it understood them and "no one could force us to accept them," Eban said.[21]

Rabin, too, met with senior administration officials and explained that the idea of bilateral talks with the Soviets aroused serious concern in Israel. He could see that the United States was sparing no effort to find agreement with the Soviet Union, which posed a danger to Israel, as he wrote in his memoirs.[22] In reply, his American interlocutors stressed that the goal of this process was to support Jarring's mission so he could make progress towards an agreement between the parties and resolve the conflict in accordance with Resolution 242. Because Jarring was proving unable to bridge the gaps between Israel and the Arabs, collaboration among the four powers might actually help him. Moreover, the feeling in the United States—as well as in France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union—was that there had been a serious deterioration in the region and that more vigorous efforts were needed to move towards an agreement between Israel and the Arabs.[23] Rabin tried to rebut these arguments. He told Rogers and Sisco that the change in American and European attitudes towards solving the Middle East crisis was a result of the biased efforts by the Soviets, French, and Arabs. Time after time, they raised the exaggerated fear that another war would break out, or, alternatively, that a regional war would lead to a confrontation between the nuclear powers. Israel saw no chance of renewed fighting in 1969, Rabin said, both because the Arabs were not ready for it and because the Soviets were not interested in an Arab–Israeli confrontation.[24]

So, Rabin continued, the Soviet Union was interested in a diplomatic agreement that would essentially fulfill Nasser's needs. Because sooner or later the Soviets would not be able to deter Egypt from a military operation, they would be forced to supply the diplomatic goods it demanded. This is why Moscow was interested in an agreement that was neither peace nor war. The Soviet Union was not interested in peace, because that would deprive it of the "traditional levers" it employed to penetrate the region: political support of the Arab states and deliveries of weapons for their armed forces. Because the Soviets had been unable to modify the stance of the American administration, they were trying to "create an explosive atmosphere and the peril of global war" as a way to persuade the United States to accept the Soviet version of a settlement.[25]

There was no danger of a Middle East war, Rabin said. Even if hostilities should break out between Israel and the Arabs, the Six Day War had shown that the superpowers could reach an understanding not to intervene in a local conflict. On the other hand, the odds of preventing the powers' involvement in a

regional war increased in proportion to their commitment to their client states. This is why it was necessary to apply the brakes to the idea of an imposed agreement, inasmuch as it would require the powers to guarantee the security of the parties to the deal, increase the polarization between the blocs, and entrench the Soviet position in the Middle East. According to Rabin,

> an imposed settlement would be a new Yalta and turn the Middle East into one large Berlin, but with one major difference—unlike Berlin, the powers would not have any control over the behavior of the local actors in the Middle East.

Rabin emphasized the great importance that Israel attached to direct negotiations with the Arabs. The conflict in the Middle East was between Israel and its Arab neighbors, the ambassador noted, so it was incumbent on them to reach a peace agreement without external involvement. The Forum of Four would achieve just the opposite, interfering with Jarring's mission and undermining Israel's position, while giving Egypt in particular, and the Arabs in general, the sense that an imposed agreement was within reach.[26]

Despite these explanations, Rabin perceived the dynamic aspect of the emerging American policy. He wrote that the United States was trying to re-examine the diplomatic stands of the other three powers, without abandoning its current policy line, on the one hand, but also without committing to adhering to it in the future. Unlike the past, there was now an American willingness, should the Great Powers reach agreement among themselves, to be more involved in Jarring's mission. For now, the main idea was to leave all diplomatic options open.[27]

In parallel to the talks held by Eban and Rabin, in Jerusalem and Washington, the Israeli ambassador at the UN, Yosef Tekoah, held several meetings with his American counterpart, Charles Yost, against the background of the positive statements emanating from Washington about the French proposal. Tekoah sought to reassure Yost that there was no imminent danger of full-scale hostilities in the Middle East that would make it imperative for the United States to respond favorably to de Gaulle's initiative, in what would essentially be a Franco-Soviet victory. Tekoah also voiced the Israeli fears of a four-power declaration that would deviate from the framework of Resolution 242. He said that the Israeli government was apprehensive that the four-power talks might take up substantive issues related to the Middle East and the Arab–Israeli conflict, and not just look for ways to help Jarring. Yost acknowledged that there were grounds for this, given that the French and Soviet delegates at the UN had told him that the American idea of going no further for the present than a quadripartite declaration of support for Jarring, with no real content, was not enough.[28]

Tekoah argued too that there might be immediate negative repercussions in the region were a new framework for consultations set up on the basis of the French statement. First, Jarring's mission might be seriously undercut, because the center of gravity would be shifted to the Forum of Four. As a consequence, it

would be quite impossible for Jarring to make progress in the diplomatic process if the representatives of the four powers continued to discuss substantive matters. Second, these consultations reduced the odds that the parties would reach an agreement on their own and would merely increase the Arabs' rigidity, in light of their desire for a settlement worked out by the Great Powers so they could avoid having to negotiate directly with Israel. Third, Israel detected that in the wake of the discussions of the French proposal the Arabs had begun to base their policy and actions on the four-power talks. For example, the Israeli government believed that the heightened Egyptian aggression along the Suez Canal and encouragement of terrorism were intended to heat up the situation and impel the four powers to take action.[29]

In his reply, Yost tried to ease the Israeli fears of an imposed settlement and said that the American administration was not considering such a possibility. He did say that Washington would find it difficult to prevent continued contacts with the other powers, at least on the bilateral level, but added that one must not expect any rapid and significant developments; the United States would certainly not be the one to spark feverish activity in the four-power framework. Yost added that much time would pass before the four powers could reach a consensus among themselves. In the first stage, the Americans would have to continue the bilateral discussions, determine the other three powers' positions on a settlement, and find out whether Moscow and Paris were prepared to support a binding contractual settlement between the parties. Beyond that, the urgency of the powers' efforts would be influenced, of course, by Jarring's progress in his talks with Israel and the Arabs; and, as was well known, his mission was going nowhere.[30]

The four begin talking

Around mid-February 1969, representatives of the four powers began meeting in order to determine whether there was a solid basis for fruitful collaboration between them, which would also contribute to the success of the Jarring mission. The State Department was interested in a public statement calling on Israel and the Arabs to cooperate with the special envoy and refrain from violence. However, despite the efforts of the members of the Forum of Four, the talks made no real progress. The powers did not even manage to achieve their initial aim: drafting a document in support of Jarring's Middle East mission.[31]

On February 12, Yost met with his French counterpart at the UN, Armand Bérard. Though Bérard agreed with Yost that Jarring should renew his mission soon, he also suggested that the four powers draft guidelines for the special envoy. According to Bérard, Jarring's efforts were not enough. Hence the Forum of Four should discuss the more important issues related to a resolution of the Middle East crisis and involve itself in the negotiations and Jarring's mediation attempts. The Americans, by contrast, attached greater importance to reaching a consensus with the other powers on a binding treaty and guarantees for its implementation. Yost also emphasized the need to provide assurances to Israel that the Arabs would indeed be willing to accept such an agreement. He said that

Israel's stance would be noticeably affected by the Arabs' willingness to conclude a lasting peace agreement and not by hollow Security Council declarations or resolutions. Bérard responded that progress on the diplomatic track required responding to the demands of both parties. Because the United States sided with Israel, France deemed it necessary to create a balance and satisfy the Arabs' desires, especially regarding the occupied territories.[32]

Two days later, on February 14, Luc de la Barre de Nanteuil, the director of the Near East Section of the French Foreign Ministry, and the French ambassador to Washington, Charles Lucet, met with Assistant Secretary of State Sisco to explain at some length his country's views on the Middle East situation. First, Nanteuil explained, France was not hostile towards Israel. Although the leadership in Paris thought it very important that the Arabs have "some friends in the West," this was not incompatible with its quest for a solution that would ensure Israel's security among the countries of the region. France favored an Israeli withdrawal to secure borders, not necessarily the lines of June 4, 1967, with border rectifications as appropriate, and free passage for Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal.[33]

Second, the senior French diplomat made it plain that his country was not "playing the Soviet game" and was not interested in being the Kremlin's mouthpiece or puppet. The Soviet Union's real ambitions in the Middle East and the urgency of an Israeli–Egyptian agreement were not lost on France. The Soviets were interested in splitting off the Israeli–Egyptian component from the rest of the Arab–Israeli conflict in order to promote a diplomatic process between Jerusalem and Cairo, which would lead to the reopening of the Suez Canal. Reopening the Canal would provide Egypt with a shot in the arm, strengthen Nasser's regime, and protect the Soviet Union's key political interests in Egypt and Asia.

Nanteuil emphasized that the French proposal to convene the Forum of Four stemmed from de Gaulle's realization that a true settlement in the Middle East would be impossible unless the United States and Soviet Union first reached an agreement between themselves, with the assistance of Britain and France. This insight was based on two assumptions. First, the settlement had to include all the countries in the region and solve all the problems related to the Middle East crisis. Second, a compromise had to be found between Israel's insistence on direct negotiations with the Arabs on the details of the agreement and the need for substantial, conspicuous, and effective outside involvement in formulating the agreement. Some elements of the solution must be crystallized by outside actors—a process that began with Security Council Resolution 242—while others would emerge from discussions and accords between the parties to the conflict.[34]

Nanteuil also said that France viewed the need to resolve the Middle East crisis with even greater urgency than did the United States. The sense in Paris was that Washington was not sufficiently aware of the volatility of the situation; this was why the four powers needed to work together to attain several critical goals. The first was coming up with a formula that would provide the Jarring

mission with greater substance than the vague authority given him, which had led to a stalemate. The second goal was to put an end to the worsening of the military situation in the region and neutralize the escalation between Israel and the Arabs. For example, the Arabs would officially declare their recognition of Israel and Israel would agree to withdraw to secure and recognized borders. The third goal was producing an agreement among the four powers, based on an idea of a package deal in which the two parties would finalize their accord before Israel began its withdrawal. And fourth, the creation of a firm set of guarantees for the settlement's implementation, in which the four powers, Israel, and the Arabs would all be involved.[35]

Sisco responded that Washington was well aware of the serious escalation in the Middle East and that there was general agreement in the American administration that a diplomatic settlement would be in everyone's interests. But he rejected the idea of imposing a settlement on the combatants. Despite the American agreement to participate in the Forum of Four, it continued to support Jarring's mission in the belief that the UN should remain the focus of the efforts to resolve the problem. Hence, in order to break the diplomatic stalemate, the United States wanted the Forum of Four to work as follows: formulating a joint statement urging Jarring to renew his talks with the parties; calling on the Israelis and Arabs to refrain from military operations so as to create a positive climate for the mediation efforts; finding a common basis for action by the members of the Forum, so as to provide Jarring their support and encouragement; and continuing the bilateral talks among the members of the Forum, because they could provide a venue for a deeper study of the conflict.[36]

The news of Sisco's meetings with Nanteuil took Israel by total surprise. The secrecy of the French diplomat's trip to Washington and his talks with senior State Department officials merely heightened Israel's fears that France and the United States were weaving an agreement behind its back, which they would then impose on the parties to the conflict. This apprehension was strengthened by Jerusalem's expectation that the British would move closer to the French position.[37]

Even though the forecast of a tripartite bloc against the United States proved true, Sisco conveyed a calming message to the Israelis when he met with Hyman Bookbinder of the American Jewish Committee. Sisco told Bookbinder that the United States had no illusions about the French and Soviet policy and was not going to be led blindly to the negotiating table. Even though there were differences between Washington's position and that advanced by Paris and Moscow, the American administration was steadfast in its basic concept, as had been made clear to the Israeli government; namely, that the United States supported Jarring's mission and a peace agreement worked out by the parties themselves. But the administration's support for Israel did not mean that the two countries had identical interests. It was true that the administration had never called for an Israeli pullback without a peace agreement, but there could still be disagreements between Washington and Jerusalem about the lines to which Israel would withdraw.[38]

At the initial meetings of the Forum, the British seconded the American approach to the talks. Soon, however, they changed their tune and accepted the French–Russian position that the four powers should get deeply involved in the Middle Eastern issue and influence it.[39] A month after the start of the contacts to discuss the French proposal and following several rounds of talks among representatives of the Forum of Four, the preliminary diplomatic process reached a moment of decision. In late February 1969, the Soviet Union and France announced, contrary to the American position, that they wanted to draw up a definite plan, with comprehensive and material proposals for resolving the conflict. Due to the lack of agreement about Jarring's mission and the American administration's opposition to addressing substantive issues at the outset of the deliberations, the initial contacts reached a dead-end. Nevertheless, Washington pressed Jarring to resume his mission, without any commitment on his part to the Forum of Four's activity.

Israel welcomed the proposal to renew contacts with the special envoy and underscored that it was the French initiative that had derailed the UN peace train, caused the Arabs to harden their position, and sparked increased violence. Senior State Department officials saw the matter differently. They thought that even if the Forum of Four had been side-lined, the Israeli leadership should show signs of movement if it wanted to keep the powers out of the conflict; in other words, it should submit proposals and introduce new ideas to advance the diplomatic process. These voices grew louder after the escalation on the Suez Canal front and outbreak of the War of Attrition, in March 1969, and the resumption of the four-power talks.[40]

After overcoming a number of hurdles and differences of opinion, the first session of the Forum of Four convened in early April 1969. As Israel foresaw, the participants split into two camps: in one corner were the Soviet Union, which continued in the role of the patron of the Arabs in general and Egypt in particular, and France, which had initiated the whole idea of these talks; in the other corner were the Americans, who wanted to pursue a fair and balanced Middle East policy. The British changed tack once again and asserted their neutrality in the matter, but with an inclination towards the American side. In the end, although several ideas for a comprehensive solution of the conflict were placed on the table, and the powers' representatives met frequently, the internal divisions among them and the fact that the Forum of Four talks became only a sideshow to the bilateral talks between the United States and the Soviet Union ensured that any serious attempt to resolve the Middle East crisis through them was doomed to failure.

Notes

1 "No. 276," January 31, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1.
2 "Memorandum for the President, French Proposal for Four Power Meeting at the United Nations on the Middle East," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "Secret State 012589," January 27, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
3 "Memorandum for the President, French Proposal for Four Power Meeting at the United Nations on the Middle East," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "Secret State 012589," January 27, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.

4 "Secret State 012589," January 27, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
5 "No 206," January 22, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1; Dishon, *MER* 5: 9; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 350–3; Meital, *Egypt's Struggle for Peace*, 65.
6 "State 018261," February 5, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I; "USUN 189," January 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
7 "Memorandum for the President, French Proposal for Four Power Meeting at the United Nations on the Middle East," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "Paris 00850," January 20, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
8 In practice, the Kremlin decided to respond to de Gaulle's proposal favorably in order to curry favor with France. Nevertheless, the Soviets continued to attach greater importance to their meetings with the Americans in Moscow and Washington than to those of the Forum of Four at the UN.
9 "Memorandum for the President, French Proposal for Four Power Meeting at the United Nations on the Middle East," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 "No. 17," April 3, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/2; "No, 643," October 31, 1969, ISA, FM, 4157/5; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 350–5.
14 "No. 17," April 3, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/2; "No. 643," October 31, 1969, ISA, FM, 4157/5; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 350–5; Quandt, *Decade of Decisions*, 76–9.
15 "Nixon's First Press Conference," January 27, 1969, ISA, FM 4157/8.
16 "State 015715," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 414," February 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 97–8, 112; Yaqub, "The Politics of Stalemate," 35.
17 Dishon, *MER* 5: 10; "State 015715," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 414," February 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I; "Nixon's First Press Conference," January 27, 1969, ISA, FM 4157/8.
18 "No. 292," March 19, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1; "A Conversation between the Prime-Minister and the U.S. Ambassador," April 30, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/2.
19 "USUN 289," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 011505," January 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 188," February 26, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1; Rabin, *Memoirs*, 146–7.
20 "USUN 289," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 011505," January 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I.
21 "Conversation between the American Delegation and the Foreign Minister, February 28," March 2, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1.
22 Rabin, *Service Diary*, 247.
23 "Memorandum of Conversation, Middle East Developments," January 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1817 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 017502," February 4, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 86," February 11, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1; "No. 276," January 31, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1; Rabin, *Memoirs*, 146–7.
24 "No. 86," February 11, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1; "No. 276," January 31, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 "No. 455," January 31, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1; "No. 207," February 14, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 "State 028194," February 21, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Four-Power Middle East Talks," February 24, 24 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol, 27 A/I.

32 "State 023406," February 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol 27 A/I.
33 "State 24913," February 15, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol 27 A/I.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 "No. 44," March 5, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1; "Memorandum of Conversation, Four-Power Middle East Talks," February 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol 27 A/I.
38 "Memorandum of Conversation, The US Commitment to Israel," March 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol 27 A/I.
39 "No. 44," March 5, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1; "Memorandum of Conversation, Four-Power Middle East Talks," February 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1818 Pol 27 A/I.
40 "No. 317," February 20, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1; "Our Argument against the American Position," March 2, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/1.

5 The Sisco–Dobrynin talks

The failure of the effort to draft a joint peace plan

> In the darkness of the State Department, there is only one ray of light today, our friend Joe Sisco. Or, as the sober journalist Peter Lisagor puts it, "today there is only the White House, with one Sputnik named Joe Sisco orbiting around it." Sisco's status is indeed extraordinary in the present circumstances. Rogers … is a negligible quantity.
>
> Shlomo Argov, the Israel Minister in Washington[1]

The "Forum of Two": the first round of talks between Sisco and Dobrynin

At the same time as it was crystallizing the American position on the Middle East, and in parallel with the attempts to find a compromise between Israel and Egypt, the State Department opened a separate diplomatic channel with the Soviets. From March to June (with a short break between April 22 and May 6), Assistant Secretary of State Sisco and Anatoly P. Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador to the United States, conducted a series of meetings with a two-fold purpose: to determine whether there was a common basis for the two powers to find a solution to the conflict and to ascertain their countries' view of the essential principles for an agreement between Israel and the Arabs. Another unspoken American goal was to investigate whether the Soviet Union was indeed interested in promoting a settlement in the Middle East or preferred to reinforce its status in that region. On this point, it is important to note that Moscow "attache[d] utmost importance" to the talks with the United States, was keenly interested in their success, and assigned them priority. However, although these talks were meant to support Jarring's mission, Dobrynin did not rule out the possibility that the Americans and Soviets might use them to formulate a document of principles for presentation to Israel and the Arabs, because "agreed positions by the US and the USSR could constitute pressure on the parties."[2]

The first round of meetings was held in Washington between March 18 and April 22, 1969. As a preliminary step and in light of the military escalation between Israel and Egypt in early March, Sisco suggested to Dobrynin that they convey a joint American–Soviet position to the two countries, demanding that Israel and Egypt adhere to the cease-fire and pressing them to cooperate

with Jarring. But aside from this point and the need for a lasting peace, they continued to disagree about the other details. Sisco repeatedly emphasized that an Egyptian and Arab undertaking to work towards a contractual and lasting peace agreement was a prerequisite for serious negotiations and was the key for extracting the region from the current impasse. Sisco added that such a commitment would have a real impact on the implementation of all elements of Resolution 242, especially an Israeli withdrawal: "Israeli willingness to be specific on borders is linked to Arab willingness [to] make [a] binding commitment to peace."

The Soviets countered that Israel must take the first step and clarify its stance on withdrawal and borders. At this stage of the talks, however, as in the past, the Soviets evinced no willingness to press Egypt to commit itself to peace. Dobrynin told his American interlocutor that the Arabs viewed the American position as biased against them, because it called for one side (the Arabs) to make a commitment but exempted the other side (Israel) from the obligations imposed on it by Resolution 242.[3]

On April 22, at the last session of the first round of talks between the two men, Sisco repeated the Americans' basic position on an agreement between Israel and Egypt. He brought into closer focus some of the principles in the American working paper—refugees, guarantees for an agreement, and the status of Gaza and Sharm el-Sheikh—as conveyed to Israel, Egypt, and the other three powers on March 24:[4]

1 The Arab–Israeli accord would be a package settlement and take the form of a treaty binding on both parties.
2 The talks between the two parties would be indirect and conducted via Ambassador Jarring, but would transition to face-to-face meetings for the last stages of the negotiations.
3 In keeping with the Security Council resolution, Israel must withdraw from the territories it occupied; the two countries would determine the final borders by agreement. Limited modifications of the former borders might be made in pursuit of mutual security; these would not reflect the "weight of conquest." In this context, and as part of the overall guarantees for an agreement, "certain critical areas" would be demilitarized. The parties would define the extent of the demilitarization in light of the principle of "secure and recognized borders."
4 The United States had never accepted either Israel's or the Arabs' position on sovereignty in Jerusalem. Jordan would be granted a significant role in Jerusalem and the rights of all religions in the city would be ensured.
5 A just solution should be found to the refugee issue, taking Israel's security needs into account. In other words, an agreed but limited number of refugees would be permitted to return to Israel. The refugees would be given the choice among "repatriation to Israel, resettlement with compensation in countries where refugees now reside, [or] resettlement with compensation in other countries in or outside the Middle-East."

6 The sides must formulate security arrangements for free passage through the Suez Canal and Straits of Tiran. They must also define special security arrangements in Sharm el-Sheikh and Gaza. The status of Gaza City should respect the Jordanian interests in the city and the Egyptian desire that Gaza remain in Arab hands. But Israel's security interests should also be taken into account.[5]

The Forum of Two worried the Israelis and made them nervous, even though the talks made no real progress. The Israel Minister in Washington, Argov, whose anxiety and gloom reached the point of near-hysteria, told Rabin that the American–Soviet talks "would bring about the destruction of Israel." In order to stem the erosion in the American position, Argov proposed sending a cable to Jerusalem enunciating his firm position on the continuation of talks and proposing "harsh criticism" of the American position, even at the price of a serious crisis in US–Israel relations. Though Rabin shared Argov's concern, he did not accept his conclusion. He suggested "fighting tenaciously against the American inclination," but not to the point of a crisis in relations with the United States. Foreign Minister Eban adopted Rabin's position and flatly rejected Argov's proposal.[6]

Washington was encouraged by the results of the talks between Sisco and Dobrynin, mainly because of the lessening of the distance between the two superpowers' positions; Secretary of State Rogers considered this a positive sign for the future. On April 23 and May 1, Rogers submitted two memoranda to President Nixon, summarizing the proposal that the United States was drafting for presentation to the Soviets, British, and French. It rested on the three pillars of American policy in the Middle East that had been formulated by the Nixon administration: peace, a formal accord between the sides, and withdrawal.[7] Although Nasser remained an "enigma" for the Americans, and Washington was still unsure about Moscow's true intentions in the Forum of Two, Rogers recommended that in the next round of talks the Americans present the Soviets with fresh ideas, focused on the principles important to both the Arabs and the Israelis. The Secretary of State wrote that this was a balanced proposal that would not only keep the Soviet and American positions close together, but would also help the United States avoid international isolation and "being only Israel's advocate."[8] Rogers noted that it was in the Forum of Two that the opportunity to make headway in the Middle East process had emerged, because the Soviets were interested in getting to the heart of the matter and wanted to study the powers' options as a preliminary to devising a settlement.[9]

Accordingly, the State Department prepared a draft document with 14 points. This paper was meant to serve as the basis for further efforts with the Israelis and Arabs, under Jarring's aegis. Its essence was an Arab commitment for peace, based on a formal treaty, and direct negotiations facilitated by Jarring. In return, Israel would undertake to drop its territorial demands vis-à-vis Egypt and to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza as part of a final peace accord. Because of the great sensitivity attached to the topics addressed by the draft—Jerusalem, Gaza, and the Palestinian refugees—Rogers recommended informing

Israel about the talks with the Soviets but not asking it to approve the document.[10]

Rogers viewed this document as a tool for gauging the two countries' true intentions; its advantage, he explained, was that it meshed with both parties' natural needs. In return for a withdrawal from Sinai, Israel would gain a "binding" peace with Egypt; an end to hostile operations against it, plus Egyptian recognition of Israel's right to exist and to live in peace; free passage for Israeli ships through the Gulf of Aqaba and Suez Canal; regional security arrangements; and a comprehensive and binding settlement achieved by the sides through direct negotiations. According to Rogers, these Egyptian commitments to Israel were the price the former had to pay; otherwise, Israel would hold on to the occupied territories indefinitely, as long as the military balance was in its favor.[11]

Rogers was realistic; he estimated that Israel and Egypt would firmly oppose the principles of the proposal, despite its advantages, and would endeavor to thwart the initiative. Despite this, he explained in his memorandum that the absence of a political initiative would lead to a military and political stalemate in the Middle East, or worse, and, ultimately, to direct American and Soviet intervention in the region. However, even though his proposal had scant chance of success, it was better than sitting idle and doing nothing. During the first week of May, following a session of the National Security Council, Nixon authorized Rogers to continue along the path he had proposed, with a few minor changes.[12]

The second round: the 13-point plan

The second round of talks between Sisco and Dobrynin ran from May 6 through June 9, 1969. Sisco expounded parts of the American plan, but only orally. It bears note that several elements of the proposal were not discussed with the Israelis before being shared with the Soviets. The State Department saw the scheme as balanced and feasible; some sections went into great detail, while others, especially on borders and the refugees, merely stated broad guidelines. Here the State Department remained faithful to its traditional path and wanted to leave the actual conduct of negotiations over the final shape of the agreement to Israel and Egypt.[13] The main points of the American plan were as follows:

- "The parties would agree that a formal state of peace exists between them and that the state of war […] would be terminated as of the date on which the final accord enters into effect" (§3 of the proposal).
- "The parties would agree on the location of the secure and recognized boundary between Israel and the UAR. […] Israel would agree: (a) That the former international boundary between Egypt and the mandated territory of Palestine is *not necessarily excluded* [emphasis added] as the secure and recognized boundary between Israel and the UAR; (b) That […] concurrently with [the final accord's] entry into effect, […] withdrawal of Israeli armed forces to the agreed secure and recognized boundary would take place in accordance with a timetable worked out by the parties" (§4).

- "The status of Gaza would be worked out between Israel, Jordan and the UAR under Ambassador Jarring's auspices" (§5).
- "Both parties would agree to terminate all claims or states of belligerency" (§6).
- "The Government of the UAR would agree to respect and to acknowledge the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the State of Israel and its right to live in peace within the secure and recognized boundary […] free from threats or acts of force; the Government of Israel would also undertake the identical obligation with respect to the UAR" (§8).
- "The areas from which Israeli armed forces are withdrawn […] would be demilitarized" (§10).
- "Both parties would declare and acknowledge that the Gulf of Aqaba and the Suez Canal are international waterways, and they would undertake to ensure that they and all other states will have freedom of navigation for their shipping without discrimination or interference" (§11).
- "Both parties would accept the principle that the refugees from the war of 1948, who are under the mandate of UNRWA, shall have the choice between repatriation to Israel and resettlement with compensation. Both parties would agree that, in order to implement such a settlement, it would be necessary to define and to agree on procedures and conditions under which repatriation and resettlement would take place as well as on the total number to be repatriated. Both parties would further agree that those procedures, conditions, and numbers would be worked out under Ambassador Jarring's auspices by Israel and the UAR and such other parties, including in particular the government of Jordan" (§12).[14]

As the talks between Sisco and Dobrynin proceeded, Jerusalem and Cairo were kept posted on their content and the details of the American proposal. On May 26, senior State Department officials met with Ashraf Ghorbal, the head of the Egyptian Interests Section in Washington. Even though he was not authorized to transmit Cairo's official position, his response was generally negative and essentially coincided with the Egyptian Foreign Ministry's "suspicious and negative" attitude towards the American initiative.[15] The Israeli response, received even before the Egyptian one, was also negative. Israel objected less to the nature of the initiative and its content than to the very fact of the bilateral talks. In a note to President Nixon, in mid-May, Prime Minister Meir expressed her opposition to the Sisco–Dobrynin talks and made it clear that Israel could not accept the American proposal, which was very close to the Soviet position. Meir again emphasized Israel's insistence that the parties to the conflict discuss these matters between themselves and its rejection of preconditions to the start of negotiations.[16]

Meir ignored the fact that the plan did respond to Israel's security needs, including an end to the state of war with Egypt, Egyptian recognition of Israel's right to exist in peace, the possibility of border rectifications, demilitarization of buffer zones and creation of suitable security arrangements, and free passage through the Suez Canal and Straits of Tiran. On the other hand, the State Department plan ignored Israel's demand for full normalization of Israel–Egypt relations

after the signing of an agreement and for a continued presence in Sharm el-Sheikh. Moreover—and in fact this was the main obstacle—the State Department recognized the principle of a right of return for the 1948 refugees.

On June 9, when Sisco and Dobrynin met for their last session, the Soviet ambassador announced that the Egyptian leadership's initial reaction to the plan was negative. However, Egypt had still not given its full and final answer, which would be forthcoming after an anticipated new round of Soviet–Egyptian consultations in Cairo.[17] In fact, the conversation between Sisco, Parker (of the Egypt Desk), and Ghorbal the next day did not raise great hopes for the success of the American initiative. Ghorbal expressed his sorrow that the American administration was not serving the cause of peace and asked for additional clarifications about the Israeli withdrawal. He said that the diplomatic initiative had come too late and essentially contained nothing new. In fact, the Nixon administration had retreated from positions taken by the Johnson administration. In Cairo's view, the proposal was one-sided and a pro-Israel.[18]

Ghorbal added that the United States was not creating the proper atmosphere that would encourage a positive reaction in Cairo. He would have liked to be able to see the initiative as a constructive and positive step so that he could pass it along to the Egyptian leadership. Sisco defended Rogers' plan and said that it represented a significant advance in the principles for a settlement, both by calling for an Israeli withdrawal and by not ruling out a return to the old borders—in other words, the international boundary between the two countries. He added that if Egypt had a practical alternative it was welcome to raise it. Parker noted that the United States had presented a "serious offer" and it would be a mistake on Egypt's part not to accept it "in the right spirit."[19]

On June 10, 1969, after the end of the second round of talks between Sisco and Dobrynin, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko landed in Cairo for consultations with the Egyptian leadership. For Washington, the Soviet response would be taken as a signal of Moscow's willingness to work towards a lasting agreement between Israel and the Arabs and help influence Egypt on this point. But the State Department was in for a disappointment. Gromyko left Cairo four days later, after a series of talks that were described as "difficult and detailed." Arab diplomatic sources reported that on several occasions during the talks Nasser lost his temper when the Soviet Foreign Minister tried to push him towards an agreement with Israel.[20]

The Egyptian media played up the consensus between Egypt and the Soviet Union, even though the Soviet Union had demanded that Nasser call off the War of Attrition. During Gromyko's visit, several senior Egyptian government officials told *al-Ahram* that an Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian rights were not negotiable and emphasized that the Soviet Union would second the Arab demands in both the Forum of Two and the Forum of Four. In his weekly column, Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, the editor in chief of *al-Ahram*, referred to the United States as the "devil's advocate for Israel" and asserted that American interests were incompatible with a peace agreement and the lines set forth in Security Council Resolution 242.[21]

In another article, written as part of the Egyptian media campaign against the peace initiative, Heikal repeated Egypt's position as Nasser had presented it to Gromyko, while stressing the diplomatic coordination between Cairo and Moscow: First, Egypt would not negotiate with Israel as long as the occupation continued; second, Israel must withdraw to the lines of June 4, 1967; third, the Palestinians' rights were not a matter for negotiation. On June 19, *al-Gomhuria* was similarly dismissive of the American initiative, which it asserted deviated substantially from Resolution 242 and did not call for the full Israeli withdrawal specified in that resolution.[22]

At the end of their meetings, Nasser and Gromyko issued a joint communiqué calling for a permanent peace and implementation of Resolution 242. Their statement emphasized the need for Israel to withdraw from all of the occupied territories and linked any agreement between Israel and the Arabs with a solution to the Palestinian problem. The Soviets expressed their support for Egypt's stand that the results of the aggression must be rolled back. One possible explanation for the Egyptian–Soviet rejection of the American initiative is that until then (June 1969), the renewed fighting across the Canal had borne the fruit the Egyptians hoped for, with Israel suffering heavy losses of personnel and matériel. Egypt believed that it could stand up to the IDF, force it to wage a static war, and thereby achieve superiority.[23]

On June 14, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry conveyed the Egyptian and Soviet response to the American plan to the American representative in Cairo. Egypt expressed its dissatisfaction with the plan, and especially its disappointment with and astonishment at the principles on which it rested. The proposal strongly favored Israel and its phrasing was based on the Israeli positions. But this was not to be taken as a total Egyptian rejection of a diplomatic solution to the conflict. The Egyptian leadership wrote of its desire for a peace settlement and expressed its hopes and expectation for further cooperation with the United States. At the State Department, this last point raised hopes that, despite the difficulties, it would ultimately be possible to produce a settlement between Israel and Egypt.[24]

Another attempt by Rogers and Sisco

On June 17, three days after Egypt had transmitted its response, the Soviet Union presented its counterproposal to the Americans. In two memoranda prepared for President Nixon, dated June 20 and 30, Secretary of State Rogers identified several positive aspects in the Soviet proposal and sought to downplay the negatives.[25] There was agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union on two points: First, recognition of each side's sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence, and right to live in peace within recognized and secure borders; second, the sides, guided by Jarring, must themselves work out the details of the final and binding agreement, in accordance with the general framework that the Great Powers would recommend.

But there was still disagreement about the other issues. For example, the Soviet proposal did not explicitly mention an end to the state of war between

Israel and Egypt, the establishment of peace, or direct negotiations between the countries. It demanded a full Israeli withdrawal to the lines of June 4, 1967, on all fronts, including the Jordanian and Syrian. Unlike the American proposal, the Soviet proposal did not relate to monitoring the settlement or to the number of refugees who would be permitted to return to Israel. As for freedom of maritime passage, the Soviets proposed applying the Constantinople Convention of 1888 to the Suez Canal and recommended that a UN force be stationed at Sharm el-Sheikh for five years.[26] The Soviet Union also called for a limited demilitarization on both sides of the Israeli–Egyptian border and a return to the status quo ante in Gaza, meaning a UN force and Egyptian administration.[27]

Despite these gaps, Rogers recommended continuing the diplomatic process and drafting a counterproposal to the Soviet document. He believed that the Soviet Union was interested in continuing the talks with the United States. At the same time, Rogers foresaw that Israel would take a pessimistic view of the Soviet response and warned that Israel would do everything in its power "to get us to kill the two-power and the four-power talks." The United States had to gear up accordingly and oppose this, for several reasons: it could exert greater control of the diplomatic process through the Forum of Two; there was a decreased risk of a direct American–Soviet military collision if the talks continued; the meetings made resumption of hostilities between Israel and the Arabs less likely; and the joint dialogue ensured that the limited tension on the Suez Canal would not escalate into a more serious armed conflict.[28]

Rogers believed that pressure should also be exerted on the Soviets, and indirectly on the Egyptians, in order to fill in the most important gaps. He believed that Moscow's response to the American proposals was better than expected as long as the United States was not willing to play its "trump card"—a more explicit commitment to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Sinai to the international border. Consequently, the Secretary of State drafted a written response that demonstrated the Americans' willingness to compromise even further in order to advance the diplomatic process and ensure the continuation of the bilateral talks. But Rogers made it clear to Nixon that the new proposal retained a number of points that were vital to Israel and its priorities, so the United States retained the ability to influence Israel to agree to the move in the future.[29] A close reading of the American document reveals the following:

- From the moment the final agreement was deposited with the United Nations, "the state of war and belligerency" between Israel and Egypt would end. They would "restrain all persons and entities on their territories from committing, instigating, or encouraging acts" contrary to the state of peace (§3).
- "The parties would agree on the location of the secure and recognized boundary between them. […] Israel would agree that […] the former international boundary between Egypt and the mandated territory of Palestine *would be the secure and recognized boundary* between Israel and the UAR" [emphasis added] (§4, specified as a "fallback point").

- The territories evacuated by Israeli forces would be demilitarized (§5).
- "The disposition of Gaza would be worked out between Israel, Jordan, and the UAR, under Ambassador's Jarring's auspices" (§6).
- "Both parties would declare that the Strait of Tiran is an international waterway and would affirm the principle of freedom of navigation through the Strait of Tiran and in the Gulf of Aqaba for the ships of all nations. The parties would further agree upon security arrangements for the Sharm el-Sheikh area which assure to their mutual satisfaction that such freedom of navigation is irrevocably guaranteed" (§7).
- "The UAR would affirm that the Suez Canal is an international waterway and that the ships of all nations, including Israel, have the right of freedom of navigation without discrimination or interference" (§8).
- The 1948 refugees under the mandate of UNRWA "would have the choice between repatriation to Israel and resettlement with compensation." The procedures, terms, and annual quota of returnees would be defined by Israel, Egypt, and Jordan, under Jarring's auspices. Implementation of the other sections of the final agreement would not be conditional on full implementation of the refugee clause (§9).
- "The UAR and Israel would mutually agree to respect and recognize each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability and political independence, and each other's right to live in peace within secure and recognized borders, free of threats or acts of force" (§11).
- "The final accord would be recorded in a document which is to be signed by the parties and immediately deposited with the United Nations." The parties' commitment to the agreement would be mutual and irrevocable (§13).
- "The four powers would submit and support an appropriate Security Council resolution and pledge that they would concert their future efforts to help the parties abide by all of the provisions of the final accord" (§14).[30]

The importance of the bilateral talks with the Soviets was not lost on the senior echelons in the State Department. They believed that the Soviet Union would demonstrate a willingness to cooperate with the United States in order to create a calm and amenable atmosphere between the two superpowers, even at the expense of undermining Soviet–Egyptian relations. But others, especially Kissinger, who opposed the entire process from the outset, expressed their reservations about the State Department position. They wondered why Rogers and Sisco wanted to present the Americans' fallback position without receiving anything of significance in return from the Soviets and in the absence of any show of willingness by Gromyko and Dobrynin to compromise on substantive and controversial issues. They also had grave doubts about the Soviet Union's willingness to ensure the success of the diplomatic process, which would include sacrificing its interests in Egypt and throughout the Middle East. Kissinger and his allies held that after years of investment, during which the Soviet Union had strengthened its position and increased its influence in the Middle East and

developed a patron–client relationship with Egypt, it was not in the Soviet interest to persuade the Egyptians to display flexibility and take a more conciliatory stance and sign a peace treaty with Israel. The constant tension and sense of crisis in the region served Soviet interests and objectives and increased the Arabs' dependence on their patron. A special report issued by the INR on June 4 found no evidence that Moscow regarded direct talks between Israel and the Arabs as necessary or that the Soviets were trying to persuade the Egyptians to show be more flexible and compromise.[31]

In his memoirs, Kissinger wrote that he had believed at the time that the Soviet Union's main goal was "to extract the total Arab problem from us by subtly evasive and substantially unyielding formulas. It showed no willingness to match our leverage on Israel with similar pressure on the Arabs." The Soviet Union was trying to show the Arabs (and its other client states) just how important and essential Soviet patronage was. Kissinger knew that were the United States to assent to the Arab–Soviet demands, it would put itself on a collision course with Israel, its principal Middle East ally.[32]

Consequently, Kissinger's recommendation to President Nixon was to continue the bilateral talks, but on condition that the United States offer no further concessions. Even at the price of a diplomatic stalemate, Kissinger had no intention of strengthening the Soviet hand in the Middle East through American compromises that would, in the end, encourage the Arabs to look to their Russian patron in their hour of need. He wanted just the opposite: to reinforce the Arabs' awareness that the Soviet Union could not extricate them from the deadlock and that the United States held the key to a solution. Instead of displaying flexibility and offering compromises, Kissinger proposed an alternative strategy: in return for the price the United States would have to pay in its relations with Israel, the Soviet Union would pay a similar price in its relations with the Arab states. This would put the negotiations between the superpowers on a more equal footing and also damage Soviet–Egyptian relations somewhat.[33]

As noted above, Kissinger also wanted to link the Middle East issue to Vietnam; he declared that "as long as the Soviets were so unhelpful on Vietnam, joint action elsewhere would be 'difficult.'" But by revealing its fallback position the United States would be making a commitment from which it would be difficult to retreat were no progress made in the diplomatic process. Washington would henceforth be committed to this position in every plan or negotiation about the Israeli–Egyptian conflict.[34]

Sisco landed in Moscow on July 14, 1969. In addition to presenting the American plan, he wanted to explore the sincerity of the Soviets' intentions regarding permanent peace in the Middle East and their interest in limiting the arms race in the region.[35]

Foreign Minister Gromyko again clarified his country's strong interest in promoting the political process, bridging the gaps between the sides through the Forum of Two, and leaving as few loose ends as possible for the actual negotiations towards an agreement. On the other hand, Gromyko noted critically that the "US government hides too much behind Israel's stubbornness," whereas the

Soviet Union was looking for a "common language" with the Americans. But were there progress in the diplomatic process and were a solution found to the Middle East crisis, "it would have a positive effect on other issues [Vietnam and nuclear weapons] and on US–USSR relations."[36]

After the Moscow talks ended, on July 18, Sisco set down several insights on paper. He believed the Soviet Union had two main reasons for continuing the bilateral talks: First, to show the Arabs that it was doing its utmost to obtain an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories; second, the talks were a stabilizing factor that prevented escalation in the Middle East and perhaps even a confrontation between the two superpowers.[37] The Soviet Union, he added, really was interested in a diplomatic accord between Israel and the Arabs (including an Israeli withdrawal), but had shown absolutely no sign of a willingness to modify the status quo in the region. Quite the opposite: Sisco recognized that the diplomatic stalemate and military tension were convenient for the Soviets and served their goals.

Sisco reported that he had seen no sign of a Soviet willingness to pressure Nasser to modify his positions on two key issues: defining the meaning of "peace" and making a commitment to negotiate with Israel. He added that the Soviet leadership viewed the Egyptian president as its "primary tool" in the Middle East and consequently was obliged to support him both diplomatically and militarily; all the more so because of the prevalent assumption that a military coup was a real possibility should Nasser agree to negotiations with Israel. Hence Sisco's assessment was that the Soviet Union had adopted a strategy "to chip away" at the American position. It was doing so in part through the Forum of Four, the Security Council, and the General Assembly, trying to press the United States to force Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. Another goal was to isolate the United States as far as possible by claiming that the American position in the Middle East was unbalanced and fundamentally pro-Israel.[38]

Sisco's report triggered great disappointment and skepticism. After five months of consultations, proposals, and counterproposals, it seemed that the Soviets were firmly entrenched in their position and molding it to suit Egypt's demands. Moreover, the Soviet Union had not demonstrated any willingness to pressure the leadership in Cairo, whereas the United States did not hesitate to exert pressure on Israel. Now, with the ball in the Soviet court, the Americans could only freeze their initiative and concessions and wait for a response from Moscow. Sisco reached this conclusion and advised Nixon and Rogers to "play it cool," insist on an explicit Soviet response to the American plan, and consult with the British and French as well.[39]

At this point, the White House and State Department no longer expected to see any significant change in the Soviet position.[40] This belief was corroborated by the failure of a series of four meetings, which ran from July 31 to August 25, 1969, between Jacob Beam, the American ambassador in Moscow, and senior Soviet officials. The Soviets were clearly dragging their feet and taking a cautious and vague approach. They neither accepted nor rejected the American document and generally evaded presenting clear ideas.[41]

The total rejection of the American proposal, in both Cairo and Jerusalem, was expected. Israel complained about "the erosion" in the American position, especially because of the change from the admissibility of border modifications to a return to the international border; Rabin called the initiative a "great success for [the] Russians." In this, he was expressing the Israeli concern that the plan would encourage the Soviets to push the Americans to make further concessions in the future.[42] On the other hand, Cairo said that Rogers' proposal represented a "further deterioration" in Washington's approach to solving the conflict in the region. Sadat went so far as to assail the peace proposal in a speech to the congress of the Arab Socialist Union and said that it was worse than any previous American proposal.[43]

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry also expressed its great disappointment with the proposal. Foreign Minister Riad said that it was biased towards Israel and included several points, such as clamping down on the activities of terrorist organizations, that were not mentioned in Resolution 242. In his view, there was no reason to demand new undertakings, which would in any case emerge from an agreement on an end to the state of war between Israel and Egypt. What is more, if the American proposal raised new points, it would leave Nasser exposed to strong opposition both at home and abroad and thus contribute nothing to the diplomatic process. Egypt had to reiterate the four points of its fundamental stand on an agreement. First, Israel must withdraw from all the territories it had occupied in June 1967. Egypt insisted that this withdrawal precede an agreement, because it was quite out of the question for it to conduct negotiations while Israeli forces were camped on occupied Arab land. Second, Egypt rejected the American proposal regarding security arrangements at Sharm el-Sheikh and would agree to demilitarized zones only if the demilitarization also applied to the Israeli side of the border, which must be the lines that existed before the June 1967 war. Third, Egypt insisted that Israel withdraw from Gaza and rejected the idea of deferring a discussion of the city's status for the time being. Fourth, Egypt was not willing to leave the power to determine which refugees would be eligible to return home as part of the Right of Return in Israeli hands.[44]

Despite Egypt's opposition to the American peace plan and its attacks on the core of the American position, the State Department responded calmly and interpreted the Egyptian response as a misunderstanding of the proposal. It tried to further clarify the nature of its details and noted that the plan represented significant progress in the search for a compromise that would be acceptable to all parties.[45] But despite the attempts to leave the window of opportunity open for further diplomacy, progress on the diplomatic front came to a standstill. In the months that followed, the violence and fighting between Egypt and Israel ramped up. Israel employed its Air Force as "flying artillery" not only to hit targets deep inside Egypt but also to convey a political message to the Egyptian leadership and show the Arabs that a diplomatic path to a peace agreement or cease-fire was preferable to the high price that war would exact from them. On the other side, Egypt was helpless and even more dependent on the Soviet Union for military aid. This dependence spawned something new in the history of the

Arab–Israeli conflict—direct Soviet involvement in the War of Attrition. This augmented the American fears of a confrontation between the blocs triggered by the Arab–Israeli conflict in the Middle East.

Escalation: Israel sends Cairo a message

From the second half of May 1969, the diplomatic contacts between the two superpowers, as well as between the United States and Israel and Egypt, gathered speed, in an attempt to lower the level of violence along the Suez Canal. But the lack of success on the diplomatic track, on the one hand, and the military escalation, on the other, led Israel to convey its concerns to Gen. Odd Bull, the commander of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). Israel hinted that if the situation did not improve it would be forced to take "new measures" against Egypt. This was in fact a euphemism for an escalation that would target key installations inside Egypt, whose damage would be a severe blow. It was also hinted to General Bull that the Israel Air Force (IAF) might be called into action. He was asked to transmit the Israeli "state of mind" to Cairo, in an attempt to calm the waters, because Israel's patience with the situation along the Canal was at an end.[46]

In light of these developments, the INR estimated that, despite the threat, the Egyptian regime expected new Israeli attacks and was preparing for them all along the Canal. According to a special report sent to the Secretary of State on May 16, Cairo was motivated by domestic commitments as well as pan-Arab considerations and was willing to risk an Israeli reaction. The Egyptian calculation was that, despite the great risk, there was also a hope of extracting some profit, if Israel achieved only a partial success or even suffered heavy losses in the confrontation. In either case, Nasser would be able to unite all the forces around him and reduce the pressure exerted by radical elements, who were rattling their sabers and pushing for an even greater escalation. What is more, from the Egyptian perspective any military operation by Israel could be painted as grave aggression and proof that the situation along the Canal was much more dangerous than Israel was willing to recognize. Israeli attacks would make the situation seem urgent, especially to the Forum of Four—something the Egyptians certainly wanted to see.

Nevertheless, the report continued that there would be severe ramifications for Egypt if the Israelis decided to act with greater and more destructive force, because any damage to its military and civilian installations or population centers would quickly lead to calls for revenge. In that case, the chances of a political settlement would plummet. The despair in Cairo would increase until Nasser felt he had been pushed into a corner and had to take some action, even if effectively suicidal. The Israeli reaction might be so devastating that it would lead to Nasser's downfall.[47]

This assessment was very close to the situation on the ground. In addition to the exchanges of artillery fire and raids behind Egyptian lines, the IDF also conducted several major operations to drive home its military superiority over

Egypt and the futility of further combat. In practice, as early as late April 1969, when the IDF conducted operations *Batzoret* and *Bustan 22*, attacking the dam and bridge at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt, Israel set out to make the Egyptians aware of this message and motivate them to agree to a cease-fire.

But when the shooting across the Canal continued, Israel decided to raise the level of its reaction. On June 17, only three days after the end of Gromyko's visit to Egypt, a quartet of IAF Mirages flew low over Cairo, including the President's Palace and international airport; the sonic boom caused little damage but great embarrassment. After a brief investigation, Nasser dismissed the commander of the Egyptian Air Force, Mustafa Hanawi, and the head of the air-defense network, Hassan Kamal.[48]

A few days later, on June 21 and 26, the IAF shot down three Egyptian planes over the southern end of the Canal and northern reaches of the Gulf of Suez. By the middle of July, ten Egyptian planes had been shot down in dogfights. The Egyptians, who had not downed a single Israeli aircraft, continued to scramble their planes, but the pilots kept a safe distance from the Israelis or turned tail before making contact. There is no doubt that these aerial battles increased Israel's awareness of the latent capacity of deploying the IAF against Egyptian targets, as it did later in the war as well.[49]

In another operation, on the night of June 21, an IDF unit attacked the radar station at Ras al-Adabieh at the northern end of the Gulf of Suez. Thirty Egyptian soldiers were killed, while the IDF suffered only two wounded. Senior Foreign Ministry personnel told diplomats at the American embassy in Tel Aviv that the raid was meant to remind the Egyptian leadership of the heavy price it would pay for breaking the cease-fire. On June 30, the IDF conducted another operation, *Bustan* 37, which severed the high-tension line between Aswan and Cairo north of Nag Hammadi. The Egyptians hastily denied the reports of the operation. But Israeli planes had photographed the damage and the pictures were distributed internationally, providing clear evidence of the raid and its success.[50]

The most complex and impressive operation during the War of Attrition was *Bulmus* 6. On July 19, 1969, a joint force of the Naval Commando and General Staff Commando Unit set out for Green Island in the northern Gulf of Suez. This was a strongly fortified position protecting a radar station, defended by anti-aircraft batteries and artillery and machine-gun emplacements. After a fierce battle that cost the lives of 80 Egyptian soldiers and six Israelis, the attackers blew up and demolished the target.[51]

From mid-July, both the Israelis and Egyptians geared up for the next stage of their conflict. The escalation had begun. Israel opened a new phase in the confrontation with Operation Boxer, a series of six strikes conducted between July 20 and July 28. The IAF launched frequent strikes; until the end of the War of Attrition, it bore the brunt of the fighting against Egypt. The escalation was intended to regain the military initiative, give the IDF freedom of action along the Canal, and demonstrate Israel's strategic superiority, especially in light of Egypt's greater capacity to absorb damage to both personnel and military and civilian installations.[52]

The Israeli operation on July 20 took Egypt by surprise. The Cairo leadership looked for ways to deal with the old-new threat. The Soviet Union dispatched a warning to Israel through the Finnish Embassy in Tel Aviv (which handled Soviet interests in Israel after the severance of relations in June 1967), alleging that Soviet ships had been damaged by shrapnel during the assault on Port Said. The Soviets defined the Israeli attack "as a provocative act which may lead to very serious consequences." The note continued:

> Such aggressive deeds indicate that the government of Israel is continuously proceeding on a very dangerous path probably not understanding where such adventurous deeds may lead. All the responsibility for the consequences of such deeds if no action is taken to avoid them in [the] future will fall on the government of Israel.[53]

In fact, Moscow was not content with merely warning Israel. On August 1, the Americans were made acquainted with the Kremlin's concern about the surging violence in the Middle East—which it blamed, naturally, on Israel and its aggression against Egypt. The Soviet Union asked the United States "to bring to the attention of Israeli leaders the seriousness of the situation." The Soviets added that the escalation in the Middle East did not contribute to a solution of the crisis, especially at a time when the two powers were exchanging views about a settlement between Israel and the Arabs.[54]

The American response to the Soviet note was swift in coming. It stated that according to the reports submitted by the UN observers along the Canal, it was Egypt that was responsible for the violation of the cease-fire; furthermore, Nasser himself had announced publicly that he no longer saw the cease-fire as in force. Consequently, the Americans wrote, "it is not realistic […] to expect Israel not to respond so long as the UAR pursues a doctrine of deliberately violating the ceasefire." Nor could there be any guarantee that Israel would refrain in the future from employing "even stronger measures" that it might deem essential for its security. Hence both the United States and the Soviet Union must do everything in their power to restore quiet to the Middle East and renew their joint efforts directed at the warring parties.[55]

So along with the escalation on the battlefield, the declarations and diplomatic dialogue became more bellicose as well. The latter were intended more as internal propaganda than as a statement of intentions. In his speech on Revolution Day, July 23, 1969, Nasser announced that Egypt had decided to go to war to recover the territory lost in June 1967. He added that the military confrontation along the Suez Canal was entering a new phase, in which the Egyptian forces would begin "the liberation operation" whose ultimate purpose was to recover not only Sinai, but also "Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, Gaza—all the Arab territories."

Nasser promised to maintain the tension along the Canal and hinted that the struggle would be long and difficult. This Six Day War was not over: "There is still the two-years, three-years and the four-years war." Stressing that his

country was willing to expand the conflict and wear down the enemy, he invited the other Arab states to join Egypt to erode Israel's manpower and resources. In light of the change in the global situation, Nasser called for the convening of an Arab summit conference; the decisions taken at Khartoum in September 1967 no longer suited the current reality.

With regard to peace, Nasser emphasized that his country had accepted Security Council Resolution 242 and the model of a diplomatic solution, but also hinted that the efforts aimed at a peace settlement were dwindling. He criticized President Nixon, who had not altered his predecessor's Middle East policy in the slightest, and denounced the unwavering support, both military and political, that Israel received from the American administration and Britain. The United States and Israel, he said, were conspiring to perpetuate the Israeli occupation of Arab land. Hence there was not much point to renewing diplomatic relations with the United States as long as the latter continued to support Israel.[56]

Nasser and senior Egyptian officials also leveled serious charges against the American administration to the British ambassador, Richard A. Beaumont, and Minister without Portfolio George M. Thomson during the latter's visit to Cairo between August 30 and September 4. Nasser told the guest that Egypt was still interested in a settlement with Israel, based on the Security Council resolution. However, Egypt despaired of the American attitude and Washington's absolute and unreservedly pro-Israel stand. Nasser was certain that the United States supported Israeli expansionism and saw the country as a beachhead of American interests in the Middle East. If there were no change in the American position and the administration did not pressure Israel, the prospects for a settlement were dim. In Nasser's opinion, Israel would not withdraw until it finally realized that its continued presence in the occupied territories was a liability rather than an asset. Because the United States evinced no willingness to stand against Israel, it was up to the Arabs to effect this change.[57]

Nasser's speeches, and articles in the Egyptian press, especially those by his confidant Heikal, reflected the steaming cauldron in which Egypt and its political leaders found themselves. The voices emanating from Cairo asserted that although there were no expectations of a change on the Israeli side before the Knesset elections scheduled for October 1969, if no movement was evident soon after that the Arab–Israeli confrontation would enter a new stage. In fact, September 1969 saw the first signs of a new phase in the conflict. Early that month, the leaders of the confrontation-line states—Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq—convened in Cairo to coordinate their military response to the crisis in the Middle East. The first shipment of American Phantom jets arrived in Israel on September 6; there is no doubt that this was an extremely important contribution to Israel's future military operations against Egypt.[58]

The very next day Israel launched a series of combined operations by air, naval, and ground forces against sensitive Egyptian military installations. In response, the Egyptian Air Force flew out to attack IDF positions on the east bank of the Canal and in the Sinai Peninsula, but went down to an ignominious defeat that led to the dismissal of senior officers.[59]

Israel hoped that the attacks by the Air Force and deep-penetration raids would shake the Egyptians' confidence in their ability to absorb the Israeli punishment, as well as undermine the Nasser regime's image at home and abroad. Israel achieved its objective. On the night of September 7/8, 1969, Israeli naval commandos landed near Ras al-Sadat on the western shore of the Gulf of Suez and sank two Egyptian torpedo boats. On September 9, a force of tanks and armored personnel carriers was landed on the western shore of the Gulf. With cover from IAF planes, the column advanced 50 kilometers up the coast, destroying Egyptian outposts, tanks and half-tracks, motor vehicles, military bases, radar stations, and air-defense installations. The Egyptians suffered heavy losses (150 killed), while on the Israeli side only one pilot was lost. As in the raid on Green Island in July, in these two operations, Israel dealt Egypt a heavy blow, in both military and psychological terms. What is more, it demonstrated the superiority of all branches of the IDF (land, sea, and air).[60]

A month later, on October 9, during his visit to Washington, Lieut. Col. Gideon Gera, the deputy chief of military intelligence, told Parker of the State Department that the Israeli operation had been designed to frustrate a large-scale Egyptian crossing of the Suez Canal. He added that the raid and the incidents that followed it were meant to make it clear to the hawks of the Egyptian High Command, who were pressing Nasser to launch a broad campaign against Israel, that the Egyptian armed forces did not have the capacity or means to carry out a major military operation and that they were in a position of inferiority.[61]

Nasser learned about the September 9 raid while en route to a division exercise, accompanied by the senior brass. First reports and photos from the scene soon began appearing in the media and news agencies. The damage was multiplied by the fact that Egypt had again been caught napping. According to Heikal, Nasser told him that evening that the Egyptians were still behaving as they had during the June 1967 war. A few days later, or perhaps the same day as the operation, the Egyptian president took to his bed because of a heart attack or a severe eruption of his diabetes. On September 11, two days after the IDF armored raid, as the wave of Israeli successes continued with airstrikes on targets along the Gulf of Suez, Egyptian Air Force planes set out for a retaliatory action against IDF positions on the east side of the canal and in Sinai. Once again, the Egyptians suffered a heavy defeat, losing 11 planes, while only one Israeli plane went down. A week after the IDF raid the Egyptian High Command was reshuffled; the most important change was the removal of the Army Chief of Staff, Ahmad Ismail Ali.[62]

From this time on the Israeli air attacks became more frequent and proactive. After the Egyptian air defenses west of the Gulf of Suez had been destroyed, Israeli planes could operate with greater freedom and even expand the scope of their missions, by day and by night, to other sectors at the south and north ends of the Canal. Little by little, the Egyptian deployment was eroded; the country found it difficult to rebuild the radar stations and air-defense positions that had been put out of commission. After two anti-aircraft batteries in the central sector of the Canal were destroyed in mid-October, the entire Egyptian front was open

skies for Israeli aircraft. Egypt had no way to respond to the Israeli power and the threat posed by the IAF.[63]

The events of September aroused serious concern in Washington. American representatives spoke with their Israeli and Egyptian counterparts about the escalation and its ramifications, especially after the IDF raid on September 8/9, and did what they could to reduce the temperature. In a conversation with Undersecretary of State Elliot Richardson, Rabin said that Israel had three alternatives: it could launch a full-scale war against Egypt, bow to the Soviet dictate and accept its peace proposal of June 17, 1969, or turn the war back against those who started it. Israel saw the last option as the most logical, and this is what it was now doing successfully.[64] The American worries about escalation increased later in September, when the American Interests Section in Cairo began receiving reports from reliable sources that "really tough" Soviet pilots had arrived in Egypt. According to reports, the pilots had received instructions to take defensive action only, and only when Israeli attempted major strikes in the Nile Valley and Delta. In the senior echelons of the administration, the fear grew that the Soviet Union might intervene in the war and that this could lead to a superpower confrontation.[65]

Back to Rhodes

The stalemate in the political arena, which had lasted since Sisco's trip to Moscow in July 1969, was broken in September. The 24th UN General Assembly in New York was a key factor in this, as the State Department sought to take advantage of the gathering in order to push the political process forward. Following the escalation on the Suez Canal front in the summer of 1969, particularly after the IAF entered the fray in a massive way, the National Security Council convened on September 11 for a session that focused on the disagreement between the State Department and Kissinger, which pertained mainly to the benefits to American interests of the status quo in the Middle East. The members of the NSC were also asked to discuss policy alternatives in the Middle East and particularly the question of whether the United States should be more forthcoming and adopt a fallback position in the discussions with the Soviets (as Rogers had proposed to Nixon in late June), in order to increase the odds of a settlement. The State Department, which was not happy with the continued stalemate, argued that the status of the United States in the Arab world would continue to deteriorate and that it would find itself isolated internationally (along with Israel) if it did not show a readiness to compromise.[66]

So the State Department wanted to reveal the American fallback position in order to advance the discussions of a political settlement between Egypt and Israel and present the United States in a more positive light to the British, French, and Arabs. That position, as presented in Rogers' 14-point plan of June 1969, stated that the secure and recognized boundary between Egypt and Israel would be the international border between Egypt and Mandatory Palestine; this replaced the previous formulation that this line "is not excluded as" the possible final border between the two countries.[67]

On the opposite side stood Kissinger, who argued that maintenance of the status quo would be difficult for the Soviets and would eventually expose their weakness and failure to help their protégé end the conflict. He added that Israel would vehemently object to any concession by the United States, that the Egyptians would continue to balk at the peace terms offered them, and that in the next round of talks the American representatives would have to begin from the same point or even compromise further. At the end of the meeting, President Nixon decided that the discussions with the Soviets regarding a settlement would continue, at least until after his meeting with Prime Minister Meir on September 25; however, the American fallback position should not be revealed unless the Soviets displayed a willingness to compromise.[68]

From September 18 to 30 there was an intensive series of meetings between Sisco and Dobrynin and between Rogers and Gromyko. The goal was to formulate common principles for an agreement, but without submitting a new American document, and to then transmit them for the approval by the Forum of Four. After more than a few disagreements, some progress was made on September 23, although fundamental issues, such as the refugees, direct negotiations with Israel, the borders, and the status of Gaza and Sharm el-Sheikh, remained open.

Hoping to get the talks off dead-center, Sisco proposed that Rogers, in his meeting with Gromyko on September 23, insist on five basic principles that, were agreement reached on them, would make it possible for the United States to move closer to the Soviet position and disclose its new position on the border issue: (1) a mutual commitment to peace; (2) adoption of the "Rhodes formula" as the basis for the negotiations between the two sides; (3) accepting the principle that the refugees would be allowed to choose between repatriation and compensation, balanced by the stipulation of an annual quota that could return to Israel (Rogers had already suggested on September 22 that 10,000 refugees be allowed to return annually over a period of ten years, and that the final total of returnees be set by an American–Soviet agreement); (4) free passage for all nations through the Straits of Tiran and Suez Canal (with no reference to the Constantinople Convention of 1888); and (5) leaving the parties to discuss demilitarized zones, security arrangements at Sharm el-Sheikh, and the status of Gaza.[69]

Sisco's memorandum to Rogers once again makes us aware of just how flexible the State Department was willing to be in order to reduce the gap between the two superpowers in pursuit of an Israeli–Egyptian settlement. During the July round of talks, the State Department evinced a willingness to adopt some parts of the Soviet formula; but now Rogers and Sisco agreed to compromise about the refugees, in utter opposition to the Israeli position, and also about the format of negotiations. On the latter, they were somewhat vague and suggested the "Rhodes model," so as not to provoke the Israelis and Arabs into demurrers or total rejection. Rogers and Sisco hope that by the end of October a joint document could be drafted and submitted to the Forum of Four, and that it would then be possible to bring Israel and Egypt to the negotiating table in November.[70]

As noted, the General Assembly session in New York was a convenient venue for meetings between representatives of the two superpowers, as well as

between the Americans, Israelis, and Egyptians. After the idea of using the "Rhodes formula" as the basis for negotiations was born, the Americans sought the Israeli and Egyptian responses to it. On September 24, Egyptian Foreign Minister Riad assured Rogers of his country's desire for peace. He emphasized, however, that the territorial issue was of cardinal importance and that there would be no direct negotiations with Israel. Riad added that "if territorial and other issues [were] settled first," Egypt would be prepared to return to the negotiating format employed between the Arabs and Israel on Rhodes in 1949. As he perceived the matter, the armistice talks then had been indirect and that should be the case now as well, because negotiations were out of the question when one country was occupying the other's land. Just as, during the Second World War, the United States had refused to sit with the Japanese and the French with the Germans, said Riad, so Egypt refused to meet directly with Israel as long as it occupied its territory.[71]

Riad unexpectedly refused to commit Egypt on the refugee issue because, he said, that was a Palestinian rather than an Egyptian problem. He did say that Egypt would accept a temporary demilitarization of territory and a temporary UN presence there, on condition that the demilitarization apply on the Israeli side of the border as well. Nor did he object to the temporary stationing of a UN force at Sharm el-Sheikh. Riad added that Egypt would not prevent the free passage of Israeli ships through the Suez Canal as long as there was not a state of war between the two countries.[72] After his meeting with Rogers, Riad told news correspondents waiting outside that Egypt would consider the Rhodes formula if territorial and other issues were settled first.[73]

The following day, September 25, Prime Minister Meir met with Nixon and Rogers. In addition to discussing the supply of arms and warplanes to Israel, the parties also considered the question of the shape of a settlement with the Arabs. Meir repeated the main elements of Israel's position and argued that the Arabs must choose between peace and war; there was no other alternative. If the Arabs desired peace, Meir said, the test would come in their willingness to negotiate with Israel without any preconditions. Rogers, encouraged by his talks with Riad, countered that Israel must accept Egypt's readiness to conduct Rhodes-style negotiations under Jarring's auspices—even though he knew that the issue had not been conclusively resolved—because that would eventually lead to direct negotiations with the Arabs, as demanded by Israel.[74]

Five days later Rogers met with the Prime Minister again. Meir said that Israel accepted the Rhodes formula as a framework for negotiations, but qualified her decision by emphasizing that this meant sticking to the model of Rhodes in 1949—in other words, with all the parties sitting together from the first meeting. Meir also opposed the American idea that in order for the discussions to move ahead there had to be agreement with the Soviets on a framework for the negotiations. She insisted that the process begin without preconditions, which an American–Soviet agreement might impose.[75]

Rogers countered that if the Arabs declared their readiness to conclude a lasting peace, Israel would have to adopt a more flexible position vis-à-vis the Rhodes

formula. He said that it was very important to examine how serious the Soviets and Arabs were about the peace process and to repair the international community's impression that the United States and Israel were responsible for the political standstill. Rogers' conciliatory stance expressed the desire to push the parties into negotiations, whether direct or indirect. At the heart of this approach lay the recognition that there were issues that only the warring parties could resolve between themselves; accordingly, it was not important for the State Department to decide whose interpretation of the Rhodes formula was correct. Rabin, who had participated in the 1949 negotiations, insisted that there had been direct discussions with the Egyptian representatives. Egypt, for its part, insisted that the face-to-face talks there had been unofficial. The State Department people knew that both sides were correct.[76]

On September 30, when Rogers and Sisco met with Gromyko and Dobrynin, the Soviet Foreign Minister accepted the American idea for Rhodes-style talks. There was also significant progress with regard to the refugees: the Soviets seemed willing to omit any mention of this issue from the future agreement between Israel and Egypt and to leave it to be decided by Israel and Jordan. The Americans and Soviets also reached an agreement that the Arabs must recognize Israel's right to live in peace and security. Gromyko did bring up two conditions, however: a mutual interpretation of the character and composition of Rhodes-style talks and a clearer American position on the boundary between Israel and Egypt; in other words, a commitment to a full Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai and Gaza, in return for indirect negotiations between the parties. The Soviets raised additional demands on behalf of Egypt, pertaining to the details of the agreement itself: The peace agreement would be legally binding only after the Israeli withdrawal; Gaza must be handed over to the Arabs and the Egyptian administration re-established there; the freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal would be in the spirit of the 1888 Constantinople Convention; and finally, UN forces would be stationed at Sharm el-Sheikh. None of these demands was in harmony with the American perspective, which was to leave to the parties themselves to discuss the security arrangements at Sharm el-Sheikh, the establishment of demilitarized zones, and the final status of Gaza.[77]

On October 2, when Sisco met with Eban, the latter presented his government's conciliatory approach to the Rhodes formula. He feared that the Americans had come away from the September 30 meeting between Meir and Rogers with too harsh an impression of the Israeli position on negotiations. Yes, the original Israeli demand had been for immediate face-to-face negotiations or nothing. Now, however, Israel was willing to accept the "simultaneous presence" of Israeli and Arab representatives with Jarring and agreed to the American position that the negotiations would not be direct, at least at first. Eban emphasized, however, that the talks between Israel and the Arabs must not be linked to the American–Soviet document of principles; rather, the parties should be allowed to present their positions to Jarring. Sisco clarified that the parties would not be committed by any agreement between the powers; the goal was to create a framework for Jarring in order to advance the negotiations according to the Rhodes model.[78]

While the Israelis agreed to the outline that was taking form, Egypt was in turmoil, with strident denials of Riad's statement to reporters in New York and even rumors of his imminent dismissal.[79] At his first press conference, on October 9, the new government spokesman, Ahmed Asmat Abdel-Meguid, said that Egypt "rejects direct negotiations and the Rhodes formula, which would be considered as direct negotiations."[80] Two days later, Egypt's establishment newspapers began a campaign of editorials, interviews, and quotations of senior officials aimed at scotching the idea of consent to negotiations with Israel, in any shape or form. For instance, *al-Ahram* wrote that "the UAR does not believe in the possibility of conducting direct or indirect negotiations, either in the Rhodes formula or any other formula."[81]

The next day, October 12, *al-Ahram* published details of a conversation between Nasser and Riad. The Foreign Minister had spoken at length about the "uproar stirred abroad" about the possibility of negotiations based on the Rhodes formula. He made it clear that the Israelis, with American backing, had launched a propaganda campaign aimed at persuading Egypt to hold direct talks with Israel. However, the Egyptians (and the Jordanians) vigorously rejected the idea and had made this plain to Secretary of State Rogers.

Riad had asserted further that the goal of the new diplomatic initiative for negotiations was to release Israel from the bind in which it had placed itself by rejecting the Security Council resolution and refusing to withdraw from Arab land. According to the newspaper, Riad had stuck to a rigid position on the Rhodes model, which he denounced as an attempt "to undermine the main objective" of Jarring's mission to the Middle East. Riad had told Jarring that the goal of the campaign for direct or indirect negotiations was to divert world public opinion and the international unanimity from the fact that Israel should declare its acceptance of Resolution 242. In order to write finis to the entire idea of talks with Israel or negotiations with it, Riad had rejected Jarring's invitation to come to New York in November for indirect negotiations mediated by him. Riad said that he had instructed the head of the Egyptian mission to the United Nations to cooperate with Jarring and to inform him if there was any progress on the diplomatic front.[82]

So as not to leave the Americans any room for error or misunderstanding, on October 14, two days after the article in *al-Ahram* just summarized, Egyptian Undersecretary of State Salah Gohar passed on a message to Marshall W. Wiley of the American Interests Section, in which Cairo made it quite clear that Riad would not "go to Rhodes, New York or any place else." But to avoid totally slamming the door on negotiations, Egypt expressed its willingness to host Jarring whenever he cared to visit and to remain in contact with him through its representatives at the UN.[83] The next day, in an interview with the Cairo newspaper *al-Akhbar*, Riad reiterated that "under no circumstances" would there be negotiations between Egypt and Israel, because negotiations "under the threat of arms," that is, while Israel was occupying Arab lands, would be tantamount to surrender, and Egypt would not agree to surrender.[84]

The State Department viewed Cairo's backtracking on Riad's statements in New York as an attempt to mollify opposition in the Arab world.[85] On October 16,

the day after Riad's interview appeared in *al-Akhbar*, the INR released a special report summarizing the meaning of the Rhodes formula.[86] It saw the Egyptian announcements as the "coup de grace" to the entire initiative; the political process was now at a standstill, with no real possibility of getting Israel and the Arabs to the negotiating table. "The term 'Rhodes formula' had lost its usefulness as a description of any future talks," even though it was likely that future negotiations would be similar to those conducted on Rhodes.[87]

The report assigned the blame for the stalemate and failure of the demarche to both sides, especially because each had made haste to publish its own interpretation of the Rhodes formula—although Israel was deemed to be guiltier in this regard. It attached prime importance to direct negotiations with the Arabs because that was the only way to achieve a stable and lasting peace. For Israel, the very fact of direct talks would be evidence that the Arabs were prepared to recognize Israel and live in peace with it. But the Arabs vigorously rejected direct negotiations, as Riad had made very clear in the *al-Akhbar* interview. Similarly, his remarks to Ambassador Jarring indicated that Egypt would not even consider indirect negotiations through the Swedish mediator, unless Israel first committed to a full withdrawal.[88]

The disagreement about the meaning of "the magic Rhodes formula" had made Egypt uncomfortable with the diplomatic track. According to the INR report, the extensive attention to and lively debate about it had stirred fears in Cairo that the Arab world might see such talks as direct negotiations with Israel. Hence the prospects for invoking this formula in the future as a way to bring Israel and the Arabs to the negotiating table had all but vanished. The implication was that the main responsibility fell on Israel's shoulders, because it had hurried to present its understanding of the Rhodes formula even before there was any agreement about talks at all.

The report concluded, however, that the Israelis and Arabs would not accept any formula for negotiations, no matter how sophisticated, unless they were convinced that the outcome of the talks would satisfy their basic demands. This, of course, would require the two parties to compromise: the Arabs must agree "to accept genuine peace" with Israel, and Israel must accept "the principle of withdrawal from territory occupied in 1967." And were a way found to bring the parties to the negotiating table, the nature of the process would have to be left obscure. Finally, a settlement between Israel and Egypt might be feasible if there was an agreement to forego direct negotiations until the important principles had been settled and the direct meetings were unofficial.[89]

Notes

1 "No. 178," August 6, 1969, ISA, FM, 4157/9.
2 "State 033965," March 5, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1833 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 042154," March 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1833 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 046143," March 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Sisco, "The US Role in the Peace Process," 19.

3 "State 042154," March 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1833 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 046143," March 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 047123," March 27, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 50983," April 3, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 51229," April 3, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
4 The six points presented here combine the working paper with Sisco's clarifications to Dobrynin on April 22.
5 "State 044730," March 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1833 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 046317," March 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 62563," April 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "No. 82," April 17, 1969, ISA, ISA, FM, 4156/2.
6 Rabin, *Service Diary*, 247–8; and a toned-down version in *Memoirs*, 147.
7 "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," April 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," May 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
8 In meetings with Eban, Rogers and Sisco emphasized that the United States did not want to be Israel's lawyers, nor for the Soviets to be the Arabs' advocate. See *Rabin, Service Diary*, 247; Rabin, *Memoirs*, 147.
9 "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," April 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," May 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 069427," May 3, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
10 "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," April 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," May 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835, Pol, 27-14 A/I. It should be noted that the draft referred to a settlement between Israel and Egypt only, because Rogers preferred that the initial stage of the talks be limited to the two countries, while deferring until a later date a resolution of the disagreements between Israel and Jordan.
11 "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," April 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," May 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
12 "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," April 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," May 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
13 "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," May 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 071012," May 7, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 072809," May 8, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 074000," May 11, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 075822," May 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
14 "State 086465," May 28, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1836 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
15 "State 086657," May 28, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1836 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1341," May 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1836 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
16 "State 077533," May 15, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Prime Minister's Message to the President," May 14, 1969, FM, 4156/3.
17 "State 093698," June 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1836 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
18 "State 094492," June 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1836 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
19 Ibid.
20 *Al-Ahram*, June 10, 1969; "Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, Status Reports on the Two-Power and Quadripartite Talks on the Near East," June 11, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1833 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "USSR–Middle East: Gromyko probably in Cairo to Clear New Soviet Position for US–USSR Talks on Middle East," June 11, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1836 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Moscow 2689," June 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1836 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1464," June 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
21 *Al-Ahram*, June 13, 1969; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar*, 193–4.

22 Heikal, too, referred to the Arab diktat. On June 20, in his weekly column in *al-Ahram*, he wrote that during the talks between Nasser and Gromyko that latter had said that his country wanted to continue the bilateral talks with the Americans, but would do so only if Egypt wished it to. Nasser responded with his approval. See *al-Ahram*, June 20, 1969. For the American angle, see "Cairo 1510," June 20, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1821 Pol, 27 A/I; *Al-Gomhuria*, June 19, 1969; "Memorandum of Conversation, Gromyko Visit to Cairo," July 7, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 2557 Pol, UAR–USSR.

23 *Al-Gomhuria*, June 19, 1969; "Memorandum of Conversation, Arab–Israel Settlement," June 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1821 Pol, 27 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 100; Bar-Or, "The Israel Government's Decision," 38.

24 "Amman 2802," June 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1837 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1479," June 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1837 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 100–1; Meital, *Egypt's Struggle for Peace*, 66.

25 "Memorandum for the President, Soviet Counterproposal on Arab–Israeli Dispute," June 20, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1837 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Quandt, *Decade of Decisions*, 87; Korn, *Stalemate*, 155.

26 Ironically, despite the American and Israeli reservations, the Israel–Egypt peace treaty of 1979 did adopt the Soviet and Egyptian position on freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal; the Constantinople Convention explicitly limited free passage if it might be harmful to Egyptian security (the clause invoked by Egypt to bar Israeli shipping from the Canal after 1948):

> Ships of Israel, and cargoes destined for or coming from Israel, shall enjoy the right of free passage through the Suez Canal and its approaches through the Gulf of Suez and the Mediterranean Sea on the basis of the Constantinople Convention of 1888, applying to all nations. Israeli nationals, vessels, and cargoes, as well as persons, vessels, and cargoes destined for or coming from Israel, shall be accorded non-discriminatory treatment in all matters connected with usage of the canal.
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> See *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Article V of the "Peace Treaty between the State of Israel and the Arab Republic of Egypt as Signed in Washington, DC on March 26, 1979," www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/israel-egypt%20peace%20treaty.aspx

27 "Memorandum for the President, Soviet Counterproposal on Arab–Israeli Dispute," June 20, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1837 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

28 Ibid.

29 "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on the Arab–Israeli Dispute," June 30, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1836 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

30 Ibid.

31 "USSR–Middle East: Strong Soviet Pressures to Get Direct Arab–Israeli Talks Seem Unlikely at this Point," June 4, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1836 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

32 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 367. Over the next several months, Israel continued to register its protest over the gradual backsliding in the American position, especially on the border issue. For example, on October 16, 1969, Ambassador Rabin informed Undersecretary of State Elliot Richardson that another discussion of this topic with the Soviets could lead to a major Israeli–American confrontation and even have negative ramifications on security in the region. He also emphasized that Israel would not be bound by any agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union. See "State 175952," October 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I.

33 "No. 643," October 31, 1969, FM, 4157/5, ISA; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 367; Spiegel, *The Other Arab–Israeli Conflict*, 182.

34 "No. 643," October 31, 1969, FM, 4157/5, ISA; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 370–3; Spiegel, *The Other Arab–Israeli Conflict*, 182.

35 "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on the Arab–Israeli Dispute," June 30, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1836 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "USSR–Middle East: Strong Soviet Pressures to Get Direct Arab–Israeli Talks Seem Unlikely at this Point," June 4, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1836 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 367–8.
36 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XII, Doc. 67, "Telegram from the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State," July 14, 1969, 203–6.
37 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 39, "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Sisco) to President Nixon and Secretary of State Rogers," July 23, 1970, 135–41.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 It is apparent from Rogers' initiatives that the State Department did not rule out concessions. Moreover, it was willing to compromise even further had the Soviet Union presented a clearer position on the twin issues of peace and direct negotiations between the sides. See the conversation between Sisco and a senior official at the Israel Embassy in Washington: "No. 41," August 7, 1969, ISA, FM, 4157/5.
41 "Memorandum to the Under Secretary, US–Soviet Talks on the Middle East: Where We Stand," August 26, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
42 "State 127271," July 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1837 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "No. 41," August 7, 1969, ISA, FM, 4157/5; Rabin, *Memoirs*, 149–50.
43 Sadat served as a member of the higher executive committee of the Arab Socialist Union. In December 1969 he was appointed vice-president of Egypt. "UAR Diplomat's Reaction to latest USG Two-Power Formulations," July 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1837 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1884," August 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 132691," August 8, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1987," August 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1822 Pol, 27 A/I.
44 "UAR Diplomat's Reaction to latest USG Two-Power Formulations," July 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1837 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1884," August 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 132691," August 8, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1987," August 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1822 Pol, 27 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 100–1.
45 "State 139216," August 15, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1822 Pol, 27 A/I.
46 "Israel/UAR—Israel Warns Egypt of Possible Military Action," May 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820 Pol, 27 A/I.
47 Ibid.
48 The targets struck by Operation *Batzoret*, in late April 1969, were identical with those of *Helem 1*, on the night of October 31/November 1, 1968. The attack on the Nag Hammadi bridge had an immense psychological impact on the Egyptian leadership. After *Helem 1*, Foreign Minister Riad told Secretary of State Dean Rusk that "the attack on Nag Hammadi was worse than [the] atomic bomb to Egypt. The risk for property destruction and massive deaths through drowning [as a result of damage to the dam] was enormous." On the Egyptian reactions to the strikes on Nag Hammadi, see "State 079131," May 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1820, Pol, 27 A/I; Schueftan, *Attrition*, 189–90; Zohar, *War of Attrition*, 222–4.
49 Schiff, *Wings over Suez* 32–41; Zohar, *War of Attrition*, 262–4.
50 "Tel Aviv 2406," June 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1821 Pol, 27 A/I; Zohar, *War of Attrition*, 226, 262–4.
51 Almog, *Flotilla 13*, 31–99.
52 "State 158471," September 17, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Schueftan, *Attrition*, 195–9.
53 "Tel Aviv 2888," July 28, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1821 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
54 "State 129203," August 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
55 Ibid.

56 With regard to the renewal of diplomatic relations between Washington and Cairo, Nasser asked his audience cynically what profit Jordan had derived from its ties with the Americans, given that Israel was still occupying the West Bank. For the full speech, see *Gamal Abdel Nasser Speeches*, "The 17th Anniversary of the Revolution at the Opening of the 3rd Session of the National Conference," July 23, 1969, http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1261&lang=en. [Arabic]. For the American analysis of the speech, see "UAR: Nasser Places One Foot Firmly on Middle East Escalator," July 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1821 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 1824," July 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1821 Pol, 27 A/I.
57 "Cairo 2200," September 9, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
58 "Cairo 2043," August 21, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
59 "State 163837," September 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Shlomo Argov," September 30, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/6; "Telegram to Missions 922," December 24, 1969, ISA, FM, 4224/39.
60 On these two operations (Escort and Raviv), see Almog, *Flotilla 13*, 100–34; Gamasy, *The October War*, 111–12; Zohar, *War of Attrition*, 230–2.
61 "Memorandum of Conversation, Situation in Egypt," October 9, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I.
62 Gera told Parker that Israeli intelligence saw a direct connection between Nasser's illness and the Israeli raid on September 9: ibid.; "UAR: Rumbles, Rumors, and 'Facts,'" September 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I; "London 7589," September 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 2278," September 20, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I; Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*, 71.
63 Schiff, *Wings over Suez*, 53–63; Schueftan, *Attrition*, 211–13.
64 In a conversation, Sisco told Ghorbal that the Israeli strike had been the result of the violation of the cease-fire and the resulting Israeli casualties. Sisco also said that the incidents were directly linked to Egypt's policy on the Canal front and that Israel felt that it must respond to Egyptian provocations. See "State 152716," September 9, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I. For the meeting between Sisco and Rabin, see "State 158471," September 17, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
65 "Cairo 2282," September 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I; "State 161647," September 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I.
66 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 368–9; "Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger, Next Steps on the Middle East," September 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," April 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," May 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1835, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
67 "Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger, Next Steps on the Middle East," September 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
68 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 368–9; "Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger, Next Steps on the Middle East," September 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I; Gat, *In Search of a Peace Settlement*, 68.
69 On the decisive meetings between the Americans and Soviets, see "USUN 3084," September 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "USUN 3145," September 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "USUN 3217," September 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Secret 17355," September 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I. On Rogers' proposal to Gromyko of an annual quota of returning refugees over a ten-year period, see "USUN 3196," September 24, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
70 "USUN 3322," October 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
71 "USUN 3240," September 26, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 106–8.
72 "USUN 3240," September 26, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 106–8.

73 "USUN 3240," September 26, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I.
74 "State 163837," September 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Shlomo Argov," September 30, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/6; Rabin, *Memoirs*, 154–5; Gelber, *Attrition*, 150–3.
75 "Shlomo Argov," September 30, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/6; "USUN 3331," October 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I; Rabin, *Memoirs*, 153–7.
76 "USUN 3331," October 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Rhodes Formula," October 9, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I.
77 "USUN 3324," October 1, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "USUN 3373," October 2, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
78 "State 173876," October 3, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
79 Salah Gohar, the Egyptian undersecretary of state, insisted that Riad had said no such thing, and added that there were rumors of his imminent resignation. See "No. 118," October 15, 1969, ISA, FM, 4157/5. Charles Yost, the American ambassador to the UN, submitted a report to the State Department that a reliable source had informed him of rumors about Riad's imminent dismissal. See "USUN 3588," October 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
80 Abdel-Meguid had recently replaced Zayyat, who had been appointed Egypt's permanent representative at the United Nations. It bears mention that Abdel-Meguid said this in Arabic. When asked by foreign correspondents to repeat the statement in English, he said that Egypt "accepts the Rhodes formula if it is not construed as direct negotiations." This comment was not included in the press conference that was broadcast on the Egyptian media. On the press conference, see "Israel–UAR: The Rhodes End," October 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
81 *Al-Ahram*, October 11, 1969; "Cairo 2462," October 11, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1823, Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum, Egyptian Position on Rhodes Formula—Information Memorandum," October 11, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
82 *Al-Ahram*, October 12, 1969; "Cairo 2477," October 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
83 The conversation with Wiley took place the day after Gohar had provided Bergus with a detailed explanation of Egypt's position on Rhodes-type negotiations. See "Cairo 2485," October 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "No. 118," October 15, 1969, ISA, FM, 4157/5.
84 *Al-Akhbar*, October 15, 1969.
85 "State 178559," October 21, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1824, Pol, 27 A/I.
86 "Israel–UAR: The Rhodes End," October 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.

6 Downhill

The failure of the October initiative and the first Rogers Plan

> We seek a settlement based on respect for the sovereign right of each nation in the area to exist within secure and recognized boundaries. We are convinced that peace cannot be achieved on the basis of substantial alterations in the map of the Middle East.
>
> Richard M. Nixon[1]

Give and take: a new idea for a settlement

While the idea of Rhodes-type negotiations was collapsing, Sisco and Dobrynin renewed their discussions on October 10. This came after Nixon granted Rogers and his assistant the freedom to try to advance the superpowers' push for a settlement in the Middle East, as well as a new initiative that the State Department wanted to propose to the Soviets as part of the strategy that had been formulated in the previous weeks. On October 14, Rogers sent Nixon a memo detailing the main points of the new proposal, which was aimed at preventing the United States and Israel from being isolated in the international arena and at adopting a fair position on the conflict that represented the United States in a more positive light to world public opinion. The proposal was based on a quid pro quo: an American readiness to be more flexible on the question of borders, in return for a clearer Soviet and Egyptian position on full peace and a commitment to it. Rogers did not despair and hoped it would be possible for the parties to negotiate under Jarring's auspices and on the basis of Resolution 242 and the Rhodes format of 1949. The negotiations would rest on two fundamental points: on the Egyptian side, a commitment to peace and a commitment to keep the peace; on the Israeli side, acceptance of the principle of withdrawal "from UAR territory to the pre-June 5 line." This in turn depended on Egypt's readiness to negotiate two additional issues with Israel: effective security arrangements in the Sharm el-Sheikh area and Gaza Strip, and the establishment and enforcement of demilitarized zones. In addition to these two points, the plan included freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran and the Suez Canal for all vessels, including Israeli ships, and Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist and live in peace in the region.[2]

The unexpected elements of Rogers' new proposal were intensified, given his assessment that it was unlikely to lead anywhere. Similar to his evaluation

before the first round of talks between Sisco and Dobrynin, Rogers again knew that the odds of success were slim. He realized that both parties to the conflict would oppose his plan; each for its own reasons. Israel would reject it because it included an American acceptance of an Israeli withdrawal to the borders of June 4; Egypt would reject it because Nasser was demanding a prior commitment to Arab sovereignty in Gaza, Jordanian sovereignty in Jerusalem, and an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. As stated, however, what motivated the plan was the American need to present something new, no matter the chances of its success; just as, a month later, the desire to preserve American interests led Rogers to issue a unilateral plan—the Rogers Plan—independently of the Soviets.[3]

On October 10, Sisco and Dobrynin renewed their discussions in the framework of the Forum of Two. On October 28, after receiving Nixon's approval and despite Kissinger's vehement objections, Sisco submitted the final version of the (ten-point) American proposal to Dobrynin, including the American fallback position regarding the boundary between Egypt–Israel.[4] The main points of the plan were as follows:

> (1) The parties would set a timetable and decide on appropriate procedures for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Egyptian territory occupied during the 1967 war to the borders specified in Point 3. (2) The state of war between Israel and Egypt would end and an official regime of peace be instituted between them. Both parties would pledge that hostile and aggressive acts (terrorism) will not be conducted (or planned) from their territory and that they will refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs. (3) Israel and Egypt would agree on the location of the secure and recognized boundary between them, as part of the final agreement. The peace agreement would include an agreement to establish demilitarized zones, effective security arrangements in the Sharm el-Sheikh region that would guarantee freedom of navigation in the Straits of Tiran (for all countries, including Israel), and the establishment of effective security arrangements and the final [military] deployment in Gaza. In addition, "the former international boundary between Egypt and the mandated territory of Palestine *would become the secure and recognized boundary* [emphasis added] between Israel and the UAR." (4) There would be freedom of navigation for all countries, including Israel, in the Suez Canal. (5) The parties would agree to conditions for a just settlement of the refugee problem. A resolution of this problem would be included in the agreement to be reached between Israel and Jordan. The two agreements would come into effect only when there was agreement on the entire package. (6) Egypt and Israel would agree to respect and recognize the other party's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence, as well as its right to live in peace within secure and recognized borders, free of threats or violent action against it.[5]

The American document was not a new plan; rather, it drew on elements of earlier proposals by the State Department. This time, however, it presented the

United States' most flexible conciliatory position (or as Sisco put it, "our rock-bottom position"). Beyond that, as was made clear to the Soviets, there would be no further American willingness to compromise on crucial points. Nonetheless, Sisco wrote to Rogers, a Soviet readiness to provide constructive criticism of the plan would lead to a joint American–Soviet document that would be submitted to Jarring through the Forum of Four. On the other hand, if the Soviet Union tried to buy time or dispute fundamental points of the plan, the United States would have to consider presenting the proposal to the Forum of Four unilaterally.[6]

The American proposal raises three main questions. First, why did the document conveyed to Dobrynin on October 28 offer the Rhodes formula as a basis for negotiations, despite Egypt's adamant resistance to negotiating with Israel according to this model or in any other manner? Second, the State Department's insistence on pursuing the plan and belief that it could impose a settlement on Israel are surprising, given that Rogers was well aware of Israel's position on the borders and particularly its negative stance on the idea that the superpowers work out between themselves a fundamental outline for an agreement. Not only did the proposal ignore Israel's vital positions and interests; for the first time, the State Department agreed to an Israeli withdrawal to the international border between Egypt and Mandatory Palestine.

Ambassador Rabin had conveyed Israel's position to Undersecretary of State Richardson on October 15, protesting the "erosion" in America's stand on the question of final borders. Rabin also emphasized that Israel would not be committed by any American–Soviet understanding and demanded that the Americans not make their position on the borders clear in their discussions with the Soviets. He argued that doing so could lead to a major clash between the United States and Israel and have adverse effects on security in the region. Additional Israeli declarations in the same vein set Washington on a collision course with Jerusalem.[7]

Third, why did Rogers and Sisco decide to unveil the American fallback position without receiving any significant return from Gromyko and Dobrynin, or at least seeing some kind of willingness on their part to compromise on essential issues? In other words, the State Department decided to move towards the Egyptian–Soviet position and ignore Israel's fundamental demands; this harmed the relations between Washington and Jerusalem in order to make the United States look better in the Arabs' eyes. Kissinger, who objected to this move from the beginning, homed in on this. He preferred maintaining the diplomatic standstill until it became clear to the Arabs that the Soviet Union could not extricate them from their predicament and that the key to a solution was in American hands. Kissinger had no intention of bolstering the Soviets' standing in the Middle East with compromises that would come solely from the American side and lead the Arabs to run to their Russian patron whenever they found themselves in trouble.[8] Furthermore, Kissinger wanted to create a linkage in the talks with the Soviets between the two crises the United States was dealing with—Vietnam and the Middle East. In his view, compromise without some reward would not serve American interests in either theater.

On October 30, Sisco informed the Egyptian representative in Washington, Ghorbal, of the details of his conversation with Dobrynin and the components of the American proposal, particularly the fallback position on the Israel–Egypt border.[9] The next day, the American ambassador in Israel, Walworth Barbour, briefed Eban on the details of the proposal; Undersecretary of State Richardson briefed Rabin. The State Department's took the line of defense that Israel was aware of the American position on the border issue. Secretary of State Rusk had explained it at length in November 1968; his successor, Rogers, had reiterated it on numerous occasions, including in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 27, 1969, when he said that "rectifications from the pre-existing lines should be confined to those required for mutual security and should not reflect the weight of conquest." Nixon had also made his position quite clear in his speech to the UN General Assembly on September 18, 1969: "We are convinced that peace cannot be achieved on the basis of substantial alterations in the map of the Middle East." So, the State Department officials said, the American position "should come as no surprise to the Israelis."[10]

Another point that the State Department made to Israel was "the urgency of a peace settlement." The status quo in the Middle East was producing "adverse trends," particularly the rise of terrorist elements, that had led to the erosion of American interests in the region. The Americans, after a "dispassionate appraisal," believed that these trends would also harm Israeli interests in the long term. Another concern was that "the trend towards violence on the borders clearly increases the chance of miscalculation which could set off a border conflict" between Israel and its neighbors. In light of these circumstances, the Americans had concluded, first, that as the major arms supplier of Israel it could not remain oblivious to the escalation in the Middle East; and second, that the administration could not ignore the possibility of a confrontation with the Soviets. Thus, in light of the negative developments in the region and the likelihood that the situation would deteriorate, the United States was demanding that the Israeli leadership decide if it was interested in continuing the stalemate, with its attendant risks, or in making progress on the diplomatic front.[11]

But the State Department had underestimated the intensity of Israel's opposition to its proposals. Starting in November, and especially after the publication of the Rogers Plan in early December, Israel acted vigorously and on all fronts to thwart the Secretary of State's political demarche, since it considered that its security and vital interests were at stake. The Israeli Foreign Ministry reached this conclusion on several grounds. First, the political initiatives encouraged the Arab side to stick to its political and military position (including terrorism) without needing to compromise. Second, the American initiatives could potentially isolate Israel for having rejected the position taken by the powers and the rest of the international community. Third, they paved the way for additional compromises and concessions, which would lead to "a dangerous confrontation" between Israel and the United States. Fourth, the proposals diminished Israel's bargaining power, damaged its opening position in future negotiations with the Arabs, and in fact undermined any chance of negotiations between the parties.[12]

Nasser rejects the October initiative

As mentioned, Sisco handed Dobrynin the American proposal for an agreement between Israel and Egypt on October 28, 1969. Soon after that, the plan was delivered to the parties involved, who were asked to keep its existence and details secret. However, the fierce criticism and displeasure with the October Proposal quickly became public knowledge and forced the Americans to publish it. This is how the October initiative became the "Rogers Plan," released on December 9, 1969, at the Galaxy Conference on Adult Education, after Rogers, the keynote speaker, presented the main points of the American proposal for a settlement between Israel and the Arabs in the Middle East.

Already a month earlier, in an address to the National Assembly on November 6, Nasser, reacting to the American proposal, attacked American policy in the Middle East in general and its initiatives for a peace settlement in particular. He represented the American document as a demand for an Egyptian surrender, arguing that the United States had adopted "the enemy's positions" and was showering arms on the Israelis. In particular, "American military men in the Israeli army fight us behind guns and from aircraft falsely bearing the Star of David." Nasser said that Egypt had made many efforts to resolve the conflict peacefully, on the basis of Security Council Resolution 242, but all for naught. In his view, the only solution was a comprehensive agreement that included Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and the Palestinians, coupled with an Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories: "There is no longer any way out except to open our own road to what we want by force, over a sea of blood and under a horizon of fire," said Nasser, demonstrating his willingness to take to the warpath against Israel.[13]

In keeping with his militant line, Nasser pledged to continue the Egyptian effort until the occupied territories had been liberated and an independent Palestinian entity established. He argued that Egypt was strong enough to repay Israel for its aggression in the same coin, and incidentally praised the ability of the Egyptian defenders to withstand the Israeli aggression. Nasser also highlighted the need for internal and external unity: domestically, he summoned the home front to help consolidate the ranks and contribute to the war efforts; to this end, he announced his intention to set up civilian war committees. Abroad, Nasser called for the Arab states to convene a summit conference to take new decisions. Arab unity, he said, required an Arab victory, and all Arabs must lay aside their disputes for the sake of that unity.[14]

The next day, November 7, William Buffum, the American deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, met with Mohammed Riad, a counselor in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry. Evidently, the Egyptian wanted to tone down the impression left by Nasser's speech. Nasser had not intended to reject the American proposal for a settlement, Riad explained, and Egypt hoped that the United States would continue its diplomatic efforts. He added, however, that although he was not authorized to convey an official response to the October Proposal, there was great dissatisfaction with it in Cairo, because it linked the Israeli withdrawal and final boundaries with the status of Gaza and Sharm el-Sheikh.

In light of Israel's declarations that it would never give up Sharm el-Sheikh and its desire to hold on to Gaza, the linkage created in the American proposal left Egypt with the impression that the United States was not committed to an end of the Israeli occupation of these territories and cast doubt on Egyptian sovereignty within the borders that preceded the 1967 war. Nasser could not accept such a formulation, Riad said, even if he were certain that the United States had no intention of infringing Egyptian sovereignty, because doing so would enable Nasser's enemies and critics, at home and abroad, to place the other interpretation on the American proposal—and "this would create insurmountable problems for Nasser."[15]

When Yost learned the details of Riad's conversation with Buffum, he was persuaded by the Egyptian argument and strongly recommended making it clear that the secure and recognized border between Egypt and Israel would be the pre-June 5 boundary. Yost also wanted to detach the issues of withdrawal and borders from those of Gaza, Sharm el-Sheikh, and freedom of navigation, in order to stress that the United States had no intention of challenging Egypt's sovereignty at Sharm el-Sheikh or hint that it accepted Israeli sovereignty in Gaza.[16]

Bergus also tried to tone down Nasser's speech. In a detailed analysis of its content, written on November 6, he wrote that "what Nasser did not say about [the] US and USSR is probably more significant than what he did say." It was true that Nasser had attacked the American assistance to Israel and its diplomatic proposals for a settlement, explained Bergus, but he had not totally ruled out a peace agreement.[17]

The recommendations by Yost and Bergus, reinforcing the State Department's unwillingness to throw in the towel, induced Rogers to send an encouraging message to his Egyptian counterpart on November 8. Rogers wrote that the parties had to seize the present opportunity to advance the political process, which would benefit all people in the Middle East. He urged the Egyptian government to be more open in its deliberations about the proposal, which, he said, attempted to balance the principles important to both sides. Rogers also made it clear that the United States did not intend to isolate the Egyptian issue from the other components of a comprehensive peace settlement and that the United States, like Egypt, viewed the agreement "as a total package." After a positive response was received from Egypt, he wrote, the Americans and Soviets could focus on a settlement between Israel and the Arab states. This was not mere lip-service. In tandem with the October Proposal, the State Department had been working on a draft for a settlement between Israel and Jordan, which was submitted to the Forum of Four on December 18.[18]

That same day, in addition to the note to Riad, Rogers wrote to King Hussein, to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, and to the foreign ministers of Great Britain and France, requesting their assistance in the political process. Rogers was afraid that, in the wake of Nasser's speech on November 6 and other negative vibrations coming from Cairo, the political efforts towards a settlement would be suspended.[19] However, before this day of frantic diplomatic activity was over the

Egyptians left no room for doubt about their attitude towards the October Proposal. In a speech to the Arab League Joint Defense Council, Foreign Minister Riad attacked the American ideas, saying that they were "even worse than the old ones because they evoke issues for discussion involving Egypt's sovereignty."[20] He accused the Americans of attempting to divide the Arabs and trying to persuade Cairo to withdraw from the Arab struggle in exchange for regaining the Sinai Peninsula. The Joint Defense Council found nothing objectionable in Riad's remarks. On the contrary, the communiqué it published on November 10 stated that the liberation of the occupied Arab territories by diplomatic means was impossible because of Israel's intransigence and the support it received from the United States and "other imperialist powers."[21]

Egypt's voice rings clearly in the communiqué. It was the old-new diplomatic line, which senior Egyptian figures stuck to in their talks with the Americans and foreign diplomats. Cairo reiterated its past demands and insisted on a solid American commitment that the Israelis would accept the agreement and not renege after Egypt agreed to its terms. What is more, the Egyptians wanted to be certain that the other confrontation states—Jordan and Syria—would sign similar agreements. It inquired whether Jordan would be accorded an agreement that could be defended to the Arab world, and whether Israel would withdraw from the Golan Heights. Finally, Egypt again underscored that it accepted Resolution 242 but was not willing to accept different formulations and interpretation of it, especially with regard to the conduct of negotiations, the status of Gaza, the issue of Sharm el-Sheikh, and the call for a package deal, as the United States had done when it drew up the October document.[22]

Drawing on the statements by Nasser and Riad, Heikal continued the assault on the American plan in his weekly column in *al-Ahram* on November 14. The October Proposal was a trap, he wrote, by means of which the United States was trying to sow discord between Egypt and the other Arab countries. The worries about America's eroding status in the Middle East had spurred Washington to try to frustrate the planned Arab summit in Rabat on December 20. However, "despite the grand US flanking maneuver"—as he designated the American's recent political maneuvers—the Arabs must preserve their unity and convene the summit "to face a new phase."[23]

Still, despite the cold water, the Egyptians tossed on the proposal, especially in Nasser's speech and Heikal's article, the State Department continued to believe that the Egyptians did not want to close the door on a diplomatic solution and the efforts by the two superpowers. Ray S. Cline, the director of the INR, assessed that behind the first attacks emanating from Cairo there was some guiding hand that wanted to persuade the United States that it "must take dramatic action" favoring Egypt in the talks with the Soviets, and thus blocking the direction the Egyptians seemed inclined to take—a military solution. This assessment was shared by other senior State Department personnel, who believed that the Arabs' frustration with the stalemate in the political process was beginning to spawn a "fatalistic attitude" that the next war was inevitable. Accordingly, the State Department continued its efforts, especially through foreign diplomats, to

persuade Nasser and to some extent also the Soviets that the United States was interested in a stable peace in the Middle East, and that an agreement was the only way to put an end to the crisis.[24]

On November 17, Riad handed his response to Rogers' note of November 8 to Bergus. In the note, as well as in his conversation with Bergus, Riad emphasized the fundamental principle of the Egyptian position; namely, that resolution of the Egyptian dimension of the Middle East issue could not be detached from a resolution of the issues involving the other Arab countries. The conflict had to be settled through a comprehensive package agreement based on Resolution 242. This position had been made clear to Secretary of State Rusk when the two met in November 1968, and Rusk himself had spoken of "putting the pieces [the West Bank and the Golan Heights] together." Since then, however, Egypt had not received any American proposal that referred to a comprehensive solution, but only to a settlement between Egypt and Israel. Riad made it clear that his country would accept only a package deal and that the "United States government should not expect a final or positive answer prior to exposure of the entire package" and clarification of the full picture regarding the other occupied territories.[25]

In fact, Riad did not refer directly to the latest American proposal. He did emphasize Egypt's sincere desire for peace to Bergus, but in his written response he referred only vaguely and minimalistically to the October Proposal. He even made any critique of the proposal itself conditional on first receiving all the points of the package agreement. As for the proposal itself, Riad said that he favored Rusk's formulation of the refugee issue in the Seven-Point Plan to Rogers' in his October Proposal.[26]

A day after the meeting with Bergus, and after Riad addressed a closed session of the National Assembly, it was announced that the latter completely rejected the American proposal. The Egyptians laid direct responsibility for the failure to find a peaceful solution in the Middle East on the United States, which supported "Israel's attempts to push the Middle East into war." The Egyptian announcement accused the Americans of siding "with the enemy" and "completely identifying" with Israel's positions, adding that with its military, economic, and political support, the United States was enabling Israel to avoid compliance with the UN resolutions.[27]

The Rogers Plan: the American calculations

The State Department received the Egyptian response with dismay. Bergus wrote that Riad's answer was a "pathetic effort" intended to placate both the Arab world and radical elements abroad and at home, as well as the United States, the West, and the Soviets.[28] In talks with Arab diplomats, Sisco observed that Cairo had not referred to the meat of the matter, which was the details of the proposal; he rejected the argument that Egypt could not make progress on the diplomatic track separate from Jordan. This was in fact begging the question. He again stressed the administration's total awareness of the demand that the

final peace accord be a package deal. However, this could not exempt Egypt from the obligation to provide a detailed response to the aspects of the deal relevant to it. Consequently, Sisco concluded, even though Egypt had stated its desire for peace, it had not yet shown the United States any real willingness to move in this direction.[29]

Ever since Sisco shared the October Proposal with the Soviets and Egyptians, Washington had been the target of venomous criticism by them and by other Arab countries. On November 6, Sisco sent an urgent memorandum to Rogers: "We have suffered in the area generally because we have not revealed more of the substance," he complained, "while the Soviets have pegged out the most extreme position publicly—total withdrawal of Israeli forces from all the occupied territories to the pre-June 5 lines." Sisco noted that the Arabs were swayed by the Soviet propaganda against the October Proposal and warned that not only direct American interests in the Middle East were in danger, but also the moderate Arab countries that were friendly to the United States, in light of the unyielding Arab position. The present situation demanded an American response, wrote Sisco, who proposed that Rogers find the earliest possible opportunity to issue a public statement whose main thrust would be "to expose some of the substantive positions that we have taken during the past months, which are much more balanced than the impression the world has of them." Rogers agreed. Given the time pressure (the next meeting of the Forum of Four, on December 2, and the Arab summit scheduled for December 20), it was decided that the best available venue for such a declaration was the Galaxy Conference on Adult Education, to be held at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington about a month later.[30]

The consensus view has always been that Rogers and Sisco were so eager to publish their plan that they did so with prior consultation with President Nixon or even alerting him to what was coming. This idea was promoted by Henry Kissinger in his memoirs. However, archival documents opened for public inspection in recent years present quite a different picture. As we shall see, throughout November and early December, Nixon and Kissinger were kept abreast of Rogers' and Sisco's intention to publish the main points of their peace proposal as well as of its details. Kissinger himself received a copy of the Galaxy speech a week before it was delivered, so its content could not have taken him by surprise. Why, then, did Kissinger pretend otherwise? The answer seems to lie in the ongoing power struggle between the State Department and the National Security Advisor concerning the appropriate policy on an Arab–Israeli peace accord. In this tussle, Rogers came out on top because he placed the American interest, as he perceived it, ahead of everything else.

On November 16, Rogers submitted a report to Nixon, summarizing the State Department's efforts to achieve a settlement between Israel and the Arabs, followed by a list of important issues on which a decision had to be taken, and, finally, "the courses of action for the future which we recommend for your approval." Rogers wrote that, from a political standpoint, the situation in the Middle East had become "more difficult" for the United States and its friends in the region.

There was a general anti-American wave in the Arab world, along with frustration over the diplomatic stalemate. These sentiments highlighted the Arabs' "fatalistic attitude" that another war was inevitable and empowered the extremists among them.[31] Rogers added that the Arab summit conference in Rabat, set for December 20, would further accelerate these trends and lock the Arabs into a position that further reduced the chances for peace and might even lead to a "formal Arab renunciation" of peace proposals based on Resolution 242. In this climate, the moderate Arab states, such as Jordan, were feeling increasingly threatened and isolated.[32]

On the Israeli side, Rogers continued, there was vigorous opposition to the American position presented at the Great Power forums. One could also expect increased criticism of the administration by the Jewish community in the United States, especially if additional compromise ideas were advanced. In Israel, on the other hand, where Prime Minister Meir was trying to put together a new government after the elections in October, she needed to maintain sufficient room to maneuver in negotiations for a settlement, as long as Israel's minimum condition—face-to-face talks—was met. Rogers admitted that Egypt's initial reaction to the proposal was negative, while the Soviet Union could be expected to "neither accept nor reject" it, but would try to hold negotiations aimed at a document that satisfied Egypt's demands. As for the other powers, "the British are wobbly, and the French are likely to be unhelpful." Given this situation, two important decisions needed to be taken: First, whether to keep on with or discontinue the talks in the Forum of Four; second, what should be done to promote a settlement on the Israeli–Jordanian front, which was complicated by the issues of the refugees, Jerusalem, and the status of the West Bank.

Finally, after stating his assessment of those two issues, Rogers presented the need for a public statement of American policy with regard to a settlement between Israel and the Arabs, "in an effort to make clear that it is basically a balanced position and not simply a carbon copy of Israeli views." Such a step, he explained, would certainly irk the Israelis, while also failing to satisfy the radicals on the Arab side, but it would benefit the pro-American Arab regimes. And, at the end of the memo to Nixon, Rogers added: "I will be sending you shortly for your review the text of a speech I propose to make very soon outlining the elements of our Middle East policy."[33]

About two weeks later, on December 2, Kissinger received a draft of the speech in which Rogers would sketch out his peace initiative. In a memo to Kissinger attached to the draft,[34] Theodore Eliot, the executive secretary of the State Department, explained that Rogers was planning to deliver this speech in another week, and consequently "would like to have the President made fully aware of his tentative plan and to get his general go-ahead."

The timing of the publication of the initiative was prompted by the desire that Rogers' speech coincide with the start of a new round of the Forum of Four talks and acquaint the other powers with the American diplomatic blueprint. The State Department had three goals: First, releasing an explicit, balanced, and authoritative presentation of the basic American stance regarding a settlement,

particularly with regards to the territorial aspect, as it had been discussed with the Soviets in the previous months; second, strengthening the moderate Arab countries before the Arab summit conference in Rabat on December 20; third, sending a soothing message to Israel, one that would assuage its concerns by declaring that the United States was adamant about preserving its security and at the same time refute the charge that the American proposals undermined its bargaining position vis-à-vis the Arabs.[35]

Eliot went on to explain that "this Administration has never made a comprehensive statement of its Middle East policy." The planned speech would thus be "the first substantive statement" since Rogers' testimony to the Foreign Relations Committee in March, and would be "a firm, balanced, and objective public statement" of the principles that would guide the United States in the Forum of Four and reaffirm the basic position to which Washington had adhered since the 1967 war; namely that "our goal is a final Arab–Israeli peace based on agreement between the parties." In conclusion, Eliot wrote that "a very prompt indication from the White House is necessary," because the arrangements for the speech had to be completed in the next few days.[36]

In a telephone conversation with Kissinger two days later, on December 4, Sisco repeated that a public declaration was imperative. Kissinger was opposed, and wondered what advantage would be gained by delivering the speech. He added that, based on his exchanges with Nixon, he was far from certain that the President believed "we are on the right track" and knew that he wanted "to reserve judgment" until the next meeting of the National Security Council, scheduled for December 10, Sisco countered that the speech was merely a statement of existing policy and not a new departure. Kissinger replied that he had passed the draft on to the President.[37]

Remarks by Harold H. Saunders, who was a member of the National Security Council, to an interviewer in 1993, substantiate the assertion that Nixon knew what Rogers was going to say in the Galaxy speech:

> I recognize that there was and may still be a perception that Rogers made that speech for his personal reasons; there is even a view that the White House distanced itself from the positions articulated by the Secretary. But I remember being in the doorway of the Cabinet room when Nixon was informed of Rogers' desire to give a speech on the Middle East. I think most likely the actual draft text was given to the President. Nixon and Kissinger discussed it, so that it seemed clear to me that the White House was aware of Rogers' plans and at least did not object. The White House was not caught unaware by Rogers' speech.[38]

Kissinger objected to Rogers' plan for the familiar reason—a "tiresome refrain," as the National Security Advisor put it—namely, that none of the previous State Department initiatives had gone anywhere. Furthermore, he saw no way to bridge the gaps between the sides, particularly without applying heavy pressure on Israel, and feared that in the end the initiative would merely provoke objections

by both the Arabs and the Israelis and might even lead to a new war between them.[39] Years later Kissinger commented on the situation: "So Rogers spoke […] to the Galaxy Conference […] an undoubtedly distinguished group whose compelling requirement for a high-level pronouncement on the Middle East continues to escape me."[40]

There is no doubt that the power struggle between the State Department and the National Security Advisor over the shape of Middle East policy contributed to the failure of the American initiative. Already the day after the speech, at the NSC meeting on the morning of December 10, Rogers found himself on the defensive against Nixon's and Kissinger's fierce criticism of his plan.[41] While Rogers insisted that a settlement had to be promoted despite the obstacles, Kissinger recommended waiting patiently until the Arabs realized that the key to a change in the status quo was in the Americans' hands, not the Soviets'. Nixon, in fact, agreed with him and pointed out that "if the UAR comes out of a settlement whole and gives only vague obligations to peace in return, the Soviets come out looking good and Israel has little in return."[42]

Kissinger wanted to perpetuate the diplomatic standstill and bolster the American position, whereas Rogers took a conciliatory position that aimed at a rapprochement with the Soviets and Egyptians even if that meant a collision with Israel. Full backing from the White House could have given the Rogers Plan a leg up, but Nixon preferred to stay out of the dispute between Rogers and Kissinger. To the former's dismay and the latter's delight, the State Department's plan failed.

So if he lacked White House backing and was opposed by Kissinger, what prompted the Secretary of State to release his plan to the public? Rogers did occasionally express his concern that, as a result of the diplomatic standstill, the United States would find itself isolated internationally. In order to avoid this outcome and improve America's image by showing that it did not always side with Israel, he wanted to cooperate with the Soviets and produce an outline that could be submitted to the parties and gain international support. Even if the initiative failed, Washington would not be blamed for sitting on its hands instead of trying to solve the Middle East conflict. The State Department believed that if Washington submitted a balanced proposal it would be able to wield its influence to get Jerusalem to accept its conditions, while Moscow would do the same with Cairo and would even be willing to sacrifice its relations with Egypt on the altar of peace.

However, at this stage, even before the plan was published, this evaluation was wide of the mark and baffling, given that Rogers knew that both Egypt and Israel would reject the proposals. He was also aware that the Soviet position regarding a settlement was murky. On April 23, 1969, before the second series of talks between Sisco and Dobrynin in May–June of the same year, the Secretary of State wrote that "realistically, we must recognize that the odds are against the success of the approach we are suggesting."[43] On July 21, after the conclusion of an unproductive round of talks with Dobrynin in Moscow, Sisco added that the Soviets indeed wished for a political settlement that would

lead to an Israeli withdrawal, but "they gave no serious signs of concern over the present status quo in the area and seemed prepared to live with it as manageable." Sisco concluded that Nasser and his political survival were of vital importance to the Soviet Union, which had adopted a strategy of "chip[ping] away at the US position" through the international community, among other things, and of pressuring the United States to pressure Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories, as well as attempting to isolate the United States, as far as possible, by arguing that its policy was pro-Israel.[44] Yet, despite Rogers' and Sisco's acknowledgment that the process had scant chance of success, they continued to promote it, believing that it was "in the American interest." But it was a failure waiting to happen. In the end, the Soviet Union rejected every American proposal, backed the Egyptian position, and was unwilling to harm its relations with Cairo for the sake of cooperating with the Americans in the pursuit of peace.

In his address at the Galaxy Conference, Rogers elucidated American policy in the Middle East and explained its motives. He emphasized the region's importance and the great risks it posed: "It could easily again be the source of another serious conflagration." Rogers described the urgent need for the international community to help the parties reach a settlement and noted that the United States felt a responsibility to "play a direct role in seeking a solution" to the conflict in the Middle East. This was why the United States had agreed to cooperate with the Soviet Union, Britain, and France and help Jarring, as the representative of the UN Secretary General, formulate an agreement on the basis of Security Council Resolution 242, and had also conducted discussions with the Soviet Union in order "to achieve as wide an area of agreement as possible" between the two powers.[45]

All these decisions, said the Secretary of State, had been made in awareness of four main factors: First, it was very important for the Great Powers to be involved in the peace efforts, because they could help solve the conflict. However, in the final account, peace itself was the responsibility of the Arabs and Israelis, since even if the Great Powers reached an agreement about a settlement, it could not be a substitute for an agreement that the parties achieved themselves. Second, "a durable peace must meet the legitimate concerns of both sides" in the conflict. Third, Security Council Resolution 242 was the sole framework for the settlement that the parties would reach after negotiations. This was a "carefully balanced" text, Rogers emphasized, and constituted a solid foundation for a just and sustainable peace, meaning a final settlement and not just a cease-fire. Fourth, the current situation of "no peace and no war," along with incessant clashes, was not in the interest of any country, in the Middle East or outside it.

After he listed the factors that had motivated the United States to try to help the parties in the Middle East resolve the conflict, the Secretary of State described the discussions and their importance in the framework of the Forum of Two with the Soviet Union. Rogers noted that the purpose of the meetings with the Soviets was to determine whether the superpowers could find common

ground for helping the parties reach a settlement. Rogers added that although the joint discussions had led to agreement on a number of principles, there were still fundamental disagreements between the two countries. All the same, the United States would continue the discussions with the Soviet Union "as long as there is any realistic hope" that they could contribute to the peace efforts.

Rogers said that the content of the discussions had been transmitted to the parties to the conflict. This had made it easier to understand the main obstacles to the start of fruitful negotiations between Israel and the Arabs, since they were very wary of each other: the Arabs feared that Israel was "not in fact prepared to withdraw from Arab territory occupied in the 1967 war," while Israel feared that the Arab countries were not prepared to live in peace with it. America's contribution to the attempts to bridge this mutual distrust and overcome these obstacles was to continue with a balanced policy towards the countries in the region. "The Arabs had to be encouraged to accept a permanent peace based on a binding agreement and to urge the Israelis to withdraw from occupied territory when their territorial integrity is assured as envisaged by the Security Council resolution."[46]

Following this preamble, Rogers moved on to discuss the main points of his diplomatic initiative, as reflected in the various American proposals that had been submitted to the Soviets during the course of 1969. He argued that American policy touched upon three fundamental issues that were interrelated: peace, security, and an Israeli withdrawal. Since November 1967 these had been the cornerstones of the American ideas for a Middle East settlement. For Rogers, it was important to deal with these issues and outline a solution as part of a desire to present a balanced American policy. However, he also faced three other issues, which were no less complex or important to the Arabs and Israelis: the refugee problem, the status of Jerusalem, and the question of a settlement between Egypt and Israel. Although Nasser emphasized (sometimes with certain reservations) the weight he attached to the refugee issue and the status of Jerusalem, Rogers remained vague about these issues and did not present an outline for their resolution.

With regard to the refugees, he said,

> there can be no lasting peace without a just settlement of the problem of those Palestinians whom the wars of 1948 and 1967 have made homeless […]. The problem posed by the refugees will become increasingly serious if their future is not resolved.

He noted that an appropriate and just solution to this issue had to take into account the will of the refugees but also "the legitimate concerns of the governments in the area."

With regard to Jerusalem, Rogers stressed that since 1967, the United States had objected to unilateral actions that aimed to finalize the status of the city. Instead, the dispute had to be settled in an agreement between Jordan and Israel, one that would take account of the interests of the other Arab countries specifically

and of the international community in general. At the same time, the unity of Jerusalem had to be preserved, with free access for people of all faiths and unrestricted movement of people and goods.

Then, in the last section of his speech, Rogers dealt in detail with the attempt to produce a settlement between Israel and Egypt and acknowledged that the discussions between the Americans and Soviets had focused on this issue. He rejected the claim that the United States was sowing division among the Arab states by pressuring Egypt to sign a separate agreement with Israel. Rogers argued that the United States and the Soviet Union understood very well that "before there can be a settlement of the Arab–Israeli conflict, there must be agreement between the parties on other aspects of the settlement—not only those related to the United Arab Republic" but also to Jordan and the other Arab countries. He claimed that the superpowers had chosen to begin with the Israel–Egypt aspect "because of its inherent importance for future stability in the area and because one must start somewhere."[47] Still, the United States was willing to work on the various aspects of an accord between Israel and Jordan and in fact had begun doing so with the other members of the Forum of Four. But, he reiterated, the American position was that "that implementation of the overall settlement would begin only after a complete agreement had been reached on related aspects of the problem."

After providing the details of the American stance regarding a settlement between Egypt and Israel and clarifying American policy on the matter, Rogers expounded the three main principles that made up the new policy formulas. These principles had been discussed by American and Soviet representatives for several months as they attempted to find common ground for action:

1 An explicit commitment by both Israel and Egypt to live in peace with each other, along with a detailed list of all the explicit commitments related to peace, including a commitment to prevent hostile activities from their territory.
2 The explicit conditions in a peace agreement related to security issues were to be worked out between the parties under the auspices of Jarring, using the procedure that had guided the armistice talks orchestrated by Ralph Bunche on Rhodes in 1949. This formula had been successfully used in the past in discussions between the parties about Middle East problems. The aforementioned security measures related first and foremost to the Sharm el-Sheikh area, to the need to maintain security in the demilitarized zones, and to the final arrangements in the Gaza Strip.
3 A peace accord and agreement on the necessary security measures would require an Israeli withdrawal from Egyptian territory.

These three principles, Rogers said, related directly to the main national interests of both Israel and Egypt. On the one hand, they required that Egypt make "a binding and specific commitment to peace"; on the other hand, they stated that Israel must withdraw from Egyptian territory to the international border. In addition,

the three points required the parties to negotiate (Rogers did not mention whether directly or indirectly) about the practical security measures that would help keep the peace. "We believe that this approach is balanced and fair," he added. He chose to end his speech on a conciliatory and hopeful note, proclaiming that the United States desired to establish good relations with all countries in the Middle East and was willing to resume relations with the Arab countries that had severed them after the June 1967 war. Finally, his country did not fear walking "the paths of patient diplomacy" but would also not refrain "from advocating necessary compromises."[48]

A tripartite "agreement": Jordan, Egypt, and Israel all reject the Rogers Plan

As mentioned, the Galaxy speech did not present any new message, so its significance lay in the announcement of the political plan itself rather than its details. The first to respond to the Secretary of State's speech, and, implicitly, to the October Proposal, were the Jordanians. On December 12, Sisco met with Zaid al-Rifa'i, King Hussein's privy secretary.[49] Though Rifa'i arrived in Washington as the representative of the Jordanian king, he spent most of the time responding to the American proposal on Egypt's behalf. Sisco stressed that despite the negative statements by Nasser and his confidants, the State Department still believed that the Egyptian leadership was willing to leave the door open for a peace settlement. However, he would like to know what prevented Nasser from accepting the American initiative. In his reply, Rifa'i merely repeated the familiar Arab and Egyptian formulas. As for Jordan, it, like Egypt, viewed the American proposal as incomplete and demanded a parallel proposal for a settlement between Syria and Israel. Even though Damascus had rejected Resolution 242, added Rifa'i, surely there was a contingency plan for the Syrian front as well. Because the principles of Resolution 242, including withdrawal, are inseparable, Nasser could not support a document that aimed to divide the Arab camp.[50]

The Jordanians and Egyptians utterly rejected two main points of the October Proposal, Rifa'i explained. First, the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai to the international border was made conditional on an agreement about Sharm el-Sheikh, which Egypt thinks "Israel has nothing to do with." Because this was a matter of freedom of navigation, not a territorial issue, it was unnecessary for Egypt and Israel to agree on security arrangements there. Similarly, because the Suez Canal is an international waterway, Israel did not need to have fortified outposts on its bank to guarantee passage by its vessels. Hence, from the Egyptian point of view, this condition meant that the American administration did not really endorse an Israeli withdrawal to the international border; this fed the Arabs' doubts as to the American ability to induce an Israeli withdrawal. In Nasser's view, the link in the American proposal between Sharm el-Sheikh and mutual agreement that the international border would be the final one between the two countries was an infringement of Egyptian sovereignty. Nasser also said the demand that Egypt agree with Israel that the old international border now be that between the countries as an

infringement of Egyptian sovereignty. Egypt did "not need Israel's agreement" to this line, which was and remained Egypt's border.[51]

The solution to the Gaza issue, the second bone of contention, was also unacceptable to the Egyptian President. Rifa'i emphasized that Egypt was not interested in Gaza and did not view it as its sovereign territory. But Gaza was Arab land and Israel must withdraw from it. Consequently, Israel had no right to be part of the decision regarding the city's final status. Furthermore, there was no need to link the withdrawal from Sinai to Israeli participation in negotiations over the security arrangements in Gaza and Sharm el-Sheikh, since such participation would allow Israel to veto principles that were important to the Arab side.

Sisco rejected the Arab arguments and said that a political solution would be achieved only if both sides were willing to compromise. He explained that because Sharm el-Sheikh was a casus belli in June 1967, measures had to be devised to ensure freedom of navigation there. Sisco also rejected the Egyptian demand that Israel not be involved in the determining security measures at Sharm el-Sheikh and Gaza; it needed to participate because security measures in these areas could not be imposed on the parties, and a withdrawal by the Israel Defense Forces could not be carried out if Israel did not take part in determining the security arrangements. Furthermore, since the October Proposal required a withdrawal from UAR territory, Israel should receive something in return if it withdrew from Sinai. In other words, Egypt had to provide "a binding commitment to peace." Egypt would also have to commit itself to supervising the activities of the *fedayeen* and permit free passage through the Suez Canal, including by Israeli vessels. Washington's influence over Israel, Sisco concluded, would be greater after the United States persuaded the parties to negotiate according to the Rhodes model on the basis of agreed formulas.[52]

Egypt took a jaundiced view of the American initiative. The Egyptian press gave little play to Rogers' Galaxy speech, and what coverage there was reeked of contempt. The content of the speech was distorted; the guiding line of the Egyptian reaction was a frontal attack on the United States and its Middle East policy. Once again, there were charges that the Americans were trying to sow division among the Arabs, satisfy Israel's interests, and violate Egypt's sovereignty. In particular, Egypt accused the United States of retreating from its former position and presenting a plan that Egypt had already rejected.[53] Senior figures in the Egyptian leadership made similar claims. In an interview published in *al-Akhbar* on December 17, Sadat explained that Egypt rejected the Rogers Plan because "it is no better than their previous proposals."[54] That same day, Egyptian government spokesman Abdel-Meguid told a press conference that "the US proposals are not peace proposals because they are incompatible with the Security Council resolutions."[55]

Egyptian diplomats said little about Rogers' speech, but what they said was not complimentary. Ghorbal went so far as to tell Parker, the head of the Egypt Desk at the State Department, that Rogers' speech was obviously a response to anxiety about the upcoming Arab summit in Rabat on December 20 and the decisions that might be taken there. Ghorbal drew Parker's attention to the fact that it was the

worsening of the crisis in the Middle East that had placed it on the American agenda in particular and the international agenda in general. The lesson of the past 22 years, he said, was that the only way to get attention was to have a crisis.[56]

Furthermore, the current crisis was essentially different from the previous ones. There was "a new spirit abroad in the Arab world and a new breed of Arabs who were sick to death of words and empty promises. They were intent on deeds." So general statements of the sort in which Rogers' speech abounded could not soothe them. They rejected the Rhodes formula and the American demand that Egypt conduct direct negotiations with Israel about Sharm el-Sheikh. If the Americans really wanted to convince the Arabs that their diplomatic efforts were serious, Ghorbal said, they should state explicitly their positions on the refugees and Jerusalem and stop supplying Israel with planes and weapons "until it began to show an interest in peace."[57]

Ghorbal's remark admittedly reflected an Egyptian sense of success, but also frustration, and the latter was the stumbling block that thwarted Rogers and his plan for a settlement. Throughout 1969, as the United States endeavored to bring about a peace settlement in the Middle East, it never tried to establish a direct and permanent line to President Nasser or Foreign Minister Riad. Fawzi, Nasser's foreign affairs advisor, did come to Washington for a series of failed meetings with the American political leadership; Rogers and Riad met in September 1969 and even exchanged notes.[58] However, most of the diplomatic exchanges between the two countries were indirect, either through the Soviets, who did not make a serious effort to promote a settlement in the region, or through Ghorbal. The negligible value of these channels can be inferred from the fact that the State Department learned more about the Egyptian position through its discussions with the Jordanians. The lack of a direct channel, essential for promoting the American peace initiative, worked against the State Department, because in the end it left the Egyptians in the hands of the Soviets.[59]

And indeed, the Soviets' response to Rogers' speech coincided with the Egyptians' view. On December 14 and 18, *Pravda* commented that the Rogers speech was a trick intended to mask the American support of Israel and demonstrate that there was dissension among the Arabs regarding the question of a settlement with Israel. However, despite the attack on the October Proposal and the Rogers Plan in the Communist Party daily, Moscow released no formal response to the initiatives. The assessment of the INR was that until Israel and Egypt were prepared to resolve the conflict, the Soviets would not adopt positions that could damage their relations with Egypt.[60]

On December 23, when it finally issued its response to the October Proposal and indirectly to the Rogers Plan, the Soviet Union objected to the diplomatic initiative, synchronized its position with Egypt's, and blamed Israel for the situation. The reason given for this rejection was Israel's refusal to implement Resolution 242 and its continued policy of aggression against its neighbors. Furthermore, Moscow viewed the American document as one-sided and pro-Israeli, and on several points saw a retreat from positions that the State Department had adopted in earlier proposals.[61]

The Soviets rejected the idea (already ruled out by the Egyptians) of a round of talks based on the Rhodes model. They demanded an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza to the border of June 4, 1967; rejected Israel's right to determine the city's future status; demanded that Israel implement the Security Council resolution regarding the refugees; and insisted that Syria be included in any agreement. The Soviet Union particularly criticized the American decision to leave numerous controversial issues for discussion between the parties, such as "the key issue" of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and, in the Egypt–Israel context, withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza and definition of a timetable for this withdrawal. As a result, the Soviet Union argued, there was insufficient common ground to formulate an American–Soviet document and the October Proposal made no contribution to solving the conflict in the Middle East. From the Soviet perspective, a settlement of the conflict must consist of an agreement that complies with Resolution 242 and that was devised as a package, meaning a comprehensive settlement that related to all countries directly involved in the conflict and to all the aspects relevant to the region.[62]

This response revealed that the Soviet Union had not changed its position in the slightest. On the contrary, in response to the American willingness to compromise, not only did Moscow and Cairo hold fast to their position, they even hardened it. As we have seen from the various reports of the discussions the Americans conducted with the Egyptians and the Soviets, the State Department had obtained a relatively clear picture of Nasser's unwillingness and inability to agree to a political solution and make peace with Israel. The Egyptian leadership missed no opportunity to attack American policy in the Middle East and utterly refused to accept its peace initiatives. The main reason for this was Nasser's fear of being perceived by the Egyptian people and the Arabs in general as succumbing to American pressure or Israeli dictates. In fact, the Egyptian president had not budged since the June 1967 war. His policy was to let the superpowers fight Egypt's political battle, as they did in 1957, and regain the status quo ante through their influence. Nasser resumed the hostilities across the Suez Canal in order to drag the region into a controlled confrontation. He was ready to absorb the Israeli reaction; in July 1969, after several months of clashes, he even declared that a new phase in the fighting had begun, the "liberation" phase. In fact, the day of liberation did not arrive, but only escalation and an even fiercer Israeli response.[63]

The Egyptian president failed to understand that times had changed and that with the change of administrations in Washington the American view of the region had also changed. Unlike the Eisenhower administration, the Johnson and Nixon administrations did not feel any particular pressure to help Egypt. In the words of Dan Schueftan, the Americans were no longer willing to "pull Egypt's chestnuts out of the fire."[64] Even though they sometimes took positions contrary to Israel's, they were not prepared to break with it. Nasser, for his part, was unwilling to agree to anything less than a complete Israeli withdrawal; he wanted it all, but was unwilling to give anything in return. He may have been encouraged by the fact that the American proposals kept changing and preferred

to wait for the best one, which would satisfy his demands. At this stage of the conflict, however, the conflagration had not reached the intensity sought by the Egyptian president (that would occur in January–April 1970). The United States did not fear a regional conflict that would escalate into a superpower confrontation, so, as the State Department had pledged, it did not propose new peace initiatives. The 1969 October Proposal was the last; after it was rejected by the parties, it was filed away. The political standstill was back, and so was the military escalation on the front.[65]

The same day that the Soviets dispatched their negative response to the American plan, Rogers held a press conference at which he repeated the main points of his address at the Galaxy Conference. He again underscored that his proposal was fair and balanced and compatible with Security Council Resolution 242. He explained that the United States was not interested in an imposed settlement, but on the contrary attached great importance to the need for negotiations in which the parties would arrange security matters between themselves. If the parties to the conflict were not willing to make concessions or compromise for the sake of a just and lasting peace, he said, the cycle of violence would continue for a long time.[66]

Rogers used the news conference to try to calm the waters stirred up by the Israeli leadership's harsh reaction to the publication of the plan. He rejected the Israeli claims that there had been some erosion in the American position and ruled out the possibility that the United States would agree to impose a settlement on Israel. He also rejected the rumors of a link between military assistance to Israel and its acceptance of the political plan, and said that the United States was weighing the aid requests "with full consideration of their problems, and in full realization that we have an obligation […] to support the sovereignty of Israel and its future security."[67]

The State Department had underestimated Israel's ability to resist its peace proposals, however. Israel objected to the American desire to discuss with the Soviets the nature of the settlement, to the existence of the Forum of Four, and to the various American initiatives for an accord with the Arabs. Hence its attack on the Rogers Plan was stronger than anticipated, with Israel deploying all its big guns, at home and abroad.

On December 22, Israel released its official response to what it referred to as "the disquieting [American] initiatives." The government rejected the proposals, because they "prejudiced the chances of establishing peace, disregarded the essential need to determine secure and agreed borders" in peace treaties achieved by direct negotiations, "affected Israel's sovereign rights and security" with regard to solutions for "refugees and the status of Jerusalem," and did not require the Arab states to end the "hostile activities of the sabotage and terror organizations." Were these proposals to be implemented, "Israel's security and peace would be in very grave danger." Israel would not be "sacrificed" to Great Power politics and would reject "any attempt to impose a forced solution upon it." Finally, the "aggressive Arab rules" would certainly construe the American proposals "as an attempt to appease them, at Israel's expense."[68]

Speaking in the Knesset a week later, on December 29, Prime Minister Meir attacked the American position reflected in the Rogers Plan. She asserted that the administration's position in the region had regressed; whereas in the past the United States had agreed that the parties to the conflict must formulate the details of the agreement through direct negotiations, now it was doing so itself, in concert with the other powers and particularly with the Soviets. Furthermore, the Americans had displayed a readiness to retreat from the principle of direct negotiations and were taking worrisome positions on other main issues, such as the refugees, the borders, and Jerusalem. In fact, Meir said, the recent American proposals would harm Israel's security and if actually carried out would constitute "a grave danger to its very existence."[69]

A day after the release of the Israeli statement, Rogers met with a delegation of American Jewish leaders who wanted to express their protest and anxiety about his diplomatic initiative. The Secretary of State was not the only one who felt the Jewish pressure: with the coming congressional elections in the background, the Jewish lobby, along with non-Jewish allies, had begun pressuring members of Congress as well as the White House to retreat from the Rogers Plan and supply additional arms and aircraft to Israel. The pressure quickly bore fruit and members of Congress began to call for support for Israel.[70]

Another step was to brief the Israeli representatives around the world about the risks inherent in the recent American initiatives. According to a special memorandum sent out by the Foreign Ministry, despite the United States' awareness of the poor chances for peace between Israel and the Arabs, of the diminished Soviet willingness to work for peace, and of the Egyptian president's unwillingness and inability to agree to peace, the United States continued to float new plans that would harm Israel. Furthermore, the American administration was motivated by a fear of losing its standing with the moderate Arab countries in particular and the Arab states in general, and even feared "diplomatic isolation" in the international community.[71]

To date, continued the memorandum, the gulf between the United States and the Soviet Union about the substance of the settlement for the region had stemmed from the Soviet desire for a political solution that would eliminate the results of the 1967 war and even turn the wheel back to the situation of the years before then. By contrast, the Americans had supported an end of the conflict between the Arabs and Israel and the conclusion of lasting peace between the parties. However, the recent proposals by the State Department pointed to a trend in which the fundamental differences between the American and Soviet political approaches were obscured, perhaps in an attempt to bridge the gaps between the superpowers. Were Moscow to succeed in moving Washington away from its initial position, Nasser would be the beneficiary, because the political solution, the first phase in his plan, would make it easier for him to engage in a military action to destroy Israel in the second phase. This goal would be achieved through "a Soviet diplomatic campaign of attrition against the American positions and a military war of attrition conducted by the Arab states against Israel." Nevertheless, the Israeli Foreign Ministry instructed its

representatives around the world not to create the impression that the relationships between Israel and the United States had deteriorated.[72]

An epilogue to the Rogers Plan

As far as the State Department was concerned, 1969 ended with a whimper, as all its initiatives and efforts had come to nothing. The Rogers Plan had been shot down, even though the State Department tried to claim otherwise; or, as Kissinger, with his characteristic acerbity, put it: "What possessed the Department to persevere when all the evidence indicated certain failure must be left to students of administrative psychology."[73] There is much truth in this assessment. The State Department, led by Rogers, seemed to be pursuing a settlement that seemed quite implausible, or, to quote Kissinger again, was "possessed," and was ignoring all the signs that the Egyptians and Soviets were simply trying to buy time and waiting for a better deal.

Had a golden opportunity been lost?[74] A close look at the October Proposal and the Rogers Plan reveals that they were premature. Neither of the warring parties saw them as responding to their own strategic needs at the time, so neither evinced any willingness to compromise in pursuit of a diplomatic resolution of their conflict. The Soviets, the Americans' partners in the Forum of Two, did not display the slightest sign of a willingness to shatter the status quo in the Middle East. On the contrary, they seemed to be perfectly happy with it. Furthermore, they were not prepared to pressure Nasser to be more flexible, as Rogers and Sisco had promised to do vis-à-vis the Israelis. Finally, the Soviets saw no good reason to back a plan that was "made in America" and whose success would leave Washington with all the credit.

Nor were the actual parties to the conflict, Israel and Egypt, cooperating with the diplomatic efforts. Israel worked to frustrate every State Department initiative to get it to reach an agreement with the Arabs, because it saw the terms as inimical to its interests. Given that the American initiatives were advanced while the guns were booming across the Canal, any Israeli compromise would have given Nasser and Egypt the triumph they sought. So Israel exploited the disagreement between Rogers and Kissinger, undermined the Secretary of State's efforts, and employed the Jewish lobby in Washington. On the other side, the Egyptian leadership, from Nasser down, continued to attack the American proposals, old and new alike, and even the United States itself for its one-sided policy in the region. Nasser believed that the American proposals for a settlement were an attempt to revise Resolution 242 or an "imperialist plot" that aimed at an Egyptian surrender.[75]

Finally, at this stage of the War of Attrition (October to December 1969), Nasser could see how Egypt was advancing towards its goals. The international community was increasingly involved in the crisis; the Americans were becoming more flexible and showing a willingness to pressure Israel to do likewise. So the Egyptian president thought that stubborn rejection of the American ideas, in tandem with further escalation of the fighting, would serve his country's

interests. As stated, though, the Nixon administration was not moved by Nasser's attempts to pressure it. What is more, earlier in the summer, Israel had begun taking the military initiative and launched deep-bombing raids that altered the profile of the conflict. In the coming months, the escalation across the Canal and the State Department's failure to devise an overall plan for resolving the conflict led it to adopt a much less ambitious outline, whose primary goal was to get the sides to stop shooting and then begin negotiations towards a settlement.

Notes

1 Nixon Address to the United Nations General Assembly, September 18, 1969. See www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/richardnixonunitednations1969.htm.
2 The American goal was to reach, in concert with the Soviet Union, a neutral formulation for these issues, with the final treatment and resolution of disagreements being left to the negotiations between Israel and the Arabs. See "Memorandum, Next Steps on the Middle East," October 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on the Middle East," October 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
3 "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on the Middle East," October 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
4 "State 173218," October 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 182821," October 28, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 58, "Paper Prepared in the Department of State," 198–201; Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 372–3.
5 "Memorandum, Status of US–Soviet Talks—Information Memorandum," October 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Middle East Settlement Efforts," November 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1824 Pol, 27 A/I; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 58, "Paper Prepared in the Department of State," 198–201.
6 "Memorandum, Status of US–Soviet Talks—Information Memorandum," October 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 182821," October 28, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
7 "State 175952," October 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1838 Pol, 27-14 A/I. On the tense atmosphere between the United States and Israel, see also: "No. 12," January 9, 1970, ISA, FM 4549/1; Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*, 60–3.
8 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 352–5, 368–72; "State 182922," October 30, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*, 60–3.
9 "State 184399," October 30, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
10 "Department of State for the Press, Statement by William P. Rogers before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations," March 27, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum, Status of US–Soviet Talks—Information Memorandum," October 25, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 182922," October 30, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum, Your Meeting with Ambassador Rabin—Thursday," October 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
11 "Memorandum, Your Meeting with Ambassador Rabin—Thursday," October 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
12 "No. 269," November 19, 1969, ISA, FM 4157/5; "Telegram to Missions 994, Israel–United States Relations," December 24, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/3.
13 *Gamal Abdel Nasser Speeches*, "The Address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the opening of the 2nd Parliamentary Session of the National Assembly." November 6, 1969. http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1264&lang=en. [Arabic].
14 Ibid.

15 "USUN 4051," November 7, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
16 Ibid.
17 "Cairo 2680," November 7, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1824 Pol, 27 A/I.
18 "State 189563," November 8, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 109.
19 "State 189511," November 7, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 189564," November 8, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 189580," November 8, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
20 Dishon, *MER* 5: 38.
21 Despite the speech to the Joint Defense Council, in his memoirs Riad claimed that he did not reject Rogers' proposal. See Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 111; "Amman 5434," November 9, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 2731," November 15, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 2553 Pol, 2-1 UAR; Dishon, *MER* 5: 38.
22 "State 190449," November 11, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 191142," November 12, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
23 *Al-Ahram*, November 14, 1969; "UAR: Heikal Derides US 'Proposals'; Implies Door is Closed to a Political Solution," November 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
24 "UAR: Nasser's November 6 Speech—The Medium Buried the Message," November 13, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "UAR: Heikal Derides US 'Proposals'; Implies Door is Closed to a Political Solution," November 14, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1839 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Middle East Settlement Efforts," November 16, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1824 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Arab–Israeli Problem," November 28, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1824 Pol, 27 A/I.
25 Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 110–11; "Cairo 2750," November 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 2751," November 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
26 Nasser also compared Rusk's Seven-Point Plan to the subsequent American proposals. In a conversation with Canadian External Affairs Secretary Mitchell Sharp, Nasser said that the last American proposals were "less satisfactory" than Rusk's proposal. See "Cairo 2764," November 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
27 "Cairo 2769," November 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 2820," November 26, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 2831," November 29, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 2552 Pol, Political Affairs and Relations UAR.
28 "Cairo 2750," November 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 2751," November 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
29 "State 196617," November 22, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 203672," December 6, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1824 Pol, 27 A/I.
30 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 73, "Editorial Note," 236–9; Korn, *Stalemate*, 160; Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*, 65–7.
31 Rogers was referring to the resolutions passed at the end of the meeting of the Arab League Joint Defense Council in Cairo, on November 8–10, 1969.
32 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 67, "Memorandum from Secretary of State Rogers to President Nixon," 221–6.
33 Ibid.
34 A comparison of the draft with the transcript of the actual speech reveals few if any changes.
35 "Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, Draft Speech for Secretary on Middle East," December 2, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1824 Pol, 27 A/I.
36 Ibid.
37 The power game between Kissinger at the White House and the diplomats of the State Department dominates this conversation. Sisco expected a rapid response, and his point of departure was the assumption that the National Security Council would

meet later that same day (December 4). But Kissinger rejected the idea. See *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 73, "Editorial Note," 236–9.

38 Interview by Thomas Stern, November 24, 1993, for The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Saunders,%20Harold%20H.toc.pdf.

39 Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 374–5; Gelber, *Attrition: The Forgotten War*, 156–9; Podeh, *Chances for Peace*, 100; Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*, 79–81.

40 Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 374–5.

41 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 74, "Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting," 239–57.

42 Ibid.

43 "Memorandum for the President, Next Steps on Arab–Israeli Dispute," April 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

44 "Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, the White House, July 21, 1969/Memorandum for the President and the Secretary of State, Report on Moscow Talks on Middle East, July 14–18, 1969," from Joseph J. Sisco, Assistant Secretary, July 21, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1837 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

45 "Department of State for the Press, No. 371, Address by the Honorable William P. Rogers, Secretary of State, Before the 1969 Galaxy Conference on Adult Education," December 9, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 "Memorandum of Conversation, Arab–Israel Settlement," December 12, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

50 Ibid.

51 The Americans protested at once and declared that this argument was "completely untenable." In fact, they said, this was precisely the logic behind the demand. Egypt had never recognized "that line as Israel's border, since it had never recognized Israel's existence." The crux of any settlement was that Egypt must recognize Israel's existence and accept the old international boundary as that country's western border.

52 "Memorandum of Conversation, Arab–Israel Settlement," December 12, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

53 "Cairo 2905," December 12, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1825 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 2910," December 12, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

54 *Al-Akhbar*, December 17, 1969; "Cairo 2936," December 17, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

55 "Cairo 2941," December 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 2955," December 20, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 2553 Pol, 2-1 UAR.

56 "Memorandum of Conversation, Secretary's Speech," December 17, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1825 Pol, 27 A/I.

57 Ibid.

58 *Al-Ahram*, April 4 and 5, 1969; "Cairo 976," April 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 2553 Pol, 2 UAR; Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 360; "State 057357," April 15, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 82," April 17, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/2; "Memorandum of Conversation, Fawzi Visit," April 4, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "USUN 1053," April 7, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1819 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Your Meeting with Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi," April 10, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1834 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

59 "Amman 5740," December 3, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1845 Pol, Political Affairs and Relations Arab–US; Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 377–9.

60 "Middle East—USSR: Soviet Policy between the Sadat Visit and the Arab Summit," December 19, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1840 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

61 "State 212662," December 26, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1825 Pol, 27 A/I.

62 Ibid; "State 211899," December 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1841 Pol, 27 A/I.
63 Blanga, "Nasser's Dilemma; Podeh," *Chances for Peace*, 99; Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*, 78–9.
64 Schueftan, *Attrition*, 47.
65 Blanga, "Nasser's Dilemma," 301–26.
66 "State 211899," December 23, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1841 Pol, 27 A/I.
67 Ibid.
68 *Israel's Foreign Relations*, "Israel Rejects the Rogers Plan—Cabinet Statement, December 22, 1969"; at https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook1/Pages/10%20Israel%20Rejects%20the%20Rogers%20Plan-%20Cabinet%20Stateme.aspx.
69 *Knesset Record*, Vol. 56/G/first session, 19th meeting of the Seventh Knesset, December 29, 1969, 311–12 [Hebrew].
70 "Telegram to Missions 994," December 24, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/3; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 377.
71 "Telegram to Missions 994," December 24, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/3.
72 Ibid.
73 Kissinger, *White House Years*, 375.
74 Podeh, *Chances for Peace*, 98–100; Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*, 78–9.
75 Nasser, *al-Majmuah al-Kamila*, vol. 2, 255–79.

7 The day after

From failed peace proposals to a cease-fire initiative

> The battle with Israel depends on who can hold out longer. Israel has limited potentialities while Arabs have vast resources. Area which Arabs inhabit is far bigger than the limited area of Israel and Arabs by far outnumber Israelis.
>
> Abdel Munim Rifai, Jordanian Foreign Minister[1]

The door to peace is still open

On December 20, 1969, when the Arab League summit met in Rabat, the capital of Morocco, President Nasser's goal was forging Arab unity in the battle against Israel. This meant, first of all, obtaining the Arab states' support for his country's military and economy, but also reasserting its leadership of the Arab world. However, Nasser was unable to win the support he expected from the other participants. The moderates—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Morocco—did not want to be dragged after Egypt's ambitions, while the more bellicose countries—Syria, Iraq, and South Yemen—asserted, based on their reading of the situation, that it would be impossible to wage a successful war against Israel in the near future. Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia agreed with this assessment and expressed their satisfaction that the summit did not take a decision that could lead to war with Israel. On the economic front, Saudi Arabia did not agree to make any new economic commitments to Egypt, Jordan, or the *fedayeen*; Kuwait agreed to provide Egypt with a one-time grant of $28 million. Nasser remained almost completely dependent on the Soviet Union, both economically and militarily.[2]

In the view of both the Americans and the Soviets, Nasser's failure to enlist the other Arab states in his confrontation with Israel left the way open to peace. Many State Department officials believed that Nasser left Rabat with the ability to continue seeking a diplomatic solution to the crisis in the region. They were also encouraged by international reactions, notably those of France and Britain, but primarily those of the moderate Arab states that wanted to move the diplomatic process forward. The Jordanians' position on the American initiatives was largely positive; this led to expectations that King Hussein would persuade Nasser to respond positively to the plan that had just been shot down. More generally, the Jordanians asserted that Rogers' speech had launched a process

that could change the Arab states' negative attitude towards to the United States and in the long-term rebuild the trust between the Americans and the Arabs.[3]

The Saudis (like the Jordanians) urged the Americans to hold direct contacts with the Egyptians about the peace initiatives, rather than go through the Soviets. Even though Cairo had rejected the American proposals, it seemed to want to leave open a "window of opportunity" for an accord. Ghorbal told State Department officials that despite the failure of the Rogers Plan, the United States should continue to pursue a solution to the Middle East conflict. The Americans insisted that their diplomatic efforts, including the October Proposal and the Rogers speech, were balanced and fair formulas for a settlement between Israel and Egypt and Jordan; no new proposals would be drafted or submitted to the parties.[4]

As a result of the encouraging reactions, Assistant Secretary of State Sisco recommended that Rogers take the American diplomatic initiative a step further. He suggested making direct contact with Egypt and Jordan and enlisting regional and international support for the American effort. The October and December initiatives should be circulated to all interested countries, with explanations of their core elements. Sisco added that the American plan should be presented to the people of the Middle Eastern countries, in tandem with personal notes to the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan, and Israel.[5]

In notes to Egyptian Foreign Minister Riad and Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdel Munim Rifai, the State Department emphasized that it was not asking their countries to agree to or accept every word in the documents. The aim was to clarify whether the October and December proposals could serve as reasonable guidelines for getting the parties to negotiate under Jarring's auspices. Because it was clear to the State Department that Jordan could not act without Egyptian consent, it expected Cairo and Amman to coordinate their position on the peace initiatives. In parallel, in accordance with Sisco's recommendation, Rogers also contacted Foreign Minister Eban, hoping "to keep the Israeli option open" with regard to the American peace proposals and tone down the Israeli reaction to them, but without retreating in the slightest from the State Department's positions as found in the proposals, and to provide backing to Eban "within the context of a hawkish-oriented cabinet." Here we will focus on the note to Foreign Minister Riad.[6]

The American note was written in response to Riad's note of November 16.[7] Rogers observed that Riad had stated that Egypt's final position would be determined only after the complete picture—that is, a solution of the Jordanian issue as well—regarding the implementation of Resolution 242 had been made clear. The Secretary of State wrote that in the interim the United States had submitted several drafts to the Forum of Four aimed at resolving the Israeli–Jordanian issue and had also publicly clarified its position on a settlement between Israel and Egypt. In keeping with the Egyptian request, the United States had drawn up an outline for a settlement, whose principles applied to all the countries that had accepted the Security Council resolution.[8]

Rogers emphasized that the United States wanted to use its influence to encourage negotiations towards a settlement. He again asserted that Egypt,

Jordan, and Israel had been sent "fair and balanced guidelines" that could be a basis for helping Ambassador Jarring and the parties themselves conduct negotiations on ways of implementing Resolution 242 and establishing a just and lasting peace. Rogers added, on a personal note, that he knew there were some items in the American initiatives to which Egypt and Israel did not agree. He also remarked that the Soviet Union opposed the peace proposals. Nevertheless, at this stage, an official response by the Egyptian leadership to the initiatives was required, because "a positive response from the UAR would facilitate the efforts being made to achieve a stable peace." In the absence of such a response, Rogers observed at the end of his note that it would be hard to see how there could be any benefit from a continuation of the talks among the major powers.[9]

Alongside the conciliatory approach towards the Egyptians, the State Department made it plain that, despite the American willingness to continue its peace efforts and hold discussions with Nasser and King Hussein, now, after it had presented two peace plans, the ball was in the Egyptian–Jordanian court. In talks between Bergus, the head of the American Interests Section in Cairo, and senior Egyptian figures, the former stated that "a sine qua non" for the continued implementation of a balanced American policy in the region was some sign from Egypt that it was sincerely interested in the American attempts to achieve peace in the Middle East. Bergus added that the October and December proposals were a final offer and the United States would not go beyond what it had already proposed.[10]

While the Americans awaited a positive sign from Cairo, the Egyptian leadership made a new-old demand to the State Department: a resolution on the Syrian front as well. Ghorbal submitted the request to Sisco and emphasized the need for a prior commitment on this matter as well. Such a commitment would prevent the impression that might otherwise be created in the Arab world that Egypt and Jordan had abandoned Syria after arranging their own affairs. The Egyptians added that a proposal that included Syria would enable Egypt and Jordan to place stronger pressure on Damascus to accept the Security Council resolution. The State Department was not convinced and refused to comply with the Egyptian demand: First, because Syria had not accepted Resolution 242; second, because Cairo's stubbornness about the Syrian question would lead all parties to the conflict into a dead-end. Moreover, the State Department told Egypt that its demand might inspire doubts about its seriousness and interest in making diplomatic progress towards peace. It could be seen as attempting to buy time and avoid an official answer on the matter.[11]

In parallel to the efforts by Rogers and other senior State Department personnel to hold direct contacts with the Egyptians, the Americans employed indirect channels, primarily Jordan. As mentioned, there was hope in the State Department, especially after the Arab League summit in Rabat, that King Hussein would be able to persuade Nasser to respond favorably to the peace initiative. Jordan did show a willingness to do so, because it wanted to see progress in the diplomatic process and because, as one of the moderate states, it wanted to keep

the possibility of a settlement open. Already in late December 1969, Foreign Minister Rifai told the Americans that King Hussein had responded positively to the draft settlement between Israel and Jordan. On January 9, 1970, a conversation in a similar vein took place between Crown Prince Hassan and Secretary Rogers; the next day Hussein told the American ambassador in Amman, Harrison M. Symmes, that, aside from several clarifications, he found the American proposals on the Jordanian front acceptable. The king expressed his satisfaction primarily with the peace initiatives and the American diplomatic position, and added that his immediate goal was to persuade the Egyptians to react positively to the initiative.[12]

In mid-January 1970, Foreign Minister Rifai came to Cairo for talks with the Egyptian leadership about the American peace proposals. Rifai met with Foreign Minister Riad, Presidential Advisor Mahmoud Fawzi, and with Nasser himself on January 20. The tone was positive. Even though there was no agreement on specific steps to continue the process, Rifai said that his country would pursue the fruitful discussions with the Americans about the main points of the plan. The Egyptians declared that for the present they would not hold direct talks with Washington, but authorized Rifai to address the Egyptian aspects of the initiatives in his talks with State Department officials.[13]

As a result of the talks with the Jordanians and the positive spirit emanating from Amman, the State Department hoped to open a diplomatic channel with Egypt that would be even more productive than the Forum of Two. The Jordanians could serve as intermediaries between Egypt and the United States and encourage Nasser to talk directly to the Americans. Rifai received the king's approval to keep talking with State Department officials about the peace initiatives and was asked not to quibble about words in text. Accordingly, senior personnel at the American embassy in Amman were directed to steer the talks with the Jordanians, especially Rifai, towards the Egyptian channel, and to ask the Jordanians for answers about Egypt's position on a diplomatic settlement, in addition to other topics discussed. They were also asked to try to extract an explicit commitment from Amman and Cairo about key elements of the October and December 1969 proposals.[14]

But the American expectations were too high. Several days after the meeting between Rifai and the Egyptian leadership, King Hussein told Symmes that Egypt found itself unable to discuss the American proposals at present. In other words, Cairo's diplomatic and military bargaining position was not strong enough to make demands on Washington. Hussein added that Israel's deep-penetration bombing raids had made it difficult for Nasser to see the American initiatives in a positive light or to discuss them with the other members of the Egyptian government.[15] For the Americans, as we will see, this was a prediction that had come true. The State Department had long been warning that the Israeli bombing would make it difficult for Nasser to accept the American proposals. As long as the Israeli raids continued, senior officials warned, Nasser could not accept the peace initiative, because the Arab world, and Egyptians in particular, would see it as a surrender.

Israel's deep-penetration raids

In late 1969 and early 1970, Israel continued to consolidate its dominance in the air. It expanded its raids and extended them deeper into the Egyptian interior. In mid-October 1969, the raids targeted and destroyed Egyptian military installations, including radar stations, all along the Suez Canal front, giving the Israel Air Force (IAF) complete freedom of action. When the War of Attrition began, in March 1969, the IDF, with the approval of the political echelon, decided to maintain the Israeli fortifications along the Canal and employ intensive firepower that would compel the Egyptians to cease hostilities. But given the IDF's limitations, this mission had to be assigned to the Air Force, which could conduct deep-penetration raids. Israel estimated that Moscow would not get directly involved in the conflict, due to fear of a similar American response, but soon discovered that it was mistaken.[16]

As mentioned, in July 1969, Israel began an extensive bombing campaign (Operation Boxer) that effectively destroyed Egypt's air-defense system in the Canal area. This left open skies for the unrelenting and higher intensity attacks by IAF planes on Egyptian installations. The campaign was so successful that Rabin asserted that the

> argument that there is a risk of war in the Middle East, which was made in early 1969, has effectively disappeared. The [American] government and public understand that the Air Force operations have achieved total control of Egyptian airspace and eliminated the Egyptian option of war in the near future.[17]

Six months later, at the end of December 1969, Israel made a significant change in its military tactics and consolidated its aerial supremacy. The new tactic expanded in early January 1970 and continued through April. On December 25, the IAF launched a major operation against Egyptian ground installations, the largest since the June 1967 war. In slightly more than eight hours, dozens of warplanes pummeled the entire Canal front to a depth of 20 kilometers, without the loss of a single Israeli aircraft. The results of the raid were felt by the entire Egyptian deployment west of the Canal. The installations destroyed included 12 SA-2 surface-to-air missile batteries sent from the Soviet Union to Alexandria, which had arrived at the front several days previously. The day after the operation, while the Egyptian military was still trying to recover from the blow, an IDF commando force attacked an Egyptian post and came away with a P-12 radar system (Operation *Tarnegol* 53). The seizure of the radar was a major boost to the Israeli war effort, because of the damage to the Egyptian electronic warfare and air-defense systems. Henceforth the IAF could penetrate even deeper into Egyptian territory.[18]

Two weeks later, on January 7, 1970, Israel continued to demonstrate its control of the skies when it attacked a series of Egyptian air-defense installations in the Nile Valley and Nile Delta (Operation *Priha*), in the deepest aerial raid since

the Six Day War. The operation was an overwhelming success. According to American estimates, since September 1969 Israel had destroyed Egypt's forward air-defense systems, including radar stations, conventional missiles, and anti-aircraft sites. By early January 1970, the IAF had cleared a relatively safe flight path between the Suez Canal and Dahshur (40 kilometers from Cairo). In addition to the severe blow to Egyptian morale, there were many casualties and serious damage to both civilian and military facilities; in response, Cairo decided to relocate military installations deep into the interior or place them in civilian buildings to protect them from Israeli air attacks.[19]

In November 1969, before Israel began dispatching its "airborne artillery" on deep-bombing raids, officials at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem came to the conclusion that the Soviet Union and Egypt had agreed on shipments of SA-3 missiles to Egypt, to be manned by Soviet crews (Operation *Kavkaz*). In December and January, when Sadat and then Nasser visited Moscow, it was also agreed that Soviet pilots would be stationed in Egypt. But the Soviets did not agree to all the Egyptian demands; for example, they did not provide Egypt with MiG-23 aircraft. By early May 1970, the Soviet Union had been able to restock the Egyptian Air Force to 150% of its previous level of matériel, and the artillery and armored corps to 180%. However, the Soviets conditioned this lavish military assistance on "greater supervision" by Moscow, expressed by the dispatch of Soviet advisors and trainers down to the battalion and company levels. Israel concluded that it was the arrival of Soviet advisors in Egypt, and of course the arms supplies, that had prompted the Egyptians to break the cease-fire and launch a war of attrition.[20]

The IAF raids came ever closer to population centers and major industrial zones, bearing a psychological message—Egypt was powerless in the face of Israel's might. The State Department believed that this was one of the Israeli leadership's goals: making the Egyptian people aware of how vulnerable they were and inciting the disillusioned population against the regime, thus leading to Nasser's overthrow. Its assessment was that Israel wanted to make Egypt pay a very high price—political even more than military—that demonstrated the futility of the attrition policy and would lead to a cessation of the hostilities.

The State Department conjectured that Israel had another and concealed goal.[21] Sisco and others believed that the Israelis hoped their attacks would make it difficult for Nasser to accept the October and December American initiatives. If so, Israel was blocking the American bid to profit from its peace proposals. Bergus (whom Shlomo Argov, the Israeli Minister in Washington, said was "not particularly stable"[22]) went much further, reporting to his superiors that the air campaign was part of a broader Israeli policy "to frustrate any peace efforts" that did not accord with Israeli interests, "no matter how unrealistic and damaging to US interests 'their liking' is."[23]

Richard Parker, the head of the Egyptian desk in the State Department, estimated that the deep-bombing raids would seriously damage the American peace efforts, because the IAF was using planes provided by the United States. Egypt would blame the United States for "Israel's victory," because Nasser believed

there was a "foreign devil" directing all the events in the region. Nasser would see any American proposal for a settlement in a negative light as long as he believed that the United States supported the Israeli efforts to topple him.[24]

State Department officials repeatedly expressed their fear that Israel would expand its deep-penetration raids in a way that would leave Nasser facing heavy pressure that could destabilize his regime. Although the Egyptian ruler was not admired in the hallways of the administration, it remained an open question whether his removal should be sought. Parker was one of those who did not think it wise to oust Nasser; he asserted that it was important to "dissociate ourselves from Israel's efforts" to bring down the Nasserite regime "not only for the historical record, but also to maintain our bona fides in the Arab world." He added that

> much of our problem today in getting the Arabs to accept what we propose is due to their lack of confidence in our intentions and of our willingness to stand by what we say about non-interference in the internal affairs of the region.

His opinion was shared by others at the State Department who believed that if the United States stood by idly, Israel would continue its air attacks. In all this, there was more than a hint that the administration should try to restrain Israel.[25]

The Israeli attacks of early January 1970 were seen as disproportionate to the situation on the ground and inspired serious charges against Israel: it was Israel that had aggravated the situation in the region and set off a chain reaction in which the Arabs hardened their position on a diplomatic settlement even more; it was Israel that had undermined the diplomatic stand of the moderate Arab states and Israel that had incited Egypt to resume the hostilities across the Canal. Israel, the argument went, knew that Nasser would not begin negotiations from a position of weakness. Nor could he allow himself to accept a cease-fire, because that would be portrayed as capitulation. This was why the Israeli government had decided to ramp up the violence. Because Egypt had responded in kind, Israel permitted itself to maintain the violent status quo without having to worry too much about an Arab acceptance of the American peace proposals, which would place it in an awkward situation.[26]

The State Department did not keep this view to itself and in fact shared it with Egypt. American diplomats told their Egyptian counterparts that the United States could not promise that Israel would agree to participate in negotiations on the basis of the peace initiatives it had presented. They hinted that a sign from Cairo about its willingness in principle to pursue the diplomatic process on the basis of those initiatives was likely to embarrass the Israelis and eventually bring them to the negotiating table. Moreover, the Americans again made it plain that the continuation of the talks in the Forum of Four, including progress towards a diplomatic settlement, depended in large measure on an explicit and serious response to the American initiative and a more sympathetic take on it by Egypt and the other parties to the conflict. The message to Egypt was clear: unless it

took some positive and sympathetic step, the diplomatic process and American efforts would remain in the drawer and gather dust.[27]

Of greater concern to the Americans were the increased Soviet presence in Egypt, the acceleration of the arms race in the region, and the threat of a flare-up that would deteriorate into a superpower confrontation. On more than one occasion, the Kremlin had hinted that if Israel continued to attack and wreak damage deep within Egypt, it would be forced to remedy the military imbalance in the region. It was specifically this threat that troubled Parker in a memo to Sisco in which, with Bergus's support, he recommended that the United States act in concert with the Soviets to restore the cease-fire. According to Parker, Israel was basking in its military successes and might have lost interest in a cease-fire. There was a risk that the Israeli actions would push Cairo and Moscow into a corner, leaving the Soviets with no choice but to intervene and make a stronger commitment to support Nasser. Parker conjectured that at some stage the Soviets might decide that the only option still open was to send pilots to Egypt to take on the Israelis and defend Egyptian airspace.[28]

Israel did not deny its lack of interest in reaching a settlement with Nasser or its desire to see him fall. In September 1969, Eban and Rabin met with Rogers, Sisco, and Alfred Atherton, the Country Director for Israel and Arab–Israel Affairs at the State Department, to receive an update on the progress of the Forum of Two talks with the Soviets. Rabin, who had for some time been urging his government to take a harder stand against Egypt and Nasser, decided, as he wrote later, to "drop a bombshell." To Eban's total shock, and the astonishment of the others present, he said that in his opinion it would not be at all bad if Nasser fell from power and disappeared from the political arena. He was certain that that would be a severe blow to the Soviets. Whoever came in Nasser's stead would be more favorable to both the Americans and the Israelis, or at least less dangerous. It was the best chance for the United States to improve its standing in the Middle East. Rabin's observation was met with a thunderous silence. Atherton was afraid that Rogers' failure to react might be taken as agreement. As the meeting was drawing to a close, he called Rogers' attention to the fact that there had been no response to Rabin's comment. But if Atherton was expecting a vigorous and unambiguous statement by Rogers against the idea, all he heard was a mild answer that left room for interpretation; namely, that the fact that Rogers had not responded to Rabin's statement should not be taken as American agreement with what he said.[29]

Kissinger also learned of the Israeli interest in a coup in Egypt. On September 25, in a special memo to Nixon—shortly after the meeting between Rogers and Eban and on the day that Prime Minister Meir arrived in Washington—he wrote about the Israeli position as clarified in a channel "the Israelis have often used […] for revealing their real thinking." After the IAF had joined the fray, with the Boxer bombing campaign in July and the series of raids in early September, the Israelis had explained that their military strategy was intended to show Nasser that the War of Attrition would "cost Egypt heavily." The Israelis were hoping

> that if they continue their present course of military action, Nasser may well fall. Nasser's fall would open the way for a new play of forces in the area. If Nasser falls, his successor will be less dangerous to Western interests because he will not have Nasser's personal charisma. Moderate Arab leaders will be more free to make peace.[30]

Kissinger continued that the Israelis believed that the Soviets were exploiting the Arab frustration with their inability to defeat Israel and the Egyptians' desire to lead the Arab world. "The present struggle is above all an Egyptian–Russian struggle against Israel. Israel's very existence prevents total Soviet domination over the region." As a result, claimed Israel, the Soviet Union was not interested in a Middle East peace accord. "With peace, the Arab states would divert their major energies to economic and social development. [The] Soviet capacity to compete with the US in that field is small." So in addition to the War of Attrition's obvious goal of weakening Israel, the Soviets were hoping that it would "make the US weary of the situation and ready to accept a compromise peace formula." Because the war certainly "makes heavy demands on Israel's resources," Kissinger alerted Nixon that Meir would be asking for additional military and economic assistance, on the grounds that "the 'identity of interests between the US and Israel' justifies US material support for Israel's strategy."

Kissinger saw this as "a forthright statement of Israel's strategy—change the overall situation in the Mid-East by removing Nasser." This, he wrote, was an outstanding example of Israel's axiom that it had an identity of interests with the United States—and he then proceeded to cast doubt on it. Even if the Soviets profited from the tension, the United States could "outrun the USSR in [a] peaceful competition." This meant that it was in American interest to support the Israeli strategy only if that strategy could "promise peace." What is more, it was far from certain that Hussein would find it easier to make peace if Nasser disappeared from the scene, because the *fedayeen* and the radical Arab states would still be an inhibiting factor. Accordingly, Kissinger summed up, "it seems more likely—and some Israelis admit this—that Israel's purpose is to surround itself with weak Arab governments so that it can weather prolonged tension behind its present borders." On October 7, Alexander Haig, Kissinger's deputy at the National Security Council, returned the memo to his boss with Nixon's handwritten annotations. The president had highlighted the paragraph beginning "the present struggle," underlined from "Egyptian–Russian struggle" to the end of the paragraph, and written "correct" underneath it. And at the bottom of the memo Nixon had jotted, "K[issinger]—Can't C.I.A. handle Nasser?!"[31]

Israel remained firm in its desire to see Nasser's overthrow. Yossi Ben-Aharon, the first secretary in the Washington embassy, reported to Jerusalem on Marshall Wiley's impressions of his visit to Israel. Wiley, a counselor in the American Interests Section in Cairo, had met with people from the Foreign Ministry and Military Intelligence and they had all told him that "Nasser's fall would be a blessing for the region, for American interests, and for Israel." But, added Ben-Aharon, the American administration was not convinced by the Israeli

arguments and found no solid basis for the assumption that Nasser's successor would be better, neither in his attitude towards Israel nor the extent of Soviet influence on him.[32]

Late in January 1970, after the IAF had launched the campaign of deep-penetration raids, Argov told Cline, the director of the INR, that, in light of the experience of the direct channel between Jerusalem and Cairo in the UN-sponsored armistice talks on Rhodes in 1949, "Israel does not expect to reach a political settlement with Nasser and even sees this as impossible." In effect, Nasser's presence on the scene also ruled out negotiations with the other Arab states. He spurred other Arab leaders to oppose peace with Israel and would never agree to recognize Israel, because Israel was the stumbling block that prevented him from implementing his dream of pan-Arab hegemony. "The Israelis do not know when or how he may be toppled, but they are looking forward to the event," Argov added. He said that the deep bombing had two main goals: First, to make it even clearer that Israel was stronger militarily than Egypt, so as to eliminate the possibility that Egypt would initiate a war in the coming years; second, to push Egypt to refrain from military operations and fully honor the cease-fire. "If these things also bring about Nasser's removal, we'll see that as an extra bonus," wound up Argov.[33]

Similar statements were made by Prime Minister Meir. In a radio interview on February 3, she said that the roots of the military escalation at the Canal were the Egyptian leadership's political decision to violate the cease-fire. The moment Egypt honored it again, Israel would do so as well; but until then it would "continue to conduct a policy of active military defense."[34] In early March, on a visit to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Meir noted that the deep-penetration raids were not aimed at occupying Cairo or overthrowing Nasser. The Egyptian people, she said, controlled their own fate, and they alone would decide who ruled them. "We have not contracted to put him out of power. That is for Egyptian people to do. I cannot say that we will be sorry if he falls." In response to a question about the goals of the current fighting, Meir replied that there were three of them: First, to reduce the pressure on the Israeli troops at the Canal, which were inferior in both numbers and firepower to the Egyptian forces there; second, to thwart Nasser's plans and preparations for another war; and third, to make the Egyptian people aware of the lie behind their leaders' military demands and show them that they were the true victims of the War of Attrition.[35]

In early March 1970, the INR's assessment was that the sides had been drawn so deep into the cycle of violence that they were now more strongly engaged in the daily hostilities than in progressing towards a diplomatic process to resolve the conflict. According to the report, even though renewal of the cease-fire would create a positive atmosphere that was more conducive to serious talks about the peace proposals, the fighting had now reached such a pitch that Israel and Egypt would find it very difficult to hold their fire. It was certainly not the time for them to deal publicly with the diplomatic and military concessions needed to restore quiet to the region.[36]

The Russian bear awakens

The Rogers Plan of December 1969 was an attempt to create such a positive atmosphere. But it went nowhere and marked the end of the American efforts to reach a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. On top of their rejection of the details of the American proposal, the Egyptians said (and also relayed through the Jordanians) that the Israeli air raids, primarily the deep-bombing raids, and the American deliveries of aircrafts to Israel were the main obstacles to achieving an agreement or a cease-fire. The bombing raids and the American military assistance were linked, in the Egyptians' view, because Israel was attacking Egyptian targets using American planes. In the next few months, the supply of aircraft and the raids gained added importance, after the Soviet threat became another factor destabilizing the region.

Between the summer of 1967 and the summer of 1968, the Soviet Union replaced the matériel that Egypt and Syria had lost in the Six Day War. By the second half of 1968, it was arming Egypt, Syria, and Iraq beyond their arsenals on the eve of the war. As in the past, Israel viewed the Egyptian rearmament as part of the Soviet Union's overall strategy, which sought to deepen its engagement with Egypt as a way to bolster its presence in the Mediterranean. The Arab–Israeli conflict was merely a pretext that covered the Soviet Union's true strategic goals.

Although the Egyptian defeat was a major disaster for the Soviets' standing in the Middle East, it also gave Moscow a one-time opportunity to penetrate the region more deeply and further its ambitions there. The Soviets' aspirations in the Middle East were not really different from those of the Czars: achieving an outlet to warm water—the Mediterranean Sea and thence the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Ever since the mid-1950s, the Kremlin had been working to expand its influence and turn the countries of the region into its satellites, and ultimately to be "a permanent and decisive power in the Middle East." At the same time, it wanted to be able to provide an effective response to the American threat in the region for several reasons, both global and regional.[37]

On the global level, the Soviets saw the Middle East as a major arena of its rivalry with the United States. They wanted to neutralize the American outposts and influence in the region, present themselves as an alternative to the United States, and prevent it from regaining positions from which it had been pushed aside. The Soviets saw their successes, at the expense of the Americans, as an important means for building their global power and strengthening their bargaining position vis-à-vis the United States in other arenas as well.[38]

Second, because the northern Middle East bordered on the Soviet Union, it was a vital focus for the country's security. The Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe provided strategic depth on that flank, but its southern border was wide open to threats from the West, especially by the NATO countries. So the Soviet leadership endeavored to apply pressure on the southern wing of NATO, which it saw as the weak spot in the Western deployment in Europe. As part of this effort, the Soviet Union wanted to use the Middle East as a springboard from

which it could to extend its influence southwards towards Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. Third, the Soviet Union longed to control the oil fields in the region, in order to supply its own needs, keep oil from flowing to the West, and acquire markets in the region.

To achieve its global strategic objectives, especially in light of the threat from the United States, the Soviet Union acted on the regional level as well. First, given the Americans' involvement in Vietnam, Washington's disinclination to get entangled in another military commitment in the region, and the lack of a declaration that the region was of vital importance to American interests, the Soviet Union identified a window of opportunity that it sought to enter. Second, the Soviet Union attempted to use diplomacy to sow dissent between the United States and its NATO partners and within the alliance itself. The target of this demarche was the "Northern Tier" of Turkey, Iran, and Greece, as well as Mediterranean countries such as Italy and Malta. Third, the Soviet Union aspired to consolidate its status in "revolutionary" Arab states such as Egypt and Syria by making them totally dependent on it in the military, diplomatic, and economic spheres. At the same time, it endeavored to foment splits between the pro-Western "conservative" Arab counties, notably Lebanon and Jordan, and the West. The main tool for this was lavish military assistance to its client states, especially Egypt.

The fourth tactic was continued naval penetration of the Mediterranean, which had begun in 1964, and the establishment of a stronger permanent presence there, as well as an aerial presence; this required bases in Egypt. Fifth—and here the regional goals circled back to the global aspirations—the Soviet Union sought to take advantage of the Arab–Israeli conflict to leverage its penetration and fortify its footholds in Arab countries, in pursuit of its global goals. In other words, the expanded Soviet involvement aimed at establishing a naval presence in the Mediterranean, along with air cover for the ships at sea. Thus the Arab–Israeli conflict was exploited by the Soviets in order to realize their true strategic objectives. Sixth, the Soviet Union hungered to obtain petroleum-exploration concessions and send out oil-industry experts and advisors, through whom it would penetrate the Middle East oil fields.[39]

Given its continued failure with the Egyptians, at this stage, the United States could continue the discussions about the Middle East conflict only with Britain and France, and especially with the Soviet Union. On January 22, 1970, a month after the Soviets responded to the American peace initiatives, Sisco conveyed to Dobrynin the American reply to the Soviet document of December 23 on the American proposals. In addition to expressing American disappointment with the Soviets' lukewarm response, Sisco told Dobrynin that further progress in the process would require Moscow to reconsider its stand on Washington's diplomatic initiatives.[40]

But instead of showing flexibility, the Soviets threatened to drag the region and the entire world into conflict. The high price exacted by the deep-bombing raids and Nasser's distress led Premier Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, on January 31, 1970, to send a sharply worded letter to President Nixon, French

President Georges Pompidou, and British Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Kosygin assigned the main responsibility for the military actions, violations of the cease-fire, and failure of the efforts to reach a peace settlement to the United States and Israel. He blamed the American administration for its direct support for the Israeli attacks on Egypt and for strengthening Israel's military power, adding: "It is in the interests of universal peace and international security to warn the Government of Israel against adventurism." Kosygin recommended taking firm and urgent action that "will make Israel listen to the voice of reason." The main thrust of the letter was its warning that if the Western powers did not put a stop to the Israeli attacks on Egypt and the other Arab countries, the Soviet Union would provide the Arabs with the arms they needed to counter the Israeli aggression:

> We would like to tell you in all frankness that if Israel continues its adventurism, to bomb the territory of the UAR and of other Arab states the Soviet Union will be forced to see to it that the Arab states have means at their disposal, with the help of which a due rebuff to the arrogant aggressor could be made.[41]

Senior State Department personnel, the National Security Advisor, and the CIA did not see the Kosygin letter as a threat of the future use of force or as an ultimatum, but as a "Soviet bluff." Kissinger maintained that the message returned Moscow to its position of 1967 and put an end to the diplomatic efforts and the progress the two superpowers had made towards a resolution of the conflict. In a closed meeting with members of the House of Representatives, Sisco said that the letter had been written as a result of the Egyptian pressure on Moscow and that no one should read into it what wasn't there. It was mainly propaganda. The Soviet Union could not acquiesce in the Israeli military operations for long and had to show the Arabs that it was doing something about them.[42]

The State Department explained that the letter was evidence that Moscow and Cairo had been placed on the defensive by Israel's deep-bombing raids and the American peace initiatives. It doubted that the Soviets would provide Egypt with advanced weaponry. The Kremlin's response would continue to be reasonable and responsible, because Moscow did not want to risk direct superpower involvement in the region. Overall, the State Department did not see the letter as an "ominous development" but rather as an attempt to "relieve pressure" that Nasser faced as a result of the Israeli raids, to express support for the Arabs, and to try to keep the United States from acceding to Israeli requests for more weapons.[43]

On February 4, four days after receiving the letter, Nixon sent Kosygin his answer. Following Kissinger's and Rogers' advice, Nixon took a belligerent tone, rejecting the charges leveled against the United States and Israel. He wrote that although both sides were violating the cease-fire, it was the Egyptians "that in early 1969 […] announced and initiated a policy of non-observance of the cease-fire." Nixon called for an immediate cease-fire, emphasizing that the two superpowers must reach an understanding to limit the arms race in the region

and thereby decrease the level of violence. He added that if the Soviet threat to supply additional arms to Egypt was realized, it could drag the two superpowers into deeper involvement in the Middle East conflict. "The United States is watching carefully the relative balance in the Middle East and we will not hesitate to provide arms to friendly states as the need arises." Nixon emphasized, however, the great importance of positive Soviet responses to the American peace initiatives in order to move the diplomatic process forward.[44]

The State Department also acted in accordance with the position Nixon took in his reply to Kosygin's letter. Its representatives, especially ambassadors, were told to contradict the Soviet assertions against the United States in their conversations with foreign diplomats, especially Soviet diplomats, and to be moderate in their response to the Kosygin letter: the United States was interested in "cooling off" the situation and had been working to restore the cease-fire between Egypt and Israel.[45]

The diplomatic stalemate, the continuing deterioration on the Suez Canal front, and the prospects of increased Soviet involvement in Egypt motivated the United States to seek a more immediate solution to the crisis in the Middle East—a cease-fire agreement, rather than a comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and the Arabs. In late January 1970, the State Department gradually raised the possibility of resuming the cease-fire, first to Israel and then to Egypt. Prime Minister Meir and Defense Minister Dayan did not reject the proposal but said that because the escalation on the Canal front had been a political decision by the Egyptian leadership, Israel would halt its operations only when Egypt was ready to do so.[46]

But Egypt's situation did not allow it to agree to a cease-fire. Bergus's contacts told him that Nasser would face a military revolt if he agreed to one. The Egyptian High Command felt that the situation should be allowed to heat up further and reach full boil, at which point the superpowers would have to intervene to stop the fighting. The Soviet Union in particular was expected to step in. Kosygin's firm tone to Nixon gave many in Egypt a sense of confidence and created expectations that the Soviet letter was only a first step in a process that would end with an escalation of the situation and a major Middle East crisis.[47] For the Americans, the reports from Bergus were supported by what Foreign Minister Riad told the former American ambassador to Egypt, John S. Badeau, that there was absolutely no chance that Nasser would negotiate directly with Israel or propose a cease-fire at his own initiative, because he would be "topple[ed] within two weeks" if he did so.[48]

The American administration found itself in a bind. On the one hand, it did not want to let the Soviets upset the military balance between Israel and Egypt. On the other hand, it did want to slow down the arms race and promote a diplomatic process in the region. The supply of warplanes to Israel was not compatible with this idea. In early February King Hussein told Ambassador Symmes that Egypt's rejection of the cease-fire proposal and the American peace initiatives was a result of Israel's deep-bombing raids and the reports that the American administration planned to sell it additional aircraft. If the United

States wanted to bring calm to the region, Hussein emphasized, it must declare that it had no current plans to supply more jets to Israel. It would be very dangerous if Washington decided to aid Israel despite the current situation and in response to the Soviet deliveries to Egypt, because "the Soviets mean business this time."[49]

Even though at this stage the Soviet Union preferred to stand aside and see whether the Nixon administration supplied additional aircraft to Israel, Hussein told Symmes, if it did so Moscow would feel freer to fulfill its commitments to Nasser. The direct result would be a further deterioration in the region, leading to a further escalation of the conflict with no realistic possibility of dialogue. Hussein warned that the talks between Jordanian and American representatives about the peace initiatives would prove fruitless if the United States responded in the affirmative to the Israeli arms requests. In effect he made the success of the diplomatic process between Jordan and the United States hinge on a freeze in the supply of warplanes to Israel.[50]

Despite the negative responses from Egypt and Jordan, the State Department did not abandon its initial cease-fire initiative. In early February it began drafting a plan for the Forum of Four, which included a joint call by the powers to Israel, Jordan, and Egypt for a 90-day cease-fire. The proposal also called for the Forum of Four to discuss limits on weapons supplies to the region, because of its members' "serious concern" about

> the steady deterioration of the situation in the Middle East [… and] in order to contribute to these efforts [achieve peace in accordance with resolution 242] and to prevent the situation in the Middle East from jeopardizing international peace and security.[51]

The State Department saw two advantages in the proposal—both the initiative itself and the message it conveyed to the other powers that the United States was working tirelessly, seriously, and honestly to achieve a cease-fire that would be acceptable to both sides in the conflict. The Americans also wanted to probe the Soviets' stance on the cease-fire and restraining the arms race. The State Department hoped to come across as seeking an immediate settlement of the crisis, despite its assessment that there was little chance that France and the Soviet Union would consent, mainly with regard to arms supplies. Ambassador Yost was instructed to avoid a situation in which the members of the Forum of Four agreed to the American proposal for a cease-fire and talks about limiting arms shipments in exchange for a unilateral agreement by the United States to postpone a decision about the supply of military equipment to Israel.[52]

When the Forum of Four met on February 12, Yost submitted the American proposal. But the initial response by Yakov A. Malik, the Soviet representative, was totally negative; nor did the French and British representatives express great enthusiasm. At this session, as in the past, sharp disagreements emerged about the character of a settlement and the extent to which the powers should be involved in formulating its principles. Yost insisted that the Four should reach a

decision that addressed the interests of the two sides and did not favor either of them. However, despite the American attempts, neither Israel, nor Egypt, nor the international community—primarily France, Britain, and the Soviet Union—expressed interest in the cease-fire initiative.[53]

A day before the Forum of Four discussed the American proposal, Egyptian government spokesman Ahmed Abdel-Meguid held a press conference at which he focused on the cease-fire issue. He attacked the United States and encouraged the Arabs to damage American interests in the Middle East, especially its oil interests, in reaction to the American military assistance, including warplanes, to Israel. The United States "furnished planes to our enemy to attack us, destroy our homes and factories, and kill our children" he said, adding that American policy and Washington's actions in the Middle East threatened not only the Arabs but also the peace and safety of the entire world.[54] As we shall see later, this exemplified the diplomatic line that Egypt had chosen to follow and that the Americans had predicted: escalation and increased pressure in order to get the powers, especially the United States, to intervene in the conflict before it deteriorated further. The threat to damage American interests in the region was one such means of pressure.

A sign from Cairo

Israel's aerial offensive in early January 1970 prompted Nasser to act on two fronts vis-à-vis the power blocs. The deep-bombing raids inspired frustration, fear, despair, and bitterness among the Egyptian people as well as Nasser and his colleagues in the political and military echelon. The public lack of confidence was so intense that the American ambassador in Israel, Walworth Barbour, passing on information from an Israeli source, itself based on the impressions of recent West Bank visitors to Cairo, reported that the military situation in the region would force Egypt to end the war.[55] These feelings were expressed in the meetings to coordinate positions with the Soviets, but also in interviews and speeches meant for American ears.

In an address on February 2, Nasser said that the United States supported "terrorist violence"—by which he meant its supplies of weaponry, particularly aircraft, to Israel—while it "pretends by lies and deceptions that it is working for peace."[56] Soon after, in a speech to representatives of the Arab confrontation-line states—Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Sudan—meeting in Cairo, Nasser declared that it would be impossible to achieve a peace settlement through diplomacy as long as Israel continued its deep-bombing raids. Moreover, a positive Egyptian gesture towards the United States, or a more positive approach to its peace proposals, was out of the question as long as the administration was contemplating the supply of more warplanes to Israel. Given Nasser's negative position, the Jordanians expressed their fear that a "major explosion was imminent" and alluded to the diplomatic and military support Nasser was receiving from the Soviet Union.[57]

Nasser also sought to address American public opinion directly, granting two interviews to the American media in the space of a week. An interview with

Rowland Evans and William Tuohy, filmed in Cairo at the start of the month, was broadcast on Metromedia stations in the United States on February 7, 1970; the next week Nasser spoke to James Reston of the *New York Times*. Nasser discussed Egypt's relations with the United States in measured and moderate tones. He said that the administration's diplomatic position in the Middle East was not balanced. The recent proposals by the State Department had aimed at sowing discord among the Arabs and were a retreat from Secretary of State Rusk's position in November 1968. Nasser added that he would not renew diplomatic relations between Cairo and Washington until the United States adopted a balanced policy in the Middle East. He rejected the idea of renewing the cease-fire with Israel and insisted on a final settlement on his own terms, inasmuch as—he asserted—Israel never honored agreements.

Nasser's main protest was directed at the American supply of the warplanes that Israel was using to bomb the Egyptian interior. Nasser acknowledged Israel's supremacy in the air and said that the deep-bombing raids were the main reason Egypt had not responded positively to the American diplomatic initiatives. He did not deny that he had met with the Soviet leadership in late January. He expressed his concern that the Americans would decide to sell additional Phantom fighter-bombers to Israel. If it did, and the raids on the Egyptian interior continued, Egyptian would have to request more assistance from the Soviet Union.

Nasser did not go on at length about his country's military capacity, presumably so as not to raise his people's expectations of an imminent change in Egypt's military situation. He made no promises about Egypt's ability to retake the Sinai by force, but did note the shortage of pilots and referred, in an aside, to his hopes of Soviet military assistance that would upgrade Egypt's air-defense capabilities. He confessed Egypt's vulnerability to the Israeli air attacks. Despite the difficulties, though, he emphasized his country's fortitude and refusal to submit.[58]

Nasser was somewhat more blunt about the Americans in an interview with Eric Rouleau of *Le Monde* on February 18. He told Rouleau that the delivery of the Phantoms proved that Washington wanted Israel to "shatter the Arab resistance." Ever since mid-1965, when a serious rift developed between Nasser and President Johnson, the former had felt that the Americans were trying to bring down the Egyptian regime: "Their strategic goal is to work towards [the] fall of all progressive Arab governments. […] They [the Americans] are using Israel as a tool to carry out their policy." He concluded derisively that "as for the British, they have made of themselves a tail of [the] US." According to Nasser, peace would be achieved only following an Israeli withdrawal from all the territories it had conquered and after a just solution for the Palestinian refugees—a return to their homeland or compensation. He rejected a new cease-fire because it would be unfair to Egypt. A cease-fire would preserve the status quo and perpetuate the diplomatic stalemate. Only after a date for Israel's withdrawal had been set would Egypt be willing to lay down its arms.[59]

As mentioned, Nasser also shared his grievances with the Soviets. In December 1969, Nasser sent his deputy Sadat to Moscow, accompanied by his two top ministers, Riad and Fawzi. The three met with the senior Soviet leadership,

including President Nikolai V. Podgorny and General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev. This was a preparatory meeting ahead of Nasser's visit to Moscow on January 22–27, 1970.[60] Nasser told his hosts then that Egypt was in desperate need of Soviet assistance. His country was totally vulnerable to the IAF's deep-bombing raids. He asked the Soviets to install a missile system in Egypt to thwart these raids; he was even willing for Soviet crews to man the missile batteries until Egyptian personnel had been trained to operate them.[61] As we will see in greater detail later on, the Soviet Union was ready to supply the equipment needed to counter the IAF, because this fit in perfectly with its strategic objectives. The benefit to the Soviets was clear: a deeper involvement in Egypt, a key country in the Middle East, and the enhancement of their status in Arab eyes. By helping Egypt, the Soviet Union would be seen as defending the Egyptians from Israeli (and American) aggression and as supporting the Egyptian–Arab effort to liberate the occupied territories from the "Zionist enemy."

So this is what the Soviets stood to gain. But why did Nasser agree to such a strong Soviet presence in Egypt that the country came to be called a "Soviet republic."[62] The answer is connected to his desire to exploit the "Soviet threat" for his own purposes. Greater Soviet involvement in the region, with the possibility of actual involvement in the fighting, was liable to drag the Middle East into a superpower conflict—something that the United States wanted to avoid at all costs. Nasser believed that as long as the American administration backed Israel, Egypt could not do anything to alter the post-1967 Middle East. As mentioned, Nasser saw the United States as his primary objective and targeted Israel's strongest supporter, the party with the greatest influence on it and the only one that could force Israel to withdraw in response to a major crisis that neither it nor its ally could withstand.[63]

This is why Nasser focused his diplomatic and military efforts on pressuring the Americans. Because he knew that the key to a solution lay in Washington, and that only the United States could pull Egypt's chestnuts out of the fire for it, he portrayed himself as a victim of Israeli aggression—and thus as needing Soviet aid—but also as not having completely abandoned the path to a diplomatic settlement.[64] This approach could provide the Egyptians with several benefits on the American front. First, and most importantly, it could lead to a freeze in American deliveries of warplanes to Israel, because the American administration would prefer calming the waters to stirring up a new storm. Second, it would pressure Israel to moderate its diplomatic demands and make concessions regarding a settlement with Egypt. Finally, a change in the attitude towards the United States might produce some change in American policy towards Egypt and possibly a rapprochement between Washington and Cairo. But Nasser's ideas were unacceptable to Israel and totally contradicted its principles, mainly with regard to the refugees and its insistence on a contractual peace accord. Nor did they coincide with the American peace proposals of late 1969. So, despite his somewhat hazy flexibility, it was impossible to do business with Nasser.

Nasser's statements for domestic consumption, for all that they tried to broadcast a readiness for battle, actually stemmed from the frustration caused by

the dead-end in the diplomatic process and the Israeli air attacks. Addressing the National Assembly in a closed session on March 24, he said that he did not set great hopes in America's abilities to produce a solution to the crisis and achieve peace. As was his habit, he blamed it for the stalemate at the Forum of Four, because of its support for Israel, whereas the Soviet Union was defending justice and Arab rights. Nasser explained that he had rejected the proposal for a cease-fire because Israel never kept its word and always broke agreements. Hence Egyptian acceptance of the initiative would merely provide the Israelis with an opportunity to consolidate their hold on the occupied territories and harm Egypt.[65]

Nasser spoke at greater length about the peace initiatives, accusing the Americans of trying to sow discord among the Arab states and getting them to sign separate peace agreements rather than a single "package deal" with all of them. He reiterated his diplomatic dogma that a peace accord, which must be reached without direct negotiations with Israel, meant full Israeli withdrawal from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria (namely Sinai, Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights), a solution to the refugee question, and restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people. If all these conditions were met, Egypt would agree to a settlement; but if not, there would be no alternative to the use of force. However, the realization that the chances that his terms would be met were not great led him to declare that there was no hope for a peaceful settlement unless Egypt achieved "the degree of power that makes our enemy feel that with such power, we can restore our rights, if we cannot get them through a peaceful settlement." Despite this belligerence, he repeated that Egypt and the Soviet Union were in agreement about the need to work towards a peaceful solution, as long as the way was open for such a solution.[66]

The State Department did not ignore the indirect messages Nasser sent it, especially through the media. As we have seen, Nasser was maneuvering on two fronts—the Soviet and the American. When the Americans did not meet his expectations, he improved relations with their rivals, thereby further escalating the situation in the Middle East. Egypt found itself effectively powerless, because while on the one hand it was unable to "remove the traces of aggression" by military means, on the other hand the diplomatic initiatives did not satisfy its demands. According to several State Department officials, if the Egyptian regime accepted the terms proposed for a peace agreement it would endanger its survival and the country's leadership of the Arab world.[67]

The dead-end and his helplessness pushed Nasser to amplify the military pressure on Israel, in the hope that it would show some flexibility and make diplomatic concessions. The military action was also intended to pressure the superpowers and get them to impose a solution more to Egypt's liking, in order to avert a confrontation between them. So in keeping with the strategy he had devised, which focused on the Americans, the State Department anticipated that Nasser would threaten to harm American and Western interests in the Middle East as a way to pressure the United States to force Israel to make diplomatic concessions and withdraw from the occupied territories. But he could also be

expected to express a willingness for discussions with senior administration officials via high-level emissaries from Cairo.

The State Department understood, however, that Egypt could hold fast to its diplomatic position as long as it was backed by the Soviet Union. The Soviets, who preferred the status quo because it served their goals, would continue to support Egypt and would not pressure it to accept the American initiatives. Consequently, the State Department stuck to its position, as expressed in the peace initiatives and balanced position it had presented to Israel and Egypt. The argument was that it was necessary to "avoid, to the greatest extent possible, actions which give the Egyptian and the Soviets leverage to attack our interests in other Arab states." For this reason, the decision by the President and Secretary of State to delay the supply of aircraft (on which see the next chapter) was presented in a positive light.[68]

Notes

1 "Cairo 143," January 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, A/I, reporting remarks by Rifa'i to an interviewer on UAR Television, January 20, 1970.
2 "Middle East: Implications of the Forthcoming Arab Summit," December 18, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1844 Pol, 7 Arab Summit; "Middle East: After the Arab Summit," December 31, 1969, NA, RG 59, Box 1844 Pol, 7 Arab Summit; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 117; Fawzi, *Ḥarb al-Thalath Sanawat*, 223–4.
3 "Telegram to Missions 992," December 24, 1969, ISA, FM, 4224/39; "No. 459," December 31, 1969, ISA, FM, 4224/39.
4 "Memorandum of Conversation, US Position on Settlement," January 3, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, US Policy in the Middle East," January 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050, Pol, 27 A/I.
5 "Memorandum, Next Steps on Middle East Settlement," January 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
6 Ibid.
7 Written in reply to Roger's note to Riad on November 9.
8 "Memorandum, Next Steps on Middle East Settlement," January 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Present Status of Middle East Efforts," January 12, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
9 "Memorandum, Next Steps on Middle East Settlement," January 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Present Status of Middle East Efforts," January 12, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
10 "State 2081," January 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
11 "UAR Position on US Formulations," January 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050, Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 101," January 17, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
12 "Initial Jordanian Reaction to US Proposals," January 1, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Hussein's Comments on US Proposals," January 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Jordanian Crown Prince Call on Secretary," January 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2412, Pol, 7 Jordan.
13 "Foreign Minister Rifai's Talks in Cairo," January 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050, Pol, A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 115.
14 "Amman 351," January 23, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2412, Pol, 7 Jordan.
15 "Discussion of Jordanian Aspects of US Proposals with King Hussein," January 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063, Pol, 27-14 A/I.
16 Bar-Or, "The Israel Government's Decision," 38; Schueftan, *Attrition*, 246; Zohar, *War of Attrition*, 264–7.

17 "State 020685," February 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "The Soviet Penetration of the Middle East," June 7, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "No. 160," September 17, 1969, ISA, FM, 4157/5; Bar-Or, *The Israel Government's Decision*, 38.
18 "Abd Magid's Press Conference," January 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I; Zohar, *War of Attrition*, 270–1.
19 *Davar*, January 8, 1970; Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Israeli–Egyptian War of Attrition*, 132. For example, the Egyptian naval academy was relocated to the Greek School in Alexandria, and some military installations, with all their personnel, were transferred to Libya. See "Cairo 487," March 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27 A/I.
20 "SAM 3," March 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "The Soviet Penetration, Telegram to Missions 757," May 6, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "The Soviet Penetration of the Middle East," June 7, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2.
21 "Israeli Aims in Regard to the UAR: Some Doubts about the Conspiracy Theory," February 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2389 Pol, ISR-U; "The Israel–UAR Front: 'Dance Macabre,'" March 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27, A/I; Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation*, 141.
22 "No. 195," November 4, 1970, ISA, FM 4549/6. In general, Bergus was not well thought of in Israel. On July 2, 1971, Joseph Zurhellen, the deputy chief of mission in the American embassy in Tel Aviv, protested to Mordechai Gazit, the Director General of the Prime Minister's Office, about an article that had appeared in *Maariv* the previous day and described Bergus as antisemitic. The article set off waves in Egypt, where it was reprinted by *al-Ahram*. Gazit informed Rabin about the conversation with Zurhellen, because he was afraid that "Sisco, too, might be stirred to respond on the same topic." Gazit added that he had expressed his "personal reservations" about the article, but was careful to avoid "giving this demurrer an official character or creating the impression of defending Bergus." See "No. 22," July 2, 1971, ISA, FM 4549/8.
23 For Bergus's report see "Cairo 166," January 26, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Egypt and Israel," January 22, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, A/I; on the Sisco memo, see "Israeli Raids on Egyptian Delta Region—Information Memorandum," January 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, A/I; "Memorandum for the President, Present Status of Middle East Efforts," January 12, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
24 "UAR–Israel: Israel Steps Up Air War Against UAR," January 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, A/I; "Memorandum, Israel–UAR Cease Fire," January 23, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
25 "UAR–Israel: Israel Steps Up Air War Against UAR," January 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, A/I; "Memorandum, Israel–UAR Cease Fire," January 23, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
26 "UAR–Israel: Israel Steps Up Air War Against UAR," January 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, A/I; "Memorandum, Israel–UAR Cease Fire," January 23, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063 Pol, 27-14 A/I. The State Department did not keep this assessment to itself and shared it with the Egyptians. The Americans hinted that a sign from Cairo regarding its willingness in principle to continue the diplomatic process on the basis of the same initiatives could embarrass the Israelis and ultimately bring them to the negotiating table. See "State 015472," January 31, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Egypt and Israel," January 22, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I.
27 "State 015472," January 31, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Egypt and Israel," January 22, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I.
28 "Memorandum, Israel–UAR Cease Fire," January 23, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Review of Middle East Situation," February 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I; Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation*, 144.

29 "No. 196," September 22, 1969, ISA, FM, 4156/3; Korn, *Stalemate*, 172–3; Eban, *Autobiography*, 465; and especially Rabin, *Service Diary*, 252–4. The last of these seems to be the only direct source for the remarks by Rabin and Rogers, so their original English has been lost to posterity.

30 *FRUS*, Arab–Israeli Dispute, 1969–72, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 51, "Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," September 25, 1969, 176–7. Intriguingly, even when this volume of *FRUS* was released, in 2016, it was felt necessary to redact the identity of "this channel" and the individual quoted.

31 Ibid.

32 "No. 58," December 8, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/3.

33 "Memorandum of Conversation, Israel's Military and Political Problems with the UAR," January 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2389 Pol, ISR-US; "No. 271," January 29, 1970, ISA, FM 4548/7. "No. 58," December 8, 1969, ISA, FM 4156/3.

34 *Davar*, February 4, 1970; "Mrs. Meir Says Israel Ready Return to Cease Fire," February 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I.

35 "Mrs. Meir Answer Session with Hebrew University Students in Jerusalem," March 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2386 Pol, 15-1 ISR; *Davar*, March 2, 1970. In a report to Washington, Ambassador Barbour took note of the theory of an Israeli conspiracy to instigate Nasser's overthrow, and added:

> We do not have to take everything the Israelis tell us at face value, but we may risk misleading ourselves when we look too far behind the facade for hidden answers. By stressing the conspiracy theory of Israeli behavior, we may find things that simply are not there. In our various analyses, we sometimes perhaps give the Israelis too much credit for imagination and a certain brand of misguided farsightedness. In most instances we should, instead, look for simple, direct motives before going digging for complicated plots and cabals.

See "Israeli Aims in Regard to the UAR: Some Doubts about the Conspiracy Theory," February 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2389 Pol, 27 ISR-U.

36 "The Israel–UAR Front: 'Dance Macabre,'" March 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27, A/I.

37 "The Soviet Penetration, Telegram to Missions 757," May 6, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; Adamsky, *Operation Kavkaz*, 17–21; Korn, *Stalemate*, 53–7.

38 "The Soviet Penetration, Telegram to Missions 757," May 6, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "The Soviet Union in the Middle East," March 13, 1969, ISA, FM, 4221/19.

39 "The Soviet Penetration, Telegram to Missions 757," May 6, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "The Soviet Union in the Middle East," March 13, 1969, ISA, FM 4221/19; Adamsky, *Operation Kavkaz*, 19–25.

40 "Sisco–Dobrynin Meeting January 22 on Middle East," January 22, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063 Pol, 27-14, A/I; "US Reply to Soviet Statement of December 23 on Middle East," January 22, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2063 Pol, 27-14, A/I.

41 "Kosygin's Note to Nixon," January 31, 1970, ISA, FM, 4548/7; "State 016110," February 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14, A/I; "Cairo 264," February 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27, A/I.

42 "Sisco in a closed meeting with members of the House of Representatives," February 4, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/1; Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation*, 145; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 560–1; Ginor and Remez, *The Soviet–Israeli War*, 149–50.

43 "State 020685," February 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Kosygin Letter on Middle East," February 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Cease-Fire," February 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 016110," February 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Middle East," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I; Parker, *The Politics of Miscalculation*, 145–6.

44 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XII, Doc. 126, "Letter From President Nixon to Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union Kosygin," February 4, 1970, 374–6; "State 020685," February 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 560–1.
45 "State 020685," February 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Kosygin Letter on Middle East," February 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I.
46 "State 016110," February 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Mrs. Meir Says Israel Ready Return to Cease Fire," February 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I.
47 "Secret Cairo 283," February 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I.
48 "Cairo 329," February 12, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I.
49 "Amman 652," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Clarifications of US Proposals," February 12, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
50 "Amman 652," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Clarifications of US Proposals," February 12, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
51 "USUN 208," February 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
52 "State 021456," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
53 "Resume Four-Power Talks on ME: February 12," February 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Draft Four-Power Appeal on Ceasefire," February 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
54 "Cairo 326," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I.
55 "Foreign Office Views on UAR, Syria, Lebanon," February 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I; Fawzi, *Ḥarb al-Thalath Sanawat*, 346–8.
56 *Gamal Abdel Nasser Speeches*, "The Speech given by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the opening session of the International Parliamentarians Conference in Cairo," February 2, 1970. http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1272&lang=en. [Arabic]; "Cairo 250," February 3, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I.
57 "Cairo Confrontation Conference," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I.
58 For the interview with Evans and Tuohy, see summary in the *New York Times*, February9,1970(www.nytimes.com/1970/02/09/archives/nasser-concedes-that-israelis-have-air-supremacy-in-mideast.html); *Gamal Abdel Nasser Speeches*, "The Interview given by President Gamal Abdel Nasser to the American Journalists Roland Evans and William Tuohy," February 8, 1970, http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1274&lang=en. [Arabic]. For the interview with Reston, see *New York Times*, February 15, 1970 (www.nytimes.com/1970/02/15/archives/excerpts-from-interview-with-president-gamal-abdel-nasser-of-the.html); Nasser, *al-Majmuah al-Kamila*, vol. 2, 305–20.
59 *Le Monde*, February 18, 1970 (www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1970/02/19/une-paix-durable-est-possible-si-israel-evacue-les-territoires-arabes-occupes-et-accepte-un-reglement-du-probleme-des-refugies-nous-declare-le-president-nasser_2671540_1819218.html?xtmc=nasser&xtcr=122); *Gamal Abdel Nasser Speeches*, "The Interview given by President Gamal Abdel Nasser to the Head of the Middle East Desk from *Le Monde*," February 18, 1970, http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1276&lang=en. [Arabic]; "Cairo 402," February 20, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27 A/I.
60 Scholars are divided about whether Nasser in fact visited Moscow—and if he did, was it in December 1969 or January 1970? See Adamsky, *Operation Kavkaz*, 30–47; Gelber, *Attrition*, 469–72; Ginor and Remez. *The Soviet–Israeli War*, 113–24. This is not the place to delve into the issue. Whatever the case, the fact remains that the Soviet decision to send air-defense systems and forces to Egypt preceded the start of the Israel deep-penetration raids in January 1970. For the Israeli report on Nasser's visit to Moscow and the lack of a connection to the bombing campaign, see "SAM 3," March 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "The Soviet Penetration, Telegram to Missions 757," May 6, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2. For the opposing view, found in the American reports on

Nasser's trip to Moscow in January and its direct link to the "airborne artillery," see "Cairo 283," February 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I; "USSR-UAR: At the Brink of Action," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I; "Amman 652," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

61 Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar*, 195–8; idem, *Li-Miser*, 150; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 112–13, 119; Gamasy, *The October War*, 116–17; Fawzi, *Ḥarb al-Thalath Sanawat*, 346–50.

62 Vitan, "The Soviets' Involvement and Intervention in Egypt," 65–70; Adamsky, *Operation Kavkaz*, 25.

63 Blanga, "Why Are They Shooting?" 155–60.

64 "Cairo 253," February 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I; "UAR: Reading between the Lines of Nasser's February 3 TV Interview," February 18, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR.

65 "Cairo 634," March 26, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27 A/I; Nasser, *al-Majmuah al-Kamila*, vol. 2, 338–47.

66 "Cairo 634," March 26, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27 A/I; Nasser, *al-Majmuah al-Kamila*, 338–47.

67 "Cairo 656," March 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27 A/I.

68 Ibid.

8 "The Russians are coming, the Russians are coming!"

The Soviet involvement in the War of Attrition

> You see Russian soldiers everywhere.… They don't come into contact with Egyptians and they buy very little.… The people simply hate them. The intellectuals are in despair. They think that whether or not Egypt is victorious in its war with Israel—Egypt is already under Russian occupation. Its leaders have sold it behind the people's back.
>
> Arye Arazi, councilor in the Israel Embassy in Athens[1]

Deciding about arms supplies to Israel

In the wake of Nasser's signals from Cairo, Kosygin's letter, and the reports that Soviet personnel and arms had arrived in Egypt, President Nixon was forced to decide about aid to Israel (especially warplanes). A decision to arm Israel was liable to undermine the efforts for a cease-fire in the Middle East, trigger a full-scale arms race between Israel and Egypt, and, ultimately, lead to a dangerous deterioration in regional stability. Although a decision not to supply arms might harm relations with Israel, it could reflect a sincere American desire to cool down the situation on the Canal front and induce the sides to halt the shooting and reach a settlement, in concert with the Soviets. The preferred course was not to supply aircraft to Israel, because both the State Department and Defense Department, as well as Egypt and the Soviets, blamed Israeli's deep-penetration raids for the escalation of the conflict along the Canal.

On March 10, 1970, while Nixon was focusing on a decision about the Israeli requests for additional warplanes, Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador in Washington, proposed a de facto cease-fire. Because the Soviets viewed Israel as responsible for the escalation and as the main threat to stability in the Middle East, it proposed that if Israel halted the bombing raids, the Soviet Union would show restraint without issuing an official statement to that effect.[2] In practice, this was the Soviet response to the American cease-fire proposal that Kissinger had conveyed to Dobrynin on February 10, and that the ambassador in Moscow, Jacob Beam, had delivered to Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko the next day, in response to the Kosygin letter and its implicit threats, as well as the reports about the new Soviet arms deliveries to Egypt.[3]

On March 12, Kissinger summoned Rabin for an urgent meeting. Even though much remained unclear about the Soviet proposal, Kissinger decided to submit it to Israel along with the information that Nixon had decided not to decide about the warplanes. However, Kissinger noted, the United States would follow events closely and respond as a function of the military and political developments in the region. In general, he added, the United States wanted to revise the way it supplied aircraft and other military equipment to Israel. It would no longer make public announcements of its agreement to or rejection of Israeli requests, but would weigh the matter in light of the attrition of Israeli matériel, in order to uphold its commitment to maintain the balance of power in the Middle East.

Kissinger then informed Rabin of the Soviet proposal for an unofficial and undeclared cease-fire. He explained that Nixon would like Israel to suspend the attacks on the Egyptian interior for 45 to 60 days. In addition, Israel should restrain itself for several days before responding to Egyptian artillery barrages. Given such Israeli restraint, the United States could ask the Soviet Union to keep the Egyptians from exploiting the cease-fire to build new missile sites and could warn the Soviets against supplying additional weapons to Egypt that would fuel a new regional arms race. "This in effect would tend to put the Soviets on the defensive," Kissinger concluded.[4]

"I'm deeply disappointed," Rabin said in response, not only about the idea of suspending the deep-penetration raids, but also and especially about the supply of aircraft. Rabin saw the step "as an expression of American weakness and as encouragement of the coordinated Egyptian and Soviet aggression." The cease-fire would merely serve as the basis for that aggression to continue, because in the absence of any commitment Egypt, after it completed deployment of the air-defense systems, would be able to resume the shooting from a stronger position, with Soviet encouragement.[5]

After five days of consultations in Israel, on March 17 Rabin returned to Washington with an answer: the Prime Minister had expressed "her very deep disappointment" with Nixon's position on the supply of warplanes and asked that he reconsider. However, despite the risk involved, Israel would agree to an undeclared cease-fire, but without a prior commitment to suspend the bombing raids on the Egyptian heartland for 45 to 60 days, but only for three to five days, as long as Egypt observed the cease-fire. Rabin added, linking the issue of the cease-fire with that of arms deliveries, "we expect that our risk-taking will be reflected in an American willingness with regard to the supply of arms."[6]

Its positive response notwithstanding, Israel reneged immediately, for two reasons. First, in a personal letter from Nixon to Meir, the president turned down her request and adhered to his initial stand that arms would be provided to Israel only on the basis of the attrition of what it already had in its arsenal, thus restoring the balance of power if it was upset. Second, by March 17, a few days after the first Soviet forces landed in Egypt, Israeli military intelligence had collected sufficient information to know that Soviet personnel had been deployed in operational formation; SA-3 missile batteries, manned by Soviet crews, would

operate in the heart of Egypt to protect Cairo. Rabin learned of this from an urgent cable he received. As a result, he told Kissinger on March 18, "in these conditions, and as long as the United States does not change its position on the matter of arms, we see the issue of the cease-fire as very serious. […] We cannot accept this proposal."[7]

Despite the worrisome reports about Soviet intentions and the deployment in Egypt of missile batteries with Soviet crews, the American government preferred to hold back on the supply of warplanes to Israel, especially because of its assessment that the Israeli deep-penetration attacks had pushed Nasser into the Moscow's arms and pulled the Soviets deeper into the conflict. Nasser had repeatedly asserted that Israel was using American planes to bomb the Egyptian interior and, on several occasions, had even charged that the United States was allowing its personnel to fight alongside Israeli troops and fly aircraft bearing Israeli markings to attack Egypt.[8]

In a press conference at the White House on March 21, Nixon responded to the situation in the Middle East and especially to the question of arms supplies for Israel. He began by delineating America's four goals in the Middle East: getting the sides to stop shooting, slowing the flow of arms to the region, brokering a diplomatic settlement between Israel and the Arabs, and, to the extent possible, establishing a balance of power in the Middle East, which would contribute to peace between the two sides. Hence his administration's decision about arms for Israel was based on its assessment of the balance of power in the region. And, he concluded:

> The United States intends […] to see whether further shipments of arms or personnel to the Mideast does tip the balance in a way that it would be necessary for us to provide some assistance, additional assistance to Israel, so that they would not be in an inferior position. We have to realize that we have in the Mideast peoples whose enmities go back over centuries. We have to realize that when one gets an enormous advantage over another, or a significant advantage, the danger of war coming escalates. That is why our policy has to be to try to maintain a balance, so that neither is encouraged to embark on an aggressive course.[9]

Although Nixon did not directly address the issue of the aircraft, he left no doubt regarding his preference for restraint. However, he explained, this was a tentative decision that might change in accordance with the situation on the ground. The Americans seemed to be focused on slowing the flow of arms to the region and providing Moscow with an example. On March 23, two days after Nixon's speech, Secretary of State Rogers officially announced that the American administration had decided to hold a decision about the Israeli request for additional warplanes "in abeyance for now" and to monitor developments in the region.[10]

The Israelis were profoundly disappointed with Rogers' announcement, as Meir and Eban made clear to Ambassador Barbour that same day.[11] The next day, Rabin conveyed to Rogers Israel's official response, in which it expressed

"deep disappointment and grave concern" about the decision, which was "a major setback for Israel." Israel asserted that the American decision could have "a far-reaching negative effect on future developments in the Middle East in the military, political, and psychological spheres," because it had been taken precisely when the Soviet Union was beefing up its military presence in Egypt.

In addition, the decision would actually decrease the chances of achieving peace in the region because it would create a military imbalance between Israel and the Arabs and encourage the Egyptians to continue and even escalate the fighting. It was also liable to have psychological ramifications on the Israelis, increasing their sense of "isolation and abandonment." The administration's decision would give the Arabs the impression that "Israel's last source of supply of crucial military equipment" had been shut down and that henceforth its power would diminish. At the end of the reply, the Israeli government expressed its hope that the United States would soon realize its mistake and provide Israel with the equipment necessary to prevent a military imbalance that would lead to further deterioration in the region.[12] Despite its disappointment, however, Israel was comforted by the fact that the United States promised to maintain Israel's superiority in the air and provide it with economic aid.[13]

Not surprisingly, Egypt too was not happy with the American announcement, precisely because of the elements that consoled the Israelis. The Egyptians saw the decision as proof that the United States intended to ensure Israel's aerial superiority and support it economically. On March 23, in parallel to the clarification session with Rabin, Sisco and his staff met with Ghorbal. Sisco emphasized the positive points in Rogers' statement and said that the decision demonstrated both the American government's steadfast adherence to a balanced policy and desire to maintain friendly relations with all peoples in the Middle East, as well as the American hope that it could broker a cease-fire between Israel and the Arabs and restrain the regional arms race.[14]

Sisco asked Ghorbal that the Egyptian leadership focus on the positive aspects of the decision and respond to the American step in two ways: First, by reconsidering the Egyptian position on a cease-fire; second, by seriously reassessing the American peace initiative, which proposed a solution that served the interests and needs of both sides. In the Americans' view, the administration's decision opened the door for a new policy. But Ghorbal preferred to focus on the negative aspects of the Rogers announcement, and, as Sisco put it, "apparently came in primed to nit pick"; the conversation turned into one of the more unpleasant meetings between the two men.[15]

Bergus, by contrast, made a further attempt to explain the American position and, in his characteristic style, endeavored to calm the air and avert Egyptian misunderstandings or anger. At a meeting with Ahmed Osman, a senior official of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, he said that the Egyptian government would be making a mistake if it rejected the Rogers Plan, inasmuch as that would harm its own interests: Egypt would miss out on the diplomatic opening offered by the plan. Bergus said that, to date, no American administration had acted in as balanced and fair a manner to resolve the crisis between Israel and the Arabs as

the Nixon administration was doing; the Cairo leadership must recognize this fact and its significance. Most importantly, he insisted that the key to a just peace settlement and progress towards resolving the crisis in the region lay in Nasser's hands. Hence Nasser and his government should seriously reconsider the American peace proposals, which took the interests of both sides into account.[16]

An oral agreement between Israel and the Soviet Union

Nixon's and Rogers' statements did not alter the two sides' positions on the Middle East, nor did they slow the steady stream of Soviet surface-to-air missiles, crews, and advisors to Egypt. The dead-end persisted despite (or possibly because of) the American decision. As March continued, reliable and documented reports of constant deliveries of military equipment from Moscow to Cairo continued to reach the State Department. On March 18, Cline, the director of the INR, reported that the Soviet Union had begun shipping SA-3 missiles to Egypt and that, as in Eastern Europe, Soviet crews would probably man the missile batteries, at least until Egyptian troops could be trained to do so. On the basis of the initial information that had reached it, the INR estimated that the Soviets and Egyptians were planning to build around ten missile sites, to be manned by between 1,000 and 2,000 Soviet troops.[17]

In fact, the first SA-3 missiles had arrived in Egypt in February 1970, and a dozen bases were constructed around Alexandria and Cairo, along the Suez Canal, and near the Aswan Dam (which the Soviets undertook to defend). By June, there were 20 batteries in place, protected by anti-aircraft guns and radar networks. The missile batteries and their defenses were manned and operated by Soviet crews. Israeli and American intelligence believed that there were three reasons for this. First, the SA-3 was a new surface-to-air missile, the mainstay of the Soviet air-defense system, and Egypt was the first country to receive it, even before the members of the Warsaw Pact. Second, it was the first opportunity for the SA-3s to see operational activity, so the Soviets wanted to try out the new system without the active involvement of the Egyptians. Third, the training period for operating the batteries was quite long (up to one year), and Egypt could not wait that long to bolster its defenses.[18]

In Israel, the arrival of the new missile batteries was seen as ratcheting up the conflict with a step that could lead to increased Soviet involvement in the war and deeper Soviet penetration of the Egyptian military. The fear was that the Soviet Union would begin by integrating its troops into the anti-aircraft system and later integrate its pilots into the Egyptian Air Force. "With the SAM-3," wrote Yohanan Cohen, director of the East European Division in the Israeli Foreign Ministry,

> the Soviet Union has reached a higher and more direct level of involvement. As the Defense Minister [Dayan] said, this is a "Sovietization" of the war […]. The introduction of SAM-3 missiles is a clear warning sign that undermines the basis of the opinion that "they won't intervene."

Cohen added that in November 1968, after the strike against Nag Hammadi (Operation *Helem* 1), "the possibility that the Soviet Union would switch from a stage of advising, training, and so on to one of direct activity and responsibility was included in several Soviet warnings and threats that were transmitted to Israel."[19] Indeed, with a few days, in the second week of April 1970, dozens of Soviet fighter pilots began flying MiG-21s in Egyptian skies. According to the first reports, these were purely defensive patrols, meant to ensure the safety of the residents of the Egyptian population centers. At first, the Soviets did not try to intercept Israeli planes.

However, in Israel, there was a growing realization that if IAF planes flew into zones defended by the Soviet crews the latter would not hesitate to engage them. The Soviet squadrons, based at three airfields manned by Soviet personnel only, two south of Cairo and one southeast of Alexandria, patrolled the zone between the Nile and the Suez Canal. The Israeli assessment was that there were 70 to 80 fliers in these squadrons; other Soviet pilots served as advisors to the Egyptian Air Force and conducted patrols over the Mediterranean and reconnaissance flights over the American Sixth Fleet.[20]

Israel saw the Soviet Union's involvement in the fighting, especially assistance to the air-defense system, as bolstering the Egyptians' self-confidence and enabling them to continue the War of Attrition. Some in Israeli intelligence believed that were it not for the Soviet involvement, the conflict with Egypt would have ended. Since the Soviet pilots' arrival, however, Egypt evinced a new and greater belligerence. During the second half of April, from April 18 on, the Egyptians attacked IDF positions along the Canal from the air and the ground.[21]

In addition to their growing air presence in Egypt, the Soviets also established a permanent naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean. Between 40 and 60 ships were posted there, including combat, intelligence-gathering, research, and support vessels.[22] Although the Soviets were at a disadvantage compared to the NATO naval forces or the American Sixth Fleet, the Israeli assessment was that the Soviet naval force had "the strategic capacity to serve as a balanced core of a much larger flotilla, and in a crisis could pose both a political and military threat."[23] But the Soviet ships lacked an air umbrella, a problem that was addressed by the dispatch to the area of two helicopter carriers, the *Leningrad* and the *Moskva*, and the use of the Soviet squadrons based near Cairo for patrol and intelligence-gathering missions. According to a top-secret Israeli intelligence report,

> there are more than 3,000 Soviet military experts and advisors in Egypt, not counting the pilots, SA-3 operators, and air-defense crews. Although there are no verified reports about the total number of active-duty Soviet military personnel in Egypt, the best estimates range between 5,600 and 7,000. Soviet advisors and experts integrated into all levels of the Egyptian command structure—about 850 to 1,000 with the Egyptian Air Force, 200 to 300 with the navy, and 2,000 with the ground forces—a total of between

> 2,500 and 4,000. Thanks to Soviet arm deliveries, in 1970 the Egyptian armed forces have 1,600 tanks, 1,600 artillery pieces, 600 fighter-bombers and bombers, seven destroyers, 13 submarines, 20 missile boats, and SA-3 surface-to-air missile batteries and other anti-aircraft systems.[24]

Additional information about the Soviet involvement and the Egyptian rearmament was gathered in May and June 1970. At this stage of the fighting, the assessment of Israeli intelligence was that three motives lay behind the increased Soviet involvement in Egypt: preventing a total Egyptian military defeat; deterring Israel from continued military operations and limiting the depth of its warplanes' penetration by eliminating the "open skies" the Israel Air Force had enjoyed; and preparing for the possibility that the crisis would escalate into full-scale war between Israel and the Arabs. Even though Moscow's interest was to prevent that, its goal was to achieve military superiority over the United States and Israel in the region, or at least a level of military power that could not be ignored should war break out.[25]

The public statements by senior Kremlin figures and the mobilization of the Soviet propaganda machine for a vicious anti-Israel campaign left no room for doubt as to the Soviet Union's intentions and the extent of its involvement in Egypt. For example, on April 14, in Kharkov, Communist Party General Secretary Brezhnev declared that the Soviet Union had promised to provide the Arabs "all the assistance that was necessary in order to frustrate the plans for aggression in the Middle East." He said the aggressive policies of Israel's rulers pose a threat to the country's future.[26] About ten days later, he declared that his country could continue to provide Egypt with active assistance in order to "totally wipe out the traces of the Israeli aggression." On May 4, Prime Minister Kosygin supported Brezhnev's statements and told a press conference that

> we have an agreement with the Government of the U.A.R. under which our military advisors are attached to the troops of the U.A.R. This is done with the object of combating Israeli aggression […]. The respective functions of our military advisers are being coordinated with Government of the U.A.R.[27]

That aggression, Kosygin underscored, was enabled by the American support and arming of Israel.

In Moscow, Ambassador Beam was informed that the Soviet reinforcement of the Egyptian air defenses was "a legitimate defensive move" and that the dispatch of additional Soviet advisors to Egypt "represents no change in Soviet involvement in the Middle East, since Soviet advisers have been in [the] UAR all along." Soviet officials expressed their concern about Israel's deep-penetration raids and the calls by the Israeli leadership to destroy the SA-3 missile batteries; in Soviet eyes, these missiles did not constitute a "qualitative change" in the balance of power. In light of these statements and additional information that had reached him, Beam estimated that the Soviet Union was ready to absorb

"some personnel losses" as a result of the deployment and operation of the SAM-3s, but would not be able to accept an extensive Israeli attempt to destroy the missile system.[28] Cline of the INR shared this view. On March 31, he wrote to Secretary of State Rogers that even if Soviet personnel were injured by Israeli attacks, "the experience of Vietnam suggests that the Soviets are unlikely to consider personnel losses per se sufficient ground for precipitating a major crisis." He believed that Israel would continue its attacks and do everything possible to prevent the missiles' installation near the Suez Canal. It seemed likely, he added, that the near future would see a hardening of Egypt's and Israel's diplomatic positions and a very serious escalation of the fighting.[29]

Despite this assessment, the Americans continued to see the deployment of the SAM-3s and dispatch of additional Soviet personnel to Egypt as an escalation in the regional situation, which entailed "a significant increase in the risks and dangers of the war of attrition," because of the view that the Soviet leadership attached great importance to its commitment to the Nasser regime. The main American fear was of an Israeli counter-thrust to the emplacement of the missiles, especially near the Suez Canal. If Israel struck the missile batteries, the Soviet Union would be faced with two options: either to absorb the humiliation or to expand its presence in Egypt by providing arms and sending additional personnel there.[30]

With no ability to encourage a comprehensive settlement that would neutralize the risks posed by the situation near the Suez Canal, State Department officials opined that "it could be brought under temporary control" if Israel and Egypt agreed to a formal cease-fire or at least reached an unofficial understanding to limit the scale the conflict.[31] There were positive signs in this direction in early April. In conversations with Sisco and Kissinger, Dobrynin took an encouraging position on an accord between Israel and Egypt. The Soviet Union demonstrated a willingness to take a more constructive position on the formulas for a settlement that referred to peace and to negotiations, in exchange for a more explicit American attitude on the status of Gaza and Sharm el-Sheikh. Dobrynin even signaled the possibility of a cease-fire when he hinted that the Soviets could work in Cairo to reach an unofficial understanding for a de facto cease-fire. This led the Americans to believe that the Soviets, too, feared an escalation in the region that could drag the two superpowers into the conflict and were consequently looking for ways to lower the tension level. If Moscow was hinting at the possibility of a de facto cease-fire, Sisco believed, it was plausible to assume that it had received approval for this from Cairo; hence the idea should be raised with the Israelis.[32]

Several weeks after the initial Americans failure to make headway with Israel concerning a de facto cease-fire, Sisco met with Rabin on April 6; the two discussed the subject again, in addition to how Israel would respond to the introduction of the SA-3 missiles. Rabin emphasized that as long as Egypt did not declare a cease-fire, Israeli policy on this matter could not change. In his view, the Soviets and the Egyptians were seeking to buy time and deploy additional missiles along the Canal. Were the fighting renewed after that deployment was

complete, the Egyptians' firepower and air-defense would be stronger than the IDF and IAF.[33] Rabin added that the story would be different if Nasser stated publicly that he accepted a cease-fire with Israel. But as long as the Egyptian position on the matter was unclear, Israel rejected the proposal for a de facto cease-fire.[34]

Rabin also said that Israel distinguished between the placement of missiles along the Suez Canal and their deployment around major Egyptian cities. At this stage, Israel had no plans to act against the missile sites in the Egyptian interior, because they did not provide any firepower advantage to the Egyptians along the Canal. Sisco tried to take advantage of Israel's decision to achieve a modus vivendi between the Israelis and the Soviets: Israel would not attack the SAM sites around Cairo, Alexandria, and Aswan, and in return the Soviets would not place SA-3 missiles east of the Nile Valley and Delta where they would create a defensive umbrella over the Canal.[35]

In an attempt to promote the modus vivendi idea, Undersecretary of State Richardson met with Rabin on April 13. Richardson presented the American position and explained that, given the situation in which it was impossible to achieve a cease-fire on terms acceptable to the two sides, the American proposal would benefit all three countries—Israel, the Soviet Union, and Egypt. Rabin repeated that at this stage Israel would not attack the Soviet crews manning the missile sites near Alexandria, Cairo, and Aswan; but if the Egyptians or Soviets placed SAM batteries near the Canal, Israel would employ all means available to destroy them. So even though the IDF was not operating against the missiles sites in the interior, this did not mean that Israel did not want to allow itself an opening—a depth of "20 to 25 miles"—for an airstrike in the future, if it were challenged.[36]

Consultations and assessments in Jerusalem and Washington

One reason for the failure of the Rogers Initiative of December 1969 was that the United States had no direct contacts with Egypt. In the first two weeks of April 1970, the State Department decided to learn from its experience and send Sisco to the Middle East. Between April 10 and 14, the Assistant Secretary of State visited Cairo and met with President Nasser, Foreign Minister Riad, and others in the leadership. It was the first visit by a senior American official since the severing of ties in June 1967. The State Department's goal was to rebuild trust between the two countries and acquaint Egypt with America's balanced approach to the conflict, especially the diplomatic initiatives of October and December 1969, and do so directly, without Soviet mediation. The demarche was the result of encouraging signs from Nasser about his willingness to begin a dialogue, but also from the Soviets, who hinted at the need for a cease-fire.

Sisco clarified at the outset that he knew he could not work "any miracles in [a] three day visit," but he emphasized the need for all sides to show diplomatic flexibility and a willingness to compromise about peace and an Israeli withdrawal. He said it would be impossible to conclude a diplomatic settlement as

long as Egypt demanded a full Israeli withdrawal on all fronts and a solution to the refugee issue that would change Israel's Jewish character. He added that the United States recognized that peace would be impossible if based on substantial territorial acquisition. However, Nasser stuck to his demand for a full Israeli withdrawal from all territories (including the Golan Heights and West Bank) and the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes, and refused to terminate the war in the current conditions. Nasser said that time was in his favor and emphasized that for now he had no choice but to rely on the Soviets and accept their support. From the other side, Egyptian Foreign Minister Riad later wrote that "Sisco did not submit one clear-cut point of view, so talks with him were of no consequence."[37]

A disappointed Sisco left Cairo for Israel, empty-handed and with no new tidings.[38] However, the Egyptian president had given him "the distinct impression he was uncomfortable left with the Soviets" and that, despite the suspicion between Cairo and Washington, "the United States," as Nasser admitted, "is the only power that could move the Israelis."[39] During the talks with Sisco, the Egyptians focused on the terms of a comprehensive Arab–Israeli settlement. In Israel, he chiefly encountered a consensus that the focus should be on the supply of warplanes and the dangers posed by the deepening Soviet involvement in Egypt. Sisco wanted to move the diplomatic process forward, and that was what he asked of Meir, Eban, and Dayan. If Israel wanted to improve its image in the eyes of the American people and strengthen its position, Sisco said, it should take the initiative and show flexibility in its diplomatic position. Moreover, such a step would make it easier for Nixon to agree to supply additional aircraft. He also asked Israel to exercise military restraint in order to keep the region from being dragged into further escalation, mentioning that the Soviets had constructed the missile sites in response to Israel's deep-penetration raids.[40]

But the Israelis showed no more willingness to compromise than the Egyptians had. Meir said that there was no possibility of peace as long as Nasser governed Egypt. Israel was ready to wait for a major change on the Arab side, but in the meantime the Americans had to adopt a more forceful stand against the Soviets and supply Israel with the arms it needed. Here the Prime Minister expressed her deep concern about the Soviet involvement in the conflict and her worry about the demand that Israel produce peace proposals to follow up on the American ideas. This position, she said, was incompatible with the Israeli line, which was "stand fast until the Arabs come to us."[41]

In addition to the attempt to jump-start the diplomatic process between Israel and Egypt, Sisco, Meir, and Dayan also discussed recent developments in the Middle East. Meir and Dayan expressed their concern about the Soviet penetration of the region. In response, Sisco emphasized the need for Israel to show military restraint in order to prevent further escalation and keep the Soviets from getting more deeply involved. This could lead to a more congenial atmosphere between the two superpowers that would permit contacts about the Middle East. Meir and Dayan promised that Israel would choose its military targets carefully and would not attack the SA-3 sites around Cairo, Alexandria, and Aswan. The

two added that Israel would "avoid [any] provocation" that would lead to deeper Soviet involvement in Egypt.[42]

At the end of Sisco's visit, Israel rejected the American proposal, albeit unofficially. It undertook not to attack the missile arrays defending the two main cities and Aswan, but refused to stipulate a line inside Egyptian territory that Israeli warplanes would not cross. Moreover, Israel would not consent to an American–Soviet understanding about a permitted zone of operations. In fact, the deep-bombing raids had already been halted on April 13, but the Soviet involvement in the conflict did not end. After a brief interruption, Egypt continued to construct missile sites near the Canal, with Soviet air-defense crews providing cover for them.[43]

Sisco's visit to the Middle East and his meetings with several leaders there persuaded him that the administration had to re-evaluate its positions and policy, because there had been new developments in the region since the current foundations of American diplomacy there had been laid in early 1969. In practice, Sisco asserted, several American assumptions had failed the test of reality. The first was that the talks between the superpowers could unblock the cul de sac. Yet despite the efforts by the United States and the Soviet Union, the sides had not changed their positions and no progress had been made in the diplomatic process. The second assumption that had proven false was that the Soviets would influence Nasser to take a more positive and conciliatory approach about a settlement with Israel.

In the event, however, not only did the Soviet Union refuse to pressure Nasser, it deepened its involvement in Egypt and helped it continue to prosecute the war. In these conditions, the ongoing talks in the framework of the Forum of Two detracted from the Americans' standing with the Arabs while helping the Soviets improve theirs. The third mistaken assumption was that Israel would accept the American outline for a diplomatic settlement. Not only had the administration encountered a firm refusal, but Israel also continued to demand even more military and economic assistance. In light of all this, Sisco's conclusion was that the United States should focus its efforts squarely on Israel, Egypt, and the Palestinians, rather than on talks with the other powers. In this way, it would have better prospects of influencing developments in the region for the better.[44]

At a meeting on April 28, Eban informed Barbour that, ten days earlier, Soviet pilots had been identified patrolling on the Israeli side of the Suez Canal. Even though there had been no engagement between the Soviet and Israeli pilots, except for a Soviet jet's pursuit of an Israeli plane on April 18, Eban warned that this signaled a quantum leap in the tension in the region and hoped that Israel could coordinate positions with the United States on the matter. He expressed his concern about the potential psychological and political consequences of the new situation and said that this was why the administration had to send Moscow a clear and sharp message.[45]

Eban emphasized that an American failure to take a firm stand and oppose the Soviet step could have a "disastrous effect." The Arabs would be swept by a

sense of great elation, whereas the Israelis would be demoralized and think that the United States had withdrawn its support. Eban again asked the administration to respond affirmatively to Israel's request for additional warplanes.[46] Cohen's assessment was that were the Soviets to see no concrete response to their military activity in Egypt and continued to estimate the risk of a clash with the Americans as low, they would not hesitate to expand their involvement further.[47]

On the morning of April 29, the day after the conversation between Eban and Barbour, the Israeli government released a communiqué about the Soviet fliers' involvement in Egypt's air-defense system. The government said that it saw this as "a grave development" and declared that "the escalation of Soviet involvement in Egypt must cause concern not only to Israel but to all freedom-loving peoples." The communiqué concluded:

> [Israel] will continue to defend itself against all aggression which violates the ceasefire arrangements and which aims at renewal of war in the area. In all its struggles, Israel drew strength from its unity and from the justice of its cause. Israel will continue in its firm stand and in its quest for true and lasting peace.[48]

The Egyptian response came the next day. Abdel-Meguid, the Egyptian government spokesman, attempted to minimize the significance of the Soviet involvement and attacked Israel. He charged that the Israeli leadership was conducting a deliberate and carefully planned "propaganda campaign" against his country and the Soviet Union, because it sensed that world public opinion was swinging against it. Israel did not want to realize the vision of peace, Abdel-Meguid said, but was trying to increase the tension and threat to world peace. He emphasized that Israel had asked the United States for additional warplanes so that it could continue its aggression. The same day, the Political Planning Committee of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry published its own response, asserting that the Israeli government's statement about the presence of Soviet pilots in Egypt had three goals: to expand the bounds of the crisis and represent it to world public opinion as a result of the global conflict between the two power blocs; to dim the luster of the Egyptian military successes and attribute them to Soviet assistance; and to create a sympathetic basis for the announcement of a new arms deal with the United States.[49]

The Soviet pilots' appearance in Egyptian skies opened a new episode in the Arab–Israeli conflict in general and in its Israeli–Egyptian chapter in particular. After Israel and the United States had collected substantial information about the scale of the Soviet presence in Egypt, and after Nasser admitted to Sisco, in mid-April, that the Soviet agreement to protect metropolitan Egypt was part of the SA-3 package agreed on during his visit to Moscow, the situation was different than it had been at the end of January.[50] In a conversation with Moshe Raviv, the counselor in the Israel Embassy in Washington, Parker, the head of the Egypt desk at the State Department, admitted that "the Soviet steps could not

be viewed as a bluff. They had made a promise to Nasser, so their word and prestige were at stake." Parker said that the Kosygin letter had been a warning before the introduction of the SA-3 batteries and that the proposal for a de facto cease-fire, floated in March, preceded the first flights by Soviet pilots in Egypt. The Americans should have "understood and explored these signals."[51]

The Israeli reports and the initial information collected in the field induced the American administration to publish a reaction to the Soviet military involvement in Egypt. On April 29, White House spokesman Ron Ziegler told reporters that the recent developments were "a serious concern to the U.S." and that President Nixon had ordered "an immediate and full evaluation of all intelligence reports and the implications of them on the strategic balance in the Middle East." State Department spokesman Robert McCloskey added that the Soviet pilots' involvement in Egypt was "serious and potentially dangerous" and that the American government did not doubt the veracity of the reports of their presence.[52]

Israel attempted to instill the American administration with a sense of the urgency behind its request for aircraft, especially after the reports about the Soviet pilots; but Washington saw things differently. As mentioned, in late March the view emerged there that the dispatch of Soviet missiles and crews was a response to the deep-penetration raids by the IAF. Even two months later, the INR and the State Department could not find any evidence to corroborate the Israeli assumption. "The prevalent thesis" was that the Soviet pilots had been forced into action because of Israel's deep-bombing raids and that their mission was defensive and intended mainly to protect the SA-3 missile sites, inasmuch as the Soviet Union could not accept yet "another blow to the Nasserite regime" and quite naturally sought to safeguard its political interests in Egypt. However, the assumption was that the Soviet pilots would not initiate combat with Israeli aircraft and would engage them only if they were attacked or thought Israel was about to strike the missile sites they were defending.[53]

The idea that the deep-penetration raids had been the trigger gained credence as the escalation and Soviet involvement grew. Sisco's deputy, Alfred L. Atherton, argued that it was clear that the Soviets had made a "commitment to Egypt's air-defense." He added, however, that the Soviets would deploy their batteries along a line from Alexandria to the Gulf of Suez to Aswan, "while leaving undefended a narrow strip along the cease-fire line at the canal and some 20 to 40 kilometers west of it." Kissinger also subscribed to the thesis that Israel bore full responsibility for the tension along the Canal and that "Israel had provoked the Soviet reaction by its deep penetration raids."[54]

This led the senior echelons of the INR and the State Department to two conclusions: First, to calm the air, the Israeli requests for additional warplanes should be weighed with due gravity. Atherton told Raviv that even had the United States immediately announced that it was giving Israel a certain number of planes, rather than selling them, he did not believe it would deter the Soviets. The only thing that could deter them would be "if the United States injected itself the same way they injected themselves with a similar commitment"—that

is, by stationing American troops in Israel—a step whose problematic nature did not require explanation. The second conclusion was that the Soviets would avoid a clash with the IDF forces arrayed along the Canal and stay a safe distance from the battle zone. Hence, they were not inclined to view the recent Soviet moves as a direct challenge to the United States in the global arena, but only as a response to Israel in the local theater.[55]

It is clear that, for the Israelis, this debate had "direct implications for the conclusions the United States should draw from the situation," because those who shared the INR's view believed that an affirmative response to Israel's requests for additional aircraft would lead the Soviet Union to unleash its pilots for combat missions, and this could lead to an American–Soviet clash in the Middle East.[56] Parker added that "it was crazy to think that another fifty Phantoms would solve the problem. Only a signal to Egypt of a willingness to reach a settlement could produce any progress." This argument ran directly contrary to Israel's position that the absence of a favorable response to Israel's requests merely encouraged the Soviets.[57]

Nasser's peace offensive

Nasser himself shed more light on the Soviet involvement in Egypt in a festive May Day speech in Shubra al-Kheima, near a factory in Abu Zabal that the IAF had bombed by mistake. Nasser declared that the role of the Soviets and the purpose of the air-defense network they had installed were to prevent Israeli deep-penetration attacks and not to support offensive military action. He said that the Egyptian armed forces had been rebuilt and strengthened and had deprived the Israelis of the military initiative. In addition to the revelation of the Soviet involvement and the emphasis on the Egyptian military effort, the State Department and the White House heard something else in Nasser's speech: the increased Soviet involvement gave the Egyptian president a feeling of confidence. Feeling that he had restored his country's military and diplomatic power and placed it in a bargaining position it had not had since the 1967 war, Nasser could now speak from a position of strength.[58]

Nasser used terms like the "war of light against darkness" and a "war of the forces of life against the forces of destruction." He took the Americans to task for their many years of support for Israel, including in 1967, and focused on the American military assistance that allowed Israel to perpetuate its occupation of Arab land. He stressed once again that the United States persisted in its unbalanced policy towards the Middle East conflict. President Nixon, he said, was facing fateful decisions about the relations between Washington and Cairo, which would determine whether the rift between the United States and Egypt lasted for many more years or whether they could open a new page in their relationship. Nasser addressed Nixon directly: despite the dark cloud over the two countries' relationship, "we have not closed the door finally with the United States"; if that country was truly interested in peace, it must tell Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. If that was beyond its ability, it should at least refrain from

providing Israel with assistance of any sort—diplomatic, military, or economic—as long as Israel continued to occupy Arab territory. This was his "final appeal for the sake of peace in the Middle East," Nasser emphasized.[59]

The May Day speech and other statements, some of them to the foreign media, induced some in the State Department to refer to "Nasser's peace offensive."[60] In an April 30 interview with the American weekly *U.S. News and World Report* Nasser came across as interested in peace. He emphasized that Egypt had accepted the Security Council resolution but Israel had rejected it. He added that Egypt accepted the presence of a Jewish state in Palestine. If Israel returned their land to the Arabs, Egypt would guarantee free passage for Israeli ships in the Suez Canal and in Sharm el-Sheikh.

But if Israel continued to hold the occupied territories and refused to withdraw, Egypt would have no choice but to exercise its "undeniable right" and attempt to liberate them. The War of Attrition, Nasser added, was not limited in time, because Israel left the Arabs no other choice. It was attempting to impose a settlement on the Arabs, but would not succeed, because "to win a victory is one thing, to force a settlement is another." He did not deny the presence of "Russian technicians" in his country, and said that Egypt would require their assistance as long as the war continued. Nasser also admitted that the invitation to the Soviets originated with him, because Egypt needed their help desperately. He said that he had turned to the Soviets because the Americans were providing Israel with the military assistance and support it needed to wage war. So as long as the hostilities continued and there was no peace, Egypt would continue to ask the Soviet Union "for more such equipment [and] more technicians to operate it."

Moreover, Nasser, his self-confidence restored by the Soviet assistance his country had received in recent months, stated that the Egyptian armed forces now had the capacity to strike Israeli positions in the Sinai from the air and ground, in response to the Israeli deep-penetration raids. Of course, Egypt preferred a peaceful solution, he continued, but this was impossible "if the US continues to give full support to Israel in a military way." From here Nasser turned to address the American public directly:

> Given a balanced US policy toward the Arab states and Israel, our relations could return to normal. The US view of Arabs is distorted. […] I want peace. I do not want war for war's sake. I am not a bloodthirsty military conqueror […]. In 1948 I saw enough war […] I do not like war, I hate it […]. But what I want is not the peace of capitulation and surrender to expanding Israeli power. I want peace with dignity, a peace that can be obtained between reasonable men.[61]

The day after Nasser's May Day speech, Foreign Minister Riad invited Bergus for a meeting at which he emphasized Nasser's appeal to Nixon. Riad said that the Egyptian people hoped that the United States would take note of what Nasser had said in the speech about Egypt's desire for peace, despite the reports in the American media that the speech was in practice an ultimatum. The speech

should be considered carefully, Riad asserted, and taken for what it was—a call for peace: Nasser had expressed his hope that Nixon would decide for peace. Hence the United States should make it clear to Israel that it must withdraw from the occupied territories, Riad said. What is more, as long as the occupation continued, the American administration must stop giving Israel military and diplomatic support. Riad summed up that if the administration clarified its position on withdrawal and the refugee problem and used its weight to push for a just solution, peace in the region was possible.[62]

The "peace offensive" continued on May 4, when the Egyptian ambassador at the UN, Mohammed Hassan al-Zayyat, asked that the May Day speech be distributed as an official General Assembly and Security Council document. A letter conveying the spirit of Nasser's remarks was attached to this request. Zayyat said that since June 1967 Egypt had been trying to protect itself against Israeli aggression, recover the territories seized from it, and support the Palestinian people's efforts "to obtain their legitimate rights," as sustained by relevant UN resolutions. The Arab side was acting within rights anchored in international law, whereas Israel maintained its stubborn refusal to withdraw from the occupied territories. It intended to annex them and callously rejected the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, "whose mere existence they even deny." Zayyat accused Israel of trying to attain its "unlawful objectives" by force and escalation of the situation in the region. Should Israel's "policy of violence" achieve its goal, Zayyat said, the foundation of the United Nations, along with international law, would be destroyed, and the organization's "prestige and effectiveness most seriously damaged."[63]

Zayyat wrote that, in his government's view, the situation in the region had reached "a most critical stage," and acknowledged that the two sides had heard "earnest initiatives" aimed at a peace settlement. The world community, too, had to deal with the fateful situation, because the "threat to peace" seemed to be expanding beyond the Middle East. In his conclusion, Zayyat asked Secretary General Thant to again call on Israel to implement the UN resolution, to continue his efforts to achieve peace, and to ask the American administration not to provide Israel with assistance and support as long as that country continued to ignore the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.[64]

Nasser made another attempt to influence American public opinion and, more importantly, the administration, in an interview conducted by Roger Fisher in mid-May and broadcast the next month on the American public-television program *The Advocates*.[65] Continuing his peace offensive, Nasser presented his country as a peace-loving state that was ready to recognize Israel and conclude a settlement with it, including solutions to the issues of borders and the refugees. Nasser announced that Egypt would agree to a six-month cease-fire, during which a package deal would be drawn up covering the Israeli withdrawal and Egyptian recognition of the lines of June 4, 1967, as Israel's secure and recognized borders.[66]

On June 17, three days after the interview aired, Ahmad Anis, Abdel-Meguid's successor as Egyptian government spokesman, enumerated his country's conditions

for implementing Nasser's proposed cease-fire: First, Israel must announce its willingness to implement the terms of Resolution 242 in full, including a complete withdrawal from all the Arab occupied territories and recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people. The second condition was that the Security Council provide firm guarantees for the fulfillment of the first condition. Finally, during the cease-fire, Ambassador Jarring would formulate the operational arrangements for the Israeli withdrawal. So in practice Nasser had added nothing new and the Egyptian core position had not changed.[67]

Israel, of course, responded with an outright rejection of the proposal and rebuffed any link, such as Egypt had made, between a cease-fire and Resolution 242. In a speech to the World Council of Synagogues (of the Conservative Movement), Prime Minister Meir repeated Israel's demand for direct negotiations with the Arabs without prior conditions, refused to consider any return of refugees to Israel, and rejected the idea of a time-limited cease-fire, because that would only serve the military interests of Nasser, who would continue to rebuild his military and plan another war.[68]

In Israel, Nasser's May Day speech was seen in Israel as "part of the Egyptian campaign to prevent another American commitment to supply aircraft to Israel."[69] Some in the INR shared this notion and viewed the speech as an "Egyptian maneuver or tactic, rather than a real attempt to improve the prospects for a settlement."[70] Bergus's assessment, too, was that Nasser's speech was an attempt to prevent an American commitment to more aid to Israel and possibly also to pressure the United States to force Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. He thought that Nasser was speaking from a "position of strength" and believed that Nasser was trying to mobilize Arab support for his strategy that "the best way to get peace is to prepare for war."[71]

But others proposed taking a different tack in response to the signals from Cairo. Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., the executive secretary of the State Department, saw the matter in a similar light. He thought that the peace offensive was meant to persuade the United States that Nasser was sincerely interested in peace with Israel. Eliot noted that the Egyptians had stepped up their military activity along the Suez Canal, which reflected increased self-confidence and military capabilities thanks to the protection from Israeli air attacks afforded them by the Soviets. Nasser now felt that he could negotiate from a position of strength and was thus ready to speak more openly about peace. At the same time, however, he wanted to keep up and increase the military and diplomatic pressure on Israel and the United States in order to further improve his position and achieve better terms for a settlement. Eliot concluded that "the speech must be taken seriously and that our response to it could affect significantly" the future of American relations with Egypt and the other countries in the region.[72]

The Egyptians' new confidence thanks to their improved bargaining position and the worrying developments in the Middle East spurred the Israeli leadership to an even more urgent request for American assistance, in the form of aircraft and other military equipment. Foreign Minister Eban and Ambassador Rabin held talks with senior American officials from May 20 to 22. All the talks dealt

with Secretary of State Rogers' peace plan and the immediate need for a cease-fire and a settlement, but focused mainly on the Soviet presence in Egypt and the Israeli requests for more aid. The core of the disagreement between the two countries about the scale of the Soviet involvement in Egypt and the need for additional warplanes came to the surface in this round of talks. Under the surface, the talks exposed the friction and battles between the White House and the State Department about these issues and the appropriate way to address them.

This round of talks began in Jerusalem with a long meeting between Prime Minister Meir and Ambassador Barbour on May 19.[73] The next day, in Washington, Eban submitted a summary of the meeting to Secretary of State Rogers and told him that there were great expectations in Israel concerning the United States response to the Soviet involvement in Egypt—a question "which dominates our lives." He said that Israel was still unsure as to the Soviets' immediate intentions, but their presence certainly eased the burden on the Egyptian forces, who could now dedicate the bulk of their effort to offensive action against the IDF. Eban explained that Israel had collected information on the movement of surface-to-air missiles towards the Canal; if missile batteries were installed within "20 miles" of the Canal, they would effectively cover the entire area. Eban added that the Soviet assistance to Egypt was liable to threaten Israel's existence. He stressed that the Israeli position vis-à-vis Egypt had two components: First, holding firm to the cease-fire lines, which it viewed as a "legitimate line and position"; second, a restrained military policy that would not provide the Soviets with an excuse for active involvement in the fighting. But if the Soviets engaged in action against Israel, it would be sure to defend itself.[74]

The recent escalation increased the Israeli need for warplanes, Eban said, as he renewed the request for American assistance on this front. He handed over a message from Prime Minister Meir to President Nixon, which included a proposal for a suitable American response to the Soviet involvement in the region. First, the United States should provide Israel with aircraft in response to the military imbalance created to Israel's disadvantage; second, it should publish a statement calling on the Soviets to end their involvement in Egypt. Rogers evaded a clear answer to the request for additional warplanes, but asked Israel to show restraint, create opportunities, and encourage initiatives to get the diplomatic process between Israel and the Arabs moving.[75]

In the meeting with Eban, Rogers clearly stated the State Department's cautious position about a decision on the Israeli request for military equipment. Even though it saw the recent Soviet moves in the Middle East "as extremely serious" and as creating "an entirely new dimension of problem," the State Department needed more time to give due consideration to the ramifications of a favorable decision in the context of its "overall political and strategic interest in the Middle East." According to Rogers, if the United States decided to advance a proposal for a cease-fire, followed by negotiations, supplying warplanes to Israel would undermine the process. Hence the matter required further and deeper study.[76]

The conversation between Rogers and Eban was matter-of-fact about the diplomatic initiatives but vague about the aircraft and devoid of any warm feelings

for Israel. The tone was quite different when Eban and Rabin met with Nixon. Impressed by Meir's emotional letter of early March, in which she begged the Americans to supply the warplanes to Israel—"The effect of this shock cannot be overestimated.… Mr. President, we are alone!"—Nixon notified Eban that "the important thing is the planes; and you will get them without fanfare." In other words, despite his desire to help Israel, Nixon deemed it important for America to maintain a low profile on the subject, so as not to damage its interests in the Middle East.[77]

After Rabin reviewed the situation on the Suez front and the threat the Soviets posed by their very presence and by the missile batteries they were installing near the Canal, Nixon replied vigorously:

> I told you before to give it to them and to hit them as hard as you can. Every time I hear that you go at them, penetrate into their territory, I am delighted. As far as they are concerned, go ahead and hit them.

In this bellicose mood, Nixon lashed out at the other Arab countries: "The trouble is the rest of the Arabs […]. The hell with oil! We can get it from somewhere else. We have to retain the other decent people in the Middle East." He agreed with Eban and Rabin that the Soviets were monitoring the Israeli and American response to their actions, and added that the United States must support Israel's efforts to deter them, but cautiously: "We ought to play it so we don't lose everything [in the Middle East] […]. We want to help you without hurting ourselves." But Nixon did ask Israel to help advance diplomatic initiatives and emphasized that the promise of warplanes (made in 1966 and 1968) was unconditional.[78]

Thus, assured of Nixon's support for Israel, especially the supply of the aircraft, on May 26 Prime Minister Meir declared, in a sort of quid pro quo, that Israel accepted Resolution 242. She added that when peace came, Israeli forces would not remain beyond the secure and recognized borders to be determined. Rogers repeated this Israeli statement in his talks with Dobrynin on June 2, emphasizing Israel's willingness, as stated by Defense Minister Dayan on May 26, to limit IAF operations to a zone 30 kilometers west of the Canal and to maintain the cease-fire.[79] But Rogers also expressed the American administration's grave concern with the Soviets' growing military involvement in Egypt. The Secretary of State gave Dobrynin a note for the Soviet leadership, in which the United States asserted that the introduction of Soviet forces to the combat zone was not a defensive move, because it encouraged Egypt to continue the fighting and

> could lead to serious escalation with unpredictable consequences to which the U.S. could not remain indifferent […]. It is neither in the interest of the Soviet Union nor the United States for the Middle East to become an area of confrontation between us.[80]

Kissinger conveyed a similar message to Dobrynin on June 10, to the effect that "the presence of Soviet combat personnel in Egypt was a matter of the very

gravest consequence which sooner or later would produce a major difficulty with the United States and could perhaps even lead to a confrontation."[81] If these statements were an American attempt at muscle-flexing in order to deter the Soviets, they appear to have had no effect. The Soviet Union continued to beef up the Egyptian air defenses and to send additional forces to Egypt. This bolstered the Egyptian's confidence, and in Soviet eyes remade the balance of power in the confrontation along the Canal. More than it wanted to prevent greater Soviet involvement in Egypt, the United States wanted to work with the Soviet Union to advance a diplomatic settlement and reach understandings that would end the fighting along the Canal as soon as possible.[82]

To conclude this section, note that while Israel was conducting the deep-penetration bombing campaign, from January to April 1970, there was substantial opposition to the campaign in Washington, because the American administration believed it was these attacks that had pushed the Soviet Union to its heightened and direct involvement in the War of Attrition. Israel, for its part, rejected the link between its "airborne artillery" and the Soviet penetration of Egypt. The Israelis held that the Soviet Union and Egypt had agreed on the dispatch of Soviet pilots and the delivery of air-defense systems, especially SA-3 batteries with their crews, in November–December 1969 and January 1970. It was not the deep-penetration raids that had bestirred Moscow to come to Nasser's assistance, the Israelis claimed, correctly, but the opportunity to stake a claim in Egypt and exploit the Arab–Israeli conflict to implement Soviet aims in the Middle East that had brought the Soviets to Egypt.[83]

This disagreement had three main ramifications, two of them linked to the supply of warplanes to Israel. First, the administration had to give new thought to the requests for aircraft, even when they became more pressing, because it saw the planes an escalation of the situation that could provoke greater Soviet involvement. As America was sinking deeper in the mud of Vietnam, and in April 1970 expanding the conflict to neighboring Cambodia, the administration could not risk additional military entanglements in another theater. Nixon wanted to link talks with the Soviets on the Middle East to the situation in Southeast Asia; escalation along the Canal was liable to endanger that effort.[84]

The second ramification involved the efforts to bring about a settlement between Israel and the Arabs. The latter said that as long as the United States continued to provide Israel with the aircraft it used against them, there was no chance of an American-mediated settlement. These voices, coming from Egypt and Jordan, were heard in the State Department and the White House. Wanting to calm the situation and adopt a balanced policy on the conflict, the administration decided to freeze the aid package as long as the balance of power did not tilt dramatically against Israel. Accordingly, the United States continued to hold back for more than ten months after Prime Minister Meir asked for delivery of the equipment and aircraft that had already been promised. Later, the shipment of the warplanes was used as a carrot and stick, especially after Secretary of State Rogers unveiled his new cease-fire plan—"stop shooting and start talking"—on June 19.[85]

The third ramification, which was in part a product of the first two, was directly linked to the intelligence surprise of direct Soviet involvement in the war. According to Philip H. Stoddard of the INR, Israel had decided to launch the campaign of deep-penetration raids without giving adequate consideration to what the Soviet response would be and the strength of the Soviet Union's commitment to its client. In the end, the Soviet response left Israel with only one option—a desperate plea for American support. The new situation placed Washington in a double bind: the risk of a clash between the IDF and the Soviet units in Egypt, versus the Israeli demand for the Americans to do something to deter the Soviets. Stoddard explained that the Rogers Initiative of June 19 reflected the success of the Soviet–Egyptian campaign, which forced the United States to seek a diplomatic way out of the mess while making concessions at Israel's expense. As we will see in the next chapter, an integrated Soviet–Egyptian diplomatic-military maneuver forced the United States to abandon a position of strength based on the same military–diplomatic mix and to shift entirely to the diplomatic plane in order to rescue its client.[86]

Notes

1 Arye Arazi quoting an American citizen who was working in the Gulf of Suez and had volunteered to provide Israel with maps and sketches of the Gulf "No. 551," July 22, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/12.
2 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XII, Doc. 140, "Memorandum of Conversation," March 10, 1970, 435–6.
3 Ibid., Doc. 131, "Memorandum of Conversation," February 10, 1970, 389–91; ibid., Doc. 133, "Telegram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State," February 11, 1970, 393–6; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 560–2.
4 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 99, "Memorandum of Conversation: Dr. Henry Kissinger and Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin, of Israel," March 12, 1970, 329–34; Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs*, 169–70.
5 Rabin, *Service Diary*, 280–2.
6 Ibid.
7 Adamsky, *Operation Kavkaz*, 143; Rabin, *Service Diary*, 283 (abridged version in Rabin, *Memoirs*, 171).
8 "Amman 652," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo Confrontation Conference," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I; Nasser, *al-Majmuah al-Kamila*, 222–35.
9 "Tel. Ext 20448," March 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 150," March 21, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/1.
10 "Tel. Ext 20448," March 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 150," March 21, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/1.
11 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 106, "Telegram From the Embassy in Israel to the Department of State," 352–6.
12 "State 42624," March 23, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 1749 DEF, 12-5 ISR.
13 "State 42544," March 23, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 1749 DEF, 12-5 ISR.
14 "State 43332," March 23, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
15 Ibid.
16 "Cairo 609," March 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27 A/I.
17 "Cairo 655," March 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2640 Pol, 2-5 UAR.

18 "The Soviet Penetration of the Middle East," June 7, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "Intelligence Brief, UAR: Israel: USSR: The SA-3 in Egypt: Prospects and Implications," March 31, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27 A/I; "SAM 3," March 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "No. 23," April 31, 1970, FM 4605/4, ISA.
19 In Operation *Helem* ("Shock"), on October 31, 1968, an Israeli force penetrated deep into Egyptian territory with the aim of damaging important Egyptian infrastructure in Nag Hammadi. See "SAM 3," March 25, 1970, FM 4605/2, ISA.
20 "The Soviet Penetration of the Middle East," June 7, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "The Soviet Penetration, Telegram to Missions 757," May 6, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; Gazit, *The Peace Process*, 44–5.
21 "The Soviet Penetration, Telegram to Missions 757," May 6, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2.
22 For example, about 45 ships of the Soviet fleet were observed there in early June 1970.
23 "The Soviet Penetration of the Middle East," June 7, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.; "Increased Soviet Involvement in Egyptian Military Activities," April 18, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I; Kass, *Soviet Involvement*, 162.
27 "The Soviet Penetration, Telegram to Missions 757," May 6, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; *New York Times*, "Kosygin Conference Excerpts," May 5, 1970. www.nytimes.com/1970/05/05/archives/kosygin-conference-excerpts-statement.html.
28 "Moscow 1689," April 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I.
29 "Intelligence Brief, UAR: Israel: USSR: The SA-3 in Egypt: Prospects and Implications," March 31, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27 A/I.
30 "Your Meeting with Israeli Ambassador Rabin," April 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I.
31 "State 050458," April 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "London 2682," April 9, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I.
32 "USUN 595," April 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "London 2682," April 9, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I.
33 In an internal report, Kissinger wrote that President Nixon shared the Israeli view ("London 2682," April 9, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I).
34 "State 050458," April 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
35 "State 050458," April 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "London 2682," April 9, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I; "Your Meeting with Israeli Ambassador Rabin," April 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I; "American References to Israeli Activity deep inside Egypt," July 22, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/12.
36 "American References to Israeli Activity deep inside Egypt," July 22, 1970, ISA, FM 4549/12; "State 055264," April 14, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Rabin, *Service Diary*, 288.
37 "State 056274," April 16, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Alleged Sisco Remarks to Nasser," April 29, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065, Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Nasser-Sisco Meeting," April 15, 1970, ISA, FM, 4548/14; "Memorandum for the Secretary and Under Secretary, Current Appraisal of Arab–Israel Situation," April 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052, Pol, 27 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 127.
38 "Cairo 815," April 15, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052, Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 23," April 14, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/12.
39 "Memorandum for the Secretary and Under Secretary, Current Appraisal of Arab–Israel Situation," April 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I.
40 "Tel Aviv 1936," April 15, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052, Pol, 27 A/I; "Tel Aviv 2105," April 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052, Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum for the Secretary and Under Secretary, Current Appraisal of Arab–Israel Situation," April 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052, Pol, 27 A/I.

41 "Memorandum for the Secretary and Under Secretary, Current Appraisal of Arab–Israel Situation," April 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052, Pol, 27 A/I.
42 "Tel Aviv 2105," April 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052, Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum for the Secretary and Under Secretary, Current Appraisal of Arab–Israel Situation," April 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052, Pol, 27 A/I.
43 "Tel Aviv 2105," April 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I; Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Israeli–Egyptian War of Attrition*, 154; Adamsky, *Operation Kavkaz*, 163; *Davar*, April 16, 1970.
44 "Memorandum for the Secretary and Under Secretary, Current Appraisal of Arab–Israel Situation," April 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052, Pol, 27 A/I.
45 "Tel-Aviv 2158," April 29, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I.
46 Ibid.
47 "SAM 3," March 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2.
48 "Intelligence Brief, UAR: Israel: USSR: The SA-3 in Egypt: Prospects and Implications," March 31, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2051 Pol, 27 A/I; "Soviet Pilots in UAR," April 29, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I; *Israel's Foreign Policy: Historical Documents*, Chapter XII, Document 14, April 29, 1970.
49 "No. 297," April 30, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "Telegram to Missions 170," April 30, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 125–6; *al-Ahram*, April 30, 1970.
50 "No. 181," April 29, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2.
51 Ibid.
52 "No. 177," April 29, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2.
53 "Increased Soviet Involvement in Egyptian Military Activities," April 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 41," May 4, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "Intelligence Brief, Israel–UAR–USSR: When is a Lull a Lull?" May 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2053 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 142," May 15, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2.
54 Note that Sisco was in the minority at the State Department, in that he accepted the Israeli definition of the Soviet pilots' role, namely, the "assumption of combat." See "No. 83," May 8, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/5. For the positions taken by Atherton and Kissinger, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 570–1; "No. 8," May 1, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2.
55 "Increased Soviet Involvement in Egyptian Military Activities," April 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 8," May 1, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "No. 142," May 15, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2.
56 "No. 83," May 8, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/5.
57 "No. 181," April 29, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2.
58 "Intelligence Brief, Israel–UAR–USSR: When is a Lull a Lull?" May 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2053 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 142," May 15, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; Heikal, *Li-Miser*, 139.
59 "Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, the White House, Nasser's Open Message to the President," May 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I; Nasser, *al-Majmuah al-Kamila*, 366–402; "Cairo 967," May 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I; Sharaf, *Sanwat wa-Ayam ma' Gamal Abd al-Nasser*, Vol. 1, 378–9; Heikal, *Li-Miser*, 139.
60 The State Department referred to the May Day speech as "Nasser's Peace Offensive." See "Intelligence Brief, UAR: Nasser's 'Peace Offensive,'" May 9, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR.
61 *US News & World Report*, May 18, 1970 (full text of the interview in "Cairo 955," May 1, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I). Several changes were made in the version published in Egypt. For the American analysis, see "Nasser Interview US News and World Report," May 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2053 Pol, 27 A/I. For the Egyptian version, see *Gamal Abdel Nasser Speeches*, "The Interview Given by President Gamal Abdel Nasser to the Representative of the US News and World Report," May 12, 1970. http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1280&lang=en [Arabic].

62 "Cairo 973," May 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
63 "USUN 820," May 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I.
64 Ibid.
65 The interview, conducted on May 12, was broadcast a month later, on June 15. See "Cairo 1072," May 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065 Pol, 27-14 A/I. For an "unofficial transcript," see www.abu-omar-hanna.info/spip/IMG/pdf/advocates_14june1970.pdf; the Nasser interview is on pages 11–14. For the Egyptian version, see *Gamal Abdel Nasser Speeches*, "The Interview Given by President Gamal Abdel Nasser to American Television with Dr. Fisher," June 15, 1970, http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1286&lang=en [Arabic].
66 "USUN 1223," June 15, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "USUN 1237," June 16, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
67 "Cairo 1337," June 17, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2065 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Tel Aviv 3162," June 18, 1970, RG 59, Box 2065 Pol, 27-14 A/I, NA.
68 "PriMin Meir Rejects Nasser Proposals—Denies Intention to Intervene Jordan," June 23, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I; *Ha'aretz*, June 23, 1970.
69 "No. 105," May 8, 1970, ISA, FM, 4548/14.
70 "No. 142," May 15, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "Intelligence Brief, UAR: Nasser's 'Peace Offensive,'" May 9, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR.
71 "Cairo 967," May 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I.
72 "Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, the White House, Nasser's Open Message to the President," May 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2052 Pol, 27 A/I.
73 "Mrs. Meir on Aircraft for Israel and Soviet Presence in UAR," May 20, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 1749 Pol, 12-5 ISR.
74 "State 079474," May 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2384 Pol, 7 ISR.
75 "Memorandum for the President, Israeli Foreign Minister Eban's Call on You Friday," May 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2384 Pol, 7 ISR.
76 "Research Study—Clashing Interests Amidst Interdependence," May 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2389 Pol, ISR-US; "Memorandum for the President, Israeli Foreign Minister Eban's Call on You Friday," May 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2384 Pol, 7 ISR.
77 Eban, *Autobiography*, 466; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 118, "Editorial Note," 392–3; ibid., Doc. 101, "Letter from President Nixon to Israeli Prime Minister Meir," n. 3, 337–8.
78 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 118, "Editorial Note," 393.
79 "Memorandum of Conversation, Tour d'Horizon with Mordechai Gazit, Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin," July 20, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum of Conversation, Middle East," June 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2053 Pol, 27 A/I; *Ha'aretz*, May 27, 1970.
80 "Memorandum of Conversation, Middle East, The Secretary with Ambassador Dobrynin," June 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2053 Pol, 27 A/I.
81 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XII, Soviet Union January 1969–October 1970, Document 168, "Memorandum of Conversation, Ambassador Dobrynin and Henry A. Kissinger, Washington," June 10, 1970, 519.
82 Note that just then the United States was neck-deep in its invasion of Cambodia—"at the peak of the Cambodia hysteria," as Kissinger put it—and the Soviets were aware of this. This made some deterrent action in the Middle East seem impossible. See Kissinger, *White House Years*, 573–81; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XII, Document 168, "Memorandum of Conversation, Ambassador Dobrynin and Henry A. Kissinger," Washington, June 10, 1970, 515–24.
83 "SAM 3," March 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "The Soviet Penetration, Telegram to Missions 757," May 6, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2. See "USSR-UAR: At the Brink of Action," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2050 Pol, 27 A/I; "Amman 652," February 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "No. 149," December 14, 1970, ISA, FM, 4548/7.

84 On the link between the invasion of Cambodia and American policy in the Middle East, see "No. 41," May 4, 1970, ISA, FM, 4605/2; "No. 142," May 15, 1970, ISA, FM 4605/2. For a discussion of the linkage idea, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 368–72; Quandt, *Decade of Decisions*, 77–8.
85 "US Initiative for MidEast Negotiations," June 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I; "Secretary's Announcement on US Middle East Initiative," June 24, 1970, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I, NA.
86 "No. 149," December 14, 1970, ISA, FM, 4548/7.

9 The Second Rogers Plan

The initiative to end the War of Attrition

> The ordinary Egyptian asks when the soldiers will come home. They've been at war for three years and there's no end in sight. They won't surrender to Israel, but they feel the loss of their young men very strongly. They see the cease-fire as an endless campaign, so they would support a broader operations.… An endless cease-fire doesn't bring the soldiers home.
>
> Mohammed Hassan al-Zayyat, Egyptian ambassador at the UN[1]

The American initiative for a cease-fire

On June 3, after long months of heavy fighting between Egypt and Israel along the Suez Canal, the State Department put the finishing touches on a cease-fire proposal and defined America's immediate objectives in the Middle East.[2] We should note at the outset that these objectives make it plan that Washington, despite its disclaimers to the Israelis, linked the cease-fire to Israel's requests for military hardware. As we will see, this became even clearer when, despite the unambiguous evidence on the ground, the administration chose to ignore Egypt's violation of the agreement. Meanwhile, Israel continued to ask for American weaponry and even conditioned the continuation of the diplomatic process on new deliveries. It preferred to set aside the threat that the Egyptian violations created along the Canal and deferred addressing them until a later time.

In the view of Secretary of State Rogers and his deputy Sisco, the plan had four elements whose achievement would help resolve the crisis along the Suez Canal and move the diplomatic process forward. The first was a time-limited cease-fire between Israel and Egypt, or at least steps to reduce the chances of a clash between Israel and the Soviet Union—a clash that might have repercussions on the relations between Washington and Moscow.[3] The second was getting Egypt and Israel to begin indirect negotiations under the aegis of the UN mediator Jarring, based on the principles of Resolution 242. The third was giving Israel the military assistance (primarily warplanes) it was requesting, in order to give it an incentive to show military restraint and diplomatic flexibility. The State Department wanted to make the decision about assistance conditional

on the results of the efforts to attain a cease-fire and launch negotiations, but agreed that in any case the United States would provide Israel with aircraft if the balance of military power in the area should change suddenly to Israel's disadvantage. Finally, the United States must stand firm and not broadcast weakness to the Soviets or fuel an escalation that would encourage them to expand their involvement in the region even further.[4]

On June 17, President Nixon approved the new American initiative for a cease-fire between Israel and the Egyptians, which came to be known as the "Second Rogers Plan." Its basis was a direct appeal to Israel, Egypt, and Jordan to begin negotiations under Jarring's auspices. The American initiative also proposed a 90-day cease-fire, but did not define it as a sine qua non. In other words, negotiations between the sides were not conditional on observance of the cease-fire.[5]

On June 19, the American ambassador to Israel, Barbour, met with Prime Minister Meir and Foreign Minister Eban and delivered a note from Rogers. Barbour said that the "political and military situation in the area has reached a critical point"; hence "new and intensive efforts" were needed to extract the region from the dead-end it had reached.[6] After mentioning several aspects of American interests in the Middle East, Barbour presented the main elements of the diplomatic initiative to his hosts. First, Egypt and Israel would agree to a 90-day cease-fire. Second, Egypt and Israel (as well as Jordan and Israel) would agree in advance to accept the following text, which would take the form of a report by Jarring to the Secretary General:

The UAR (Jordan) and Israel advise me that they agree:

A That having accepted and indicated their willingness to carry out Resolution 242 in all its parts, they will designate representatives to discussions to be held under my auspices, according to such procedure and at such places and times as I may recommend, taking into account as appropriate each side's preference as to method of procedure and previous experience between the parties.
B That the purpose of the aforementioned discussions is to reach agreement on the establishment of a just and lasting peace between them based on (1) mutual acknowledgment by the UAR (Jordan) and Israel of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, and (2) Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict, both in accordance with Resolution 242.
C That, to facilitate my task of promoting agreement as set forth in Resolution 242, the parties will strictly observe, effective July 1 until at least October 1, the cease-fire resolutions of the Security Council.[7]

Meir did not hide her strong opposition to the plan. "There was no doubt," she said, "that since 1967 this was the greatest blow Israel had received from United States Government." As she saw matters, Israel's acceptance of the principles in the proposal would indeed lead to negotiations with the Arabs, but at the cost of

undermining the IDF's dominance. The problem was not only that the initiative was based on Resolution 242 and talks through Jarring, rather than direct negotiations between the sides, as Israel demanded, but also and primarily that, along with his explanations about the diplomatic process envisioned and the negotiations intended, Barbour emphasized the details related to supply of warplanes and effectively created a close link between the two topics. When Eban said that this contradicted the American promises, Barbour replied that the "supply of planes had not been tied to negotiations, but no one could realistically say that there was not an inherently conditional relationship in view of [the] involvement of the military equation in a state of war."[8]

Israel saw this initiative by Rogers chiefly as America's reneging on its promise of additional aircraft. The need for more planes had become crucial after the escalation of the spring and summer of 1970. Now, after representing itself as a fair broker and devising a plan intended to lead to a cease-fire, negotiations, and eventually peace, the United States could not provide Israel with military assistance, because it could not function as both a peacemaker and as an arms dealer to one side. Meir commented that she "would be happy to be so optimistic as to think that negotiations would lead to peace but was certain they would lead to no more planes for Israel." She added that during the lull in fighting, Egypt would be free to receive unlimited quantities of military supplies from the Soviets and could also drag out the negotiations for an unlimited time without making concessions. In these conditions, "Nasser would be a fool not to accept [the proposal]."[9]

The next day, Nixon sent a letter to Meir aimed at allaying the Israeli anxiety. He wrote (departing from the diplomatic line he had approved) that there was no link between the negotiations and the deliveries of warplanes. He assured her that the United States did not make light of the Israeli concern about the deterioration of the situation along the Canal and asked that she give the American proposal deep consideration and serious thought and "avoid taking any irreversible action." Nixon added his hope that Israel would take a positive view of the American efforts. If, however, it decided to reject the initiative, it would be well advised to delay the decision and not respond until the other side had submitted its answer.[10]

There was great tension and excitement in Cairo at the start of the third week of June, in expectation of the peace initiative to which Rogers had repeatedly referred. The prevalent view in the Egyptian press and Foreign Ministry was that Rogers or Scranton would come to the Middle East to present the new peace proposal to Egypt and Israel. In a press conference on June 17, the Egyptian government spokesman said that there had been no feeler from the White House about coordinating a visit to the region by Rogers. He added that his country was willing "to keep [the] door open to any peaceful effort."[11]

Two days later, the expected American request reached Cairo. Bergus met with Foreign Minister Riad and handed him a letter from Rogers with the details of the cease-fire initiative (a similar letter was conveyed to the Jordanian Foreign Minister). Rogers stressed that the situation in the Middle East was "at a critical

point" and that Egypt and the United States had a "joint interest that the United States retain and strengthen friendly ties with all the peoples and states of the area." He hoped that with cooperation by Israel and the Arabs it would be possible to take advantage of the opportunity, because "if it is lost, we shall all suffer the consequences and we would regret such an outcome very much indeed."[12]

Rogers made it plain that the United States was interested in achieving lasting peace in the region and was ready to assist the sides in reaching this goal. He wrote about the need for both sides to show flexibility to permit the creation of a positive environment in which the efforts to make peace could make progress. In other words, the idea was to relax the tensions between Israel and the Arabs and to clarify their positions in order to reach "some confidence that the outcome will preserve their essential interests." Accordingly, Rogers explained, the American position was that the best way for the sides to reach an agreement to settle the conflict was for Arab and Israeli representatives to begin formulating, with Jarring's mediation, the requisite steps and principles for implementing Resolution 242.[13]

Rogers also conveyed to Riad Eban's statement that "Israel would be prepared to make important concessions once talks got started." Hence Egypt's participation in the talks was crucial, because it would induce Israel to overcome its doubts and recognize that Egypt was indeed interested in making peace with Israel. In order to avoid stirring up Egyptian negativity at the very start of the process, though, Rogers added that he was aware that the Egyptians found direct talks with Israeli representatives problematic. He accordingly emphasized that for now the United States was not raising the possibility of a direct meeting between the sides, although if there were progress in negotiations Washington would certainly deem face-to-face talks between Israel and the Arabs essential if the two sides truly wanted to achieve peace.

After this preface, Bergus acquainted Riad with the main elements of the American proposal, as Barbour had done in Israel, and also relayed several points made by Rogers but omitted from the letter to Riad. Along with a promise that the United States would remain in the diplomatic picture from the start of negotiations between the sides, and the clarification that the core of the American diplomatic approach was that there could not be peace without withdrawal or withdrawal without peace, Bergus noted two conditions that were critical for an effective cease-fire and that applied to both sides. First, Israel and Egypt must silence their guns along the entire length of the cease-fire line; second, Egypt and the Soviet Union must not make any changes to the military status quo, for example by introducing new missile batteries or other installations in the cease-fire zone. The same condition, Bergus added, applied to Israel on the eastern side of the Canal.[14]

Behind these clarifications were two important points. First, the United States wanted to create mutual trust between Egypt and Israel, because that was critical for the success of the emerging diplomatic process. Second, as we will see below, both the Israelis and the Americans feared that Egypt would take advantage of the cease-fire and, with Soviet assistance, reinforce its positions along the Canal. Such a change in the status quo might lead to renewed fighting. So the terms of the agreement had to be made crystal-clear already in this

preliminary stage. In addition to the requirement that Israel, like Egypt, maintain a military freeze along the cease-fire line, it would also have to agree to indirect negotiations with the Egyptians and accept the principle of withdrawal before the start of negotiations.[15]

Bergus continued with another example of the American flexibility on a topic that was very close to the Egyptians' hearts: the supply of warplanes to Israel. Riad was told that during the talks about the peace initiative, the United States would supply only the planes it had already undertaken to provide Israel (in 1966 and 1968), but no more. Bergus was also allowed to reveal to the Egyptians the number of planes involved and the length of time between deliveries.[16] However, if the military balance changed to Israel's detriment, the Americans would send it aircraft to replace those it had lost. Here Bergus hinted that the decision about military assistance would be influenced by the degree of success of the peace efforts and observance of the cease-fire. For our purposes, the last element is important, because Bergus, in his conversation with Riad, tied the success of the Rogers Initiative to the supply of warplanes to Israel. In other words, Egypt, which had continued its war against Israel on the Suez front, could understand that its consent to the American proposal would freeze military assistance to Israel, while Egypt itself could continue to acquire new arms from the Soviet Union.[17]

On June 20, a day after Washington conveyed its proposal to the two sides, Rogers informed Ambassador Dobrynin of the key elements of the American plan for a cease-fire and start of negotiations. Rogers and Sisco offered a vague response to Dobrynin's question of whether the negotiations would be direct or indirect. Rogers said that the "wording of [the] formula in effect gave Jarring discretionary power with respect to procedural arrangements." Sisco added that "each side would have to justify entering negotiations with [the] other side within the framework of its own policy and its preferred procedure of negotiations."

When Dobrynin asked about the status of the joint forums (the Forum of Two and Forum of Four), Rogers emphasized that the United States sought Soviet cooperation in implementing its proposal and wanted to continue the joint talks, including the Forum of Four. Moreover, the administration expected a positive response from Moscow as proof of its sincere desire to restore stability and find a peaceful solution to the problem of the Middle East. Once negotiations between the sides begin, the superpowers could influence them and make a significant contribution to progress towards a settlement.[18]

Five days later, on June 25, the State Department made its initiative official, as it had done previously in December 1969. Rogers held a press conference at which he presented the major elements of the American plan. He announced that due to the worrisome recent events in the Middle East, on April 29, the President had ordered "a thorough review of all political and military aspects of the problem." This review had concluded, Rogers said.

> As a consequence of the review, the United States has undertaken a political initiative, the objective of which is to encourage the parties to stop shooting and start talking under the auspices of Ambassador Jarring in accordance

> with the resolutions of the Security Council. Our objective in launching this initiative has been to encourage the parties to move towards a just and lasting peace which takes fully into account the legitimate aspirations and concerns of all governments and peoples of the area.[19]

An initial negative response, albeit unofficial, came from Nasser on June 22, only three days after the Bergus–Riad meeting. At a tripartite meeting in Tripoli with the ruler of Libya, Muammar Gaddafi, and the president of Syria, Nureddin al-Atassi, he attacked American policy towards the Arabs and accused the United States of seeking to sow division among them, supporting Israel, and threatening Egypt. Nasser returned to his uncompromising position that Israel withdraw to the lines of June 4, 1967, and restore the rights of the Palestinian people. Despite the negative tone of Nasser's statement, the State Department asked Israel not to see it as a firm Egyptian "no" to the cease-fire proposal and to consider the idea seriously. It emphasized that Israel should not be the first to reject the initiative, because that would leave it bearing exclusive responsibility for the failure of the peace efforts. This would be the "greatest tragedy" for the joint interests of the United States and Israel.[20]

Three days after the speech in Tripoli, President Nasser repeated his belligerent line in Benghazi. His tone was heard clearly in Washington, which looked for ways to soften the Egyptian position somewhat. On June 26, Sisco spoke with Mohammed Riad, a counselor in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, and again focused on the important elements of the American initiative. Sisco expressed his hope that President Nasser "fully realizes the significance" of the American commitment to obtain Israel's agreement to the plan. Once the first positive signs were received from Cairo, Sisco emphasized, the United States "will make every feasible effort to get Israeli acceptance," and added that the "response to the proposals that we were now putting forward would inevitably set the tone for US–UAR relations for a long time to come." He also addressed the Syrian issue, explaining that Syria had been left out of the initiative because it had not accepted Resolution 242. If Damascus agreed to the resolution's principles, Washington would be glad to revise its proposal.[21]

Bergus, too, was instructed to join this campaign. After being unable to arrange a meeting with Nasser, he sat with Foreign Minister Riad on June 28. Riad doubted that the United States would be able to persuade Israel to accept the cease-fire proposal. He asserted that there was nothing new in it and that Egypt wanted to be sure that this time that it was a serious plan to resolve the crisis. Despite this skepticism, Riad said that the Egyptian leadership would give serious consideration to the American initiative, focusing on the territorial issue of Gaza and Jerusalem and, even more so, the matter of a full Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. But Egypt saw no commitment in the Rogers Initiative to a full withdrawal and was waiting for an Israeli commitment on the subject. Moreover, the American proposal remained unclear regarding the Palestinian refugees, and this too had to be addressed. The United States must decide what direction it wanted to take with regard to the Middle East crisis, Riad concluded: did it want "a

lasting peace or only a temporary peace"? A temporary peace would be easier to achieve than a lasting peace; but even if temporary peace was what emerged now, it would still be necessary to work towards lasting peace in the region.[22]

The Sphinx in Red Square: Nasser consults with the Kremlin

On June 29, President Nasser arrived in Moscow, accompanied by Foreign Minister Riad and War Minister Fawzi, for a visit that, according to American sources, had been long in the planning. The Egyptians' visit had two aims: First, to discuss the recent developments in the Middle East with the Soviet leadership, including the Rogers Initiative and the continuation of Soviet military assistance to Egypt; second, to allow Nasser, whose health had begun to deteriorate, to undergo medical tests. The American assessment was that the Soviet Union and Egypt would try to coordinate their position on the Rogers Initiative and formulate Cairo's final response to it.[23]

The idea of getting his forces across the Canal, as the first step towards the liberation of Sinai, remained on Nasser's agenda, even though it was not realistic at the time. He attached great importance to achieving a cease-fire because it would allow Egypt to build a strong defensive system on the Suez front in preparation for the next round against Israel. During his meeting with the Soviet leadership, Nasser used this argument to explain his acceptance of the American initiative, with all its details, rather than turning to Moscow for assistance. Nasser's line of thought was supported by War Minister Fawzi's estimate that 90 days without hostilities would suffice for Egypt to install a new defensive network, consisting mainly of Soviet SAM missiles, and gear up to renew the fighting as soon as the cease-fire was over. "I am going to accept it [the Rogers Initiative] just because it has an American flag. We must have a breathing space so that we can finish our missile sites," Nasser told General Secretary Brezhnev, when the latter expressed his astonishment that Egypt would accept a purely American diplomatic approach.[24] In his account of the visit, Heikal wrote that Nasser had been fully aware of the price Egypt was paying in the War of Attrition—Israel had seriously damaged civilian facilities in the Delta and interfered with Egypt's attempts to fortify its positions on the west bank of the Suez Canal. In the end, after further discussions, Brezhnev accepted the Egyptian position.[25]

The joint communiqué issued on July 17, at the end of Nasser's visit to Moscow, emphasized that the Soviet Union stood behind Egypt without reservation and that the two countries' diplomatic positions were fully coordinated. There was no hint of compromise in the communiqué, which clung to the familiar line and expressed the desire for stronger collaboration, primarily between the Soviet Communist Party and the Arab Socialist Union. The communiqué did not mention the American initiative, but neither did it reject the United States' efforts or the recently released peace plan:

> The two sides express [their] full belief that a just and durable peace in the Middle East can be realized only by taking urgent measures which will

> insure the halting of Israel's aggression against the Arab states. The withdrawal of Israeli forces from all the occupied territories in accordance with the principle that acquisition of territory through war is illegitimate, the full implementation of 22 November 1967 Security Council Resolution, and the execution of UN resolutions on the Palestinian refugees.[26]

The Egyptians and Soviets also expressed their support for and identification with the Palestinian struggle "against imperialism and Israeli aggression." The Soviet Union declared its willingness to support the Arabs' just struggle for independence, sovereignty, and freedom, and to provide them the means to wage that struggle. In other words, Cairo stuck to its position, with full Soviet backing.[27]

While Nasser was consulting with the Soviets in Moscow, in Washington, on July 1, Rabin gave Sisco a note from Prime Minister Meir for transmission to President Nixon. This was Meir's response to Nixon's letter of June 20. She had not budged from the stand she had taken at her June 19 meeting with Barbour, with its total rejection of the American initiative. In the note, Meir expressed her hope that, without reference to the diplomatic process, the administration would soon take a decision about Israel's requests for warplanes. This was now "a crucial need"; not surprisingly, she also asked for even more planes. Note that she wrote in the shadow of the incidents in the Canal theater the day before (June 30), when two Israeli Phantoms were shot down by SAM missiles. In light of this episode, Meir expressed her anxiety about the significant reinforcement of the Egyptian air-defense network; Israel had no alternative but to take quick and vigorous action against the new missile sites. If it did not do so, "our basic position in the Canal zone will come under increasing peril."[28]

In a television interview that same day, Nixon said that the situation in the Middle East had become very dangerous. He even compared it to the situation in the Balkans on the eve of the First World War. The risk of a clash between the two superpowers, he said, was greater in the Middle East than in Vietnam. Hence it was essential for the United States and the Soviet Union to talk about ways to neutralize that risk. He added that his administration was seriously concerned about the growing Soviet involvement in Egypt and also about Israel's ability to defend itself.[29]

In addition to the volatile situation in the Middle East, Nixon discussed the Arab–Israeli conflict in general. He said that peace and the territorial integrity of the countries in the region was an American interest, as was the need to maintain the military balance so as to deter the Arabs from attacking Israel. Should the balance of power in the Middle East tilt in the Arabs' favor, they would start a new war against Israel, because, "we recognize that Israel is not desirous of driving any of the other countries into the sea. The other countries do want to drive Israel into the sea." According to Nixon, the solution to the conflict was a settlement in which the Arabs recognized Israel's right to exist and Israel withdrew to defensible borders.[30]

Nixon's television interview sparked great interest in both Egypt and Israel. Israel felt somewhat relieved by his declaration that the United States would

maintain Israel's military capacity, especially after the two Phantoms had been downed over the Canal. But while the Israelis were encouraged by the American statement of support, diplomatic circles in Cairo were confused and in shock. The Arab and especially Egyptian media attacked Nixon for the same reasons. The reports emphasized his failure to call for an Israeli withdrawal and denounced his desire to maintain the balance of power in the Middle East between Israel and the Arabs. Some even interpreted Nixon's promise to do so as an attempt to return the world to the nineteenth century. There was some truth in Nixon's words, the Arab media allowed; the situation in the region was indeed dangerous. But the blame lay on the shoulders of the United States and the White House, which had caused the situation in the Middle East to deteriorate to a dangerous pitch.[31]

It is possible to disagree with Nixon's evaluation of the danger posed by the Middle East. But his remarks certainly reflected a sincere concern triggered by the emerging escalation between Israel and Egypt, and especially by the increasing Soviet involvement in the conflict. The information from the field corroborated the American fears. In addition to the report that Meir handed to Barbour on July 2, noting the construction of new missile sites 16 to 22 miles west of the Canal, in mid-July the American intelligence agencies began collecting firm evidence about the reinforcement of the Egyptian missile system on the Canal front. In July, with full assistance by the Soviets, the Egyptians began construction on 12 SA-2 missile sites and three SA-3 sites in the zone 30 to 50 kilometers from the waterline. The estimate was that they were intended to provide a protective umbrella to the Egyptian artillery as well as superior firepower against the Israeli forces on the eastern side of the Canal, even though it was not sure that the Egyptians were planning an attack.[32]

Israel's core assumption about the nature of the Egyptian–Soviet activity in the Canal theater was that the thickening of the artillery units on the Egyptian side would make the Bar-Lev Line untenable and allow Egypt to mass its forces and cross the Canal, under cover of the missiles. In order to maintain the military balance, Israel knew it had to enjoy the freedom of aerial operations over as much of the Canal as possible. This is why Meir again asked the American administration to urgently reconsider Israel's request for warplanes and electronic equipment. The urgency of the request was reiterated when Ambassador Rabin submitted the new intelligence data to Sisco. Rabin commented acidly that the American initiative had encouraged Nasser to take the recent military steps and had improved his hand vis-à-vis the Soviets as well.[33]

Two days after the conversation between Barbour and Meir, Nixon approved the sale to Israel of electronic equipment that would help it parry the missile threat. Despite this assistance, the Egyptian missile batteries forced the IAF to curtail its operations over the Canal, and Israel began planning airstrikes on them. On July 10, the head of Israeli military intelligence, Maj. Gen. Aharon Yariv, briefed the American military attaché in Tel Aviv, Col. John Wieben, about the plan. Within a few hours Rabin received an urgent call from Sisco, demanding that Israel hold its fire. Sisco claimed that the operation could harm the prospects of the diplomatic effort and even hinted that the American promise

of military equipment and warplanes was conditional on an end to Israel's deep-penetration raids in Egypt. The Israeli government took this into account and decided to call off the planned strikes.[34]

Acceptance of a cease-fire

On July 22, while Israel was weighing its response to the American initiative, on the one hand, and trying to counter the Egyptian missile threat, on the other hand, Foreign Minister Riad conveyed the Egyptian response to the Rogers Initiative to Bergus: "The government of the UAR accepts the proposal of Mr. Rogers contained in his message of June 19." Riad again clarified the Egyptian position that a final settlement of the conflict required a full Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied in June 1967 and the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian refugees, in accordance with UN resolutions. Riad emphasized that Egypt agreed to accept the plan despite the negative attitude towards it in Arab public opinion. He added that Cairo was prepared to deal with the opposition in the Arab world and the possible damage to its relations with some Arab countries.[35]

In his Revolution Day speech the next day (July 23), Nasser informed the Egyptian people of his decision to accept the American proposal. He had agreed to the initiative, he said, although it contained nothing new, because all the points of the Rogers Plan were included in Security Council Resolution 242, which Egypt had accepted in November 1967. Nasser also expressed skepticism that the Rogers document would lead to a peace settlement, because "the only language the Israelis understand is force," and thus "land taken by force can only be regained by force." He added that the Egyptian leadership was determined to continue the military preparations in tandem with the efforts to reach a peaceful solution, and promised that Egypt had not surrendered any "Arab rights" by agreeing to the American proposal. Nasser again emphasized the Egyptian position that peace could be achieved only if Israel withdrew from all territories occupied in the June 1967 war and a just solution to the issue of the Palestinian refugees was found. If the American initiative did not lead to a settlement, Nasser said, Egypt would renew military operations against Israel.[36]

On July 24, in an address to an open session of the Arab Socialist Union, Nasser announced that the surrender of even a millimeter of land belonging to Egypt, Syria, or Jordan was unthinkable. He went on to explain why he had agreed to accept the cease-fire after a long and bloody war of attrition. First, the diplomatic initiative was not a solution that would lead to peace. He did not trust the United States or believe it possible to reach a diplomatic settlement, and emphasized that the timing of the initiative had been influenced by the tensions between the United States and the Soviets. Second, the agreement would mean the suspension of American deliveries of military hardware to Israel. Third, the American proposal did contain one new point that met an Egyptian requirement—the demand that Israel declare that it accepted the principle of withdrawal. Fourth, the initiative also addressed the rights of the Palestinian people. Fifth, Nasser explained, he did not want to see a clash between the United States and the

Soviet Union. Finally, he admitted that the fighting had exacted a heavy price from Egypt. The economy "is not well established," and Egypt was not developing or advancing to the modern world; in fact, it lagged 50 years behind "the developed countries."[37]

He also described the American initiative as "really the final opportunity" for progress towards a settlement and expressed his hope that the United States would reconsider its diplomatic stance in the region. In addition to the insistence that he would not give up any occupied Arab territory, Nasser said more than once that Egypt had accepted the American proposal without conditions or reservations. With this step, he was returning the ball to the American court, and, even more so, leaving Israel with the awkward alternative of rejecting the proposal or accepting it without conditions. If it rejected the initiative, it would be seen as the party that had torpedoed the effort and as responsible for the deterioration of the situation in the region. On the other hand, Nasser was not particularly worked up by the possibility that Israel would agree to the American initiative so that it could exploit the cease-fire to reinforce and strengthen its positions along the Canal. Even if Israel accepted the proposal with this in mind, he said, his armed forces had destroyed the Bar-Lev Line in the past and "can do so again." He added that he did not believe that Israel would be able to "paralyze" the Egyptian missile defenses during a three-month cease-fire.[38]

Nasser tried to convey strength and power in his various arguments for accepting the cease-fire initiative; he was not the only one to do so. Other grounds for Egypt's consent, most of them pertaining to an improvement in Cairo's bargaining position and its new sense of confidence and strength, emerge from Sisco's analysis for Prime Minister Meir at their meeting in September and from Riad's retrospective assessment in an Egyptian television interview on October 6, eight days after Nasser's sudden death. He began by noting, as Nasser had, that there was nothing new in the Rogers Initiative and that its aim was essentially to move towards implementation of Resolution 242.[39] Riad told the interviewers that the United States had launched the initiative for a number of reasons. First, both America and Israel were aware that Egypt's demands enjoyed worldwide support. They had made the proposal in the belief that Egypt would reject it or insist on several modifications. Either way, the Americans and Israelis could have blamed Egypt for its recalcitrance and justified the transfer of additional military equipment to Israel. Second, the United States had recognized that Egypt did not intend to give up its fight against Israel. Third, Washington saw that Cairo had Moscow's full support. Finally, the Nixon administration appreciated that its interests in the region, especially its dependence on Middle Eastern oil, were threatened, and preferred to halt the deterioration of the situation and promote a peace plan between the combatants.[40]

The Americans, too, recognized the change in the Egyptians' bargaining position, but added their own conclusions. During talks on September 18 and 19 between Prime Minister Meir, Maj. Gen. Yariv, and Ambassador Rabin, for Israel, and Sisco and other senior State Department officials for the United States, Sisco said that there had been three main factors that led the Egyptians to

change their position on a cease-fire. First, the delivery of the SA-3 missiles with Soviet operators had improved Nasser's bargaining position so that he could persist in his familiar demand—a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai. Second, when he agreed to the Rogers Initiative, he postulated that the United States would then bear the responsibility for restoring calm in the region and would pressure Israel to accept the cease-fire proposal. Third, Nasser hoped that the American administration would suspend or at least cut back its military assistance to Israel if he agreed to a 90-day truce.[41]

When Riad's answer reached Rogers, Sisco updated Rabin immediately and asked him to pass on the message to Jerusalem, emphasizing that Israel must not respond publicly. The next day, July 23, Rogers and Sisco met with Rabin to discuss the details of the Egyptian response. "I cannot deny this is clever move," Rabin told them, adding that it was more positive than he had expected. In Sisco's view, the Egyptians had not substantially modified their position, but nevertheless their response made it clear that Cairo was interested in taking advantage of the opportunity, for reasons about which he could only speculate, and in starting talks under Jarring's auspices. The two Americans again requested that the Israeli government not make a public statement about Egypt's acceptance of a cease-fire, and chiefly that it avoid any military operation, because such steps could impair the new diplomatic development.[42] Sisco also informed Rabin that the Soviets' response to the American proposal had been positive, including consent to a military standstill in the region as part of the cease-fire.[43]

At noon on July 23, Rogers had met with Dobrynin, who conveyed his government's response to the American initiative. The Soviet Union, Dobrynin said, supported the renewal of Jarring's mission and expected the four powers to continue their active involvement in the diplomatic process, especially by setting guidelines for Jarring. The Soviet declaration did not address the idea of a cease-fire or the stipulation that neither side improve its position. Noticing this, Rogers said that he assumed the Soviet Union accepted the call for a military standstill as part of the cease-fire. Dobrynin's response was, "yes, of course." He added that Riad's declaration had covered this part of the American proposal and he saw no need to discuss it further. We can only observe that the tenor of the Soviet response foreshadowed its future actions.[44]

Not content with the clarifications to Rabin in Washington, on July 23 Nixon sent another note via Ambassador Barbour to Prime Minister Meir (she received it the next day), hoping to persuade her to endorse the initiative. Nixon wrote that he was aware of the strong opposition of Meir and her government to the American proposal. However, he asked that Israel reconsider its response in light of Egypt's green light to the Rogers Initiative. "A prompt affirmative reply" by the Israeli government would lead to an immediate cessation of the hostilities and bloodshed and the start of a diplomatic process aimed at a settlement. Nixon continued:

> Our position on withdrawal is that the final borders must be agreed between the parties by means of negotiations under the aegis of Ambassador Jarring. Moreover, we will not press Israel to accept a refugee solution which would

> alter fundamentally the Jewish character of the state of Israel or jeopardize your security. We will also adhere strictly and firmly to the fundamental principle that there must be a peace agreement in which each of the parties undertakes reciprocal obligations to the other and that no Israeli soldier should be withdrawn from the occupied territories until a binding contractual peace agreement satisfactory to you has been achieved.[45]

At the end of the letter Nixon repeated his declaration of July 1 about "the strong and unequivocal support of the United States for […] Israel's existence and security" and his intention "to continue to provide Israel with the necessary assistance" in order to ensure that the balance of military power not be altered to its disadvantage.[46] For the Israeli government, the pledge that the IDF would not be required to pull back before a peace agreement was signed was a strong line that could be grasped, since it meant American diplomatic backing for Israel in all future peace negotiations with any of its Arab neighbors.

After Meir and Eban finished studying the note, Barbour read out a message from the president with additional clarifications. He began in a fatalistic tone, explaining that the Middle East was at a critical stage that could determine the future course of events in the region. This might be the "last opportunity" to get on track to a diplomatic process that would resolve the conflict. Barbour told Meir that "he felt as seriously as he had at any time in nine years" that he had dealt with her that they were "perhaps on the threshold of turning from hostilities to negotiations." The administration's recommendation to Israel, Barbour said, was that, despite the difficulty involved, it should decide on a swift and affirmative response to the Rogers proposal. The United States believed that the Israeli government would not let slip an opportunity to draw Egypt into negotiations, even if the process itself did not begin on the terms it sought—direct talks with the Arabs.[47]

Barbour, who urged Meir to accept the American proposal, did not offer practical solutions to her questions about the observance and supervision of the standstill clause after the cease-fire took effect. But he was candid and direct about the possibility the Soviet Union would send large weapons shipments to Egypt. The heart of the initiative dealt with a ban on new missile sites and fortifications. The cease-fire did not apply to arms deliveries. "The Egyptians will continue to be rearmed by the Soviets," he said, and "you by us." Meir was not satisfied by this and requested a stronger American commitment on the supply of weaponry, electronic equipment, and warplanes. She asked for "something more specific" that she could pass on to the ministers at the cabinet meeting on Sunday, July 26, which would discuss cease-fire proposal, but she would not commit to a quick Israeli answer. Barbour promised to provide a commitment by Saturday night, July 25, and it indeed arrived from Washington:

> Acceptance by Israel of the US proposal and coming into effect of the ceasefire and standstill will have no adverse effect on Israel US discussions regarding military assistance. Shipments which would have been made in the absence of a ceasefire and standstill will be made in spite of them.[48]

Also, on July 25, Rabin and Sisco met for further discussions and "an exchange of information." The ambassador raised several questions. The first related to what role the American initiative assigned to the Forum of Two and the Forum of Four. Sisco responded that the talks could not be discontinued, but that they could "stall" them for a while and give priority to negotiations mediated by Jarring. Rabin next said that Nixon's letter was "not concrete enough"; would the United States be willing to give an advance written commitment to veto any Security Council decision that called on Israel to implement a full withdrawal? Sisco responded in the affirmative. However, he continued, he could not promise that America would ignore the State Department proposals of October and December 1969.[49]

Sisco gave another positive response as to whether the United States would provide a written commitment to veto a resolution prescribing the entry of Palestinian refugees on a scale that would change Israel's Jewish character. Rabin's last question was whether, should there be a change in Egypt's military deployment during the cease-fire, Israel could resort to military action with the administration's "blessing." To this too Sisco replied in the affirmative. Rabin made it clear that Israel would not agree to UN supervision of the cease-fire and would demand mutual supervision; each side verifying the other's compliance. Sisco responded that the administration was studying that problem in the hope of finding an effective method to monitor the cease-fire, because the United States, too, understood the supreme importance of preventing exploitation of the cease-fire for an Egyptian and Soviet redeployment near the Canal.

Finally, to eliminate all doubt regarding the American willingness to deliver military equipment to Israel, Sisco said that previous American commitments would be honored and Israel would receive all the weapons and equipment by the end of 1970, in accordance with to the current timetable.[50] At the end of the discussion, Rabin explained that the American initiative placed Israel in a very bad situation. He asked Sisco not to visit Israel, because that would be seen as an American attempt to interfere in its domestic affairs. Sisco, for his part, requested that the Israeli government approve the Rogers Initiative as soon as possible and without reservations, and appoint a ministerial-level representative to conduct the negotiations mediated by Jarring, in order to avoid the impression of low-level talks. When he reported home on this meeting, Rabin recommended that Jerusalem accept Sisco's positive replies with reservations. "I don't know whether he has the authority to make a prior commitment that the American Government will cast a veto."[51]

Sisco's affirmative replies to Rabin's questions certainly had a positive impact on the leadership in Jerusalem. However, on July 27, Eban sent Rabin a list of additional clarifications on a variety of key issues, to be passed on to the State Department. The first point was an American commitment to torpedo, in all international forums, any interpretation of Resolution 242 that would define the term "withdrawal" to mean full withdrawal of Israeli forces to the lines of June 4, 1967, as well as an American commitment to wield its veto if the Security Council adopted such an interpretation.

The second point was an American commitment to torpedo, in all international forums, any attempt to push a settlement of the refugee problem that might be liable to change the Jewish character of Israel or endanger the country's security, as well as an American commitment to employ its veto if the Security Council sought to adopt a resolution incompatible with this principle.

Third, Israel sought an American commitment that the UN mediator, Jarring, would answer only to the Secretary General and that it would oppose any attempt to place his mission under the authority of the Forum of Four.

Fourth, Israel wanted an American commitment to make it clear to all parties involved (Israel, Egypt, and Jordan) that the cease-fire must apply to all forces, regular and irregular, including the *fedayeen* organizations. The Americans should also clarify that the end of the temporary cease-fire would not make the renewal of hostilities legitimate and that the Security Council cease-fire resolutions of June 1967 would remain in force. In addition, the United States should agree that violations of the cease-fire along the borders between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Jordan would not serve as a pretext for a renewal of hostilities between Israel and Egypt;

The fifth and last point was an American commitment to make it clear to the sides that the cease-fire included a ban on military activities of every sort, including work to build or install military sites of any sort within 50 kilometers of the Canal, on either side. In addition, the United States should agree that there must be prior agreement about the method to monitor that both sides were maintaining the military status quo.[52]

Sisco did not hesitate. Before the day was out he gave Rabin the American reply to Israel's list of requested clarifications: First, as Nixon had informed Meir, the United States would not pressure Israel to agree to a complete withdrawal to the lines of June 4, 1967, and would take a similar position in the Security Council and other international forums. However, the United States could not undertake to wield its veto power on the basis of a theoretical question, though it would be willing to exercise it in the appropriate circumstances.

On the second point, the United States would not pressure Israel to agree to a settlement of the refugee issue that ran contrary to its position. Here too, however, the United States could not commit itself in advance to cast a veto.

As for the third point, the Forum of Four was an informal ad-hoc group that met at the Security Council but had no direct authority to give instructions to Ambassador Jarring. Under Resolution 242, the special envoy was directly responsible only to the Secretary General, who was responsible to the Security Council.

Fourth, even though the main thrust of the American cease-fire proposal applied to Israel and Egypt, the United States was of the opinion that the Jordanian government must take all practical steps to ensure that the *fedayeen* organizations observed the cease-fire. However, both Israel and the United States recognized that Jordan had only a limited ability to do this. If the *fedayeen* violated the agreement, Israel would be entitled to respond against them as might be appropriate within the bounds of self-defense. Israel's exercise of this right by

Israel could not serve Nasser as an excuse for breaching the cease-fire between Israel and Egypt.

Fifth, the American proposal for a limited cease-fire made it clear that neither side is permitted to improve its military positions. In addition, the sides must hold their fire along the entire length of the cease-fire lines. Egypt and the Soviet Union must avoid changing the military status quo in the range to be agreed upon on the western side of the Canal, and Israel must respect the standstill principle within the defined range on the eastern side.

Finally, there was a need for an understanding about the supervision of the military standstill and the depth of the zone to which it applied. The American position was that each side must rely on the means of surveillance available to it. As for the depth of the standstill zone, the United States considered the Israeli proposal of 50 kilometers on either side of the Canal "to be reasonable."[53]

After delivering the written document to Rabin, Sisco returned to the American veto. He said that the United States had vetoed a Security Council resolution in the past and had no "theological opposition" to doing so in the future if necessary.[54] Not long after, evidently aware of the importance that Israel attached to this question, Rogers phoned Rabin and stated plainly that the United States would not be reticent about using its veto on two issues of cardinal importance to the Israel—withdrawal and the Palestinian refugees. The secretary added that he did not want to ask Nixon for "a commitment about this"; but Israel had no grounds for worrying "that the United States might permit the passage of such resolutions by the Security Council."[55]

This was not the end of the American attempt to persuade the Israelis to accept the proposal; along with the carrot, there was a stick. At a meeting with Rabin on July 27, Sisco conveyed a message from Secretary Rogers to Foreign Minister Eban: the United States expected a positive response from Israel and suggested that it follow the format of the Egyptian response. Rogers went so far as to sketch out the structure and tone of the Israeli response that was looked for. Moreover, Israel must not attach any conditions to its acceptance of the initiative, since that would endanger and undermine the entire effort. Should Israel decide to reject the plan, Rogers added, it would bear the responsibility for whatever ensued. Rabin understood very well the tone of the message, which was more like a dictate from on high than a friendly recommendation, and said that the Israeli government was liable to read the letter as putting pressure on it. In reaction, the State Department asked Ambassador Barbour to clarify to Eban that the message was sent as "friendly advice."[56]

The "friendly advice" had a rapid effect. On July 31, Israel announced its acceptance of the cease-fire initiative, "despite the risk involved," and even though it had not yet submitted its official reply.[57] At first, the Israeli leadership had tried to come up with a formula that, while not endorsing the text of the report Jarring would submit to U Thant verbatim, would not be interpreted by the United States as a rejection of its initiative. Israel did agree to a cease-fire and was willing to send a representative to the peace talks under the auspices of the Swedish mediator, but it wanted its reply to Washington to omit any reference

to a willingness to withdraw and fully implement Resolution 242. Rabin objected to this approach, writing to his superiors:

> I see no possibility of saying at one and the same time that we accept the initiative and that we do not accept it […]. The substance of the American initiative is acceptance and implementation of Security Council Resolution 242 […]. There is no peace without what we call concessions with regard to some of the territories occupied in the war.

He continued that Israel had informed the Johnson administration in October 1968 of its decision that

> in a context of peace the borders between Egypt and Israel would still require an Israeli presence at Sharm el-Sheikh, overland access to Sharm el-Sheikh, and certain modifications, stemming from security needs, to the border between Mandatory Palestine and Egypt.

In that statement, Rabin concluded, the Israeli government had agreed to the principle of withdrawal.[58]

After the Israel announcement, the administration did not let the opportunity escape. Later that day, despite several Israeli reservations about the wording of the initiative, and even though Israel's official response was delayed until August 6, Nixon announced from the "Western White House" in San Clemente that the Israeli government had accepted the Rogers Plan. "I am gratified that now all three governments to whom we have addressed our initiative have responded positively and have accepted the U.S proposal." But in his view, too, it was merely the first step towards a regional settlement, which "will require moderation, flexibility, and a willingness by both sides to accept something less than their maximum position if progress toward a just and lasting peace between the parties is to be made."[59]

In addition, deeply aware of the mutual suspicion between Israel and the Arabs, Nixon emphasized another important issue, which he said was "an integral part" of the initiative: the sides must not take advantage of the agreement to improve their military positions and acquire a strategic advantage in the cease-fire zone. They must not place new missiles, build military installations, or reinforce their military deployment in that zone. Out of a desire to alleviate both countries' fear of a settlement imposed upon them by the major powers, Nixon noted that "the focus of future efforts must be on the parties" under the aegis of the mediator, Ambassador Jarring, and stated that the United States would continue to support him "wherever and whenever" it might be necessary, with the aim of reaching a settlement. He concluded that "we still have a long way to go before we achieve the results that we hope can be achieved."[60]

On August 3, Meir and Eban met with Barbour. Meir explained that despite the numerous difficulties involved, of both a political and a military character, the Israeli Government had decided to accept the cease-fire proposal. The major

problem was that the proposal presented in Jarring's name called, inter alia, for an Israeli withdrawal in accordance with Resolution 242. Even though Israel had accepted Resolution 242, it saw its reaffirmation as a political complication. On the other hand, rejection of the American proposal or a vague response was liable to produce a crisis with the United States.[61]

As for the military aspect, Meir shared with Barbour the reasons Israel found it difficult to accept the cease-fire initiative, given that the Soviets and the Egyptians were working vigorously to upgrade the SAM missile network near the Canal. Meir cited three examples from the last week of July that demonstrated the magnitude of the threat to the IDF forces there. On July 25, Soviet pilots had tried to intercept Israeli planes about five kilometers west of the Canal. Three days later, they provided air support for Egyptian pilots who flew east of the Canal. And in dogfights on July 30, Israeli pilots had shot down five Soviet MiGs. There could be no doubt that the direct Soviet involvement in the conflict and the immense assistance that the "big goy" was providing Egypt placed a heavy weight on the Prime Minister and the rest of the senior Israeli leadership and had induced them to accept the cease-fire initiative.[62]

On August 4, Prime Minister Meir submitted the text of Israel's reply to the Rogers Plan to the Knesset for its approval. After reading out the American proposal from the podium, she said that "despite our negative position," following an exhaustive dialogue with the United States, which produced important clarifications, Israel had replied in the affirmative. The decision had led to the break-up of the National Unity Government, when the ministers from the Gahal faction, led by MK Menachem Begin, submitted their resignation. Meir went on to emphasize Israel's position on the new diplomatic initiative:

> Israel has publicly declared that, by virtue of its right to secure borders, defensible borders, it will not return to the frontiers of 4 June 1967 […]. Our position was, and remains, that, in lieu of peace, we will continue to maintain the situation as determined at the time of the cease-fire. The cease-fire lines will be replaced only by secure and recognized boundaries determined in a contractual peace. In accepting the American Government's peace initiative, Israel was not asked to, and did not, take upon itself any territorial commitments […]. The Government of Israel is certain of the justice of its demand for direct negotiations between ourselves and the Arab states. However […] we are prepared to reach face-to-face negotiations with our neighbors even if this is preceded by a stage of indirect talks […]. We subscribe to a cease-fire on all fronts on the basis of reciprocity […] Israel has made it clear that the cease-fire must apply to all forces operating from the territory of a state that that accepts the cease-fire, meaning all regular forces […] foreign forces […] and irregular forces […] including the terrorists […]. The decision taken by the Government of Israel was not an easy one […]. It is not out of weakness that we reached our decision. It is within our power, and we prove it every day, to maintain our control of the cease-fire lines on all fronts until peace comes.[63]

After the Knesset approved the Government's decision, on August 4 Rabin handed Sisco a letter for Secretary of State Rogers, in which Israel conveyed its acceptance of his initiative without prior conditions. The Israeli government also declared its agreement to a "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict to secure recognized and agreed boundaries to be determined in the peace agreements." After Sisco read the Israeli note, Rabin mentioned that the administration had succeeded in getting Israel to use the term "withdrawal" for the first time. It was indeed the first time since June 1967 that Israel had agreed, and moreover in writing, to withdraw from territories occupied during the Six Day War.[64] Here it is worth noting that in response to the American initiative, Israel agreed to compromise, whereas Egypt showed no flexibility and did not modify its position on a solution to either the Egyptian–Israeli conflict or the larger Arab–Israeli conflict. Eban highlighted this: "Egypt and Israel are entering this process [of negotiations] from a starting point of positions that are very remote each other, as defined in Riad's letter to Rogers and the Prime Minister's speech in the Knesset."[65]

"Have you or haven't you? Let us know clearly!"—a low point in Israel–US relations[66]

Despite Israel's and Egypt's acceptance of the American proposal, two disagreements between Israel and the United States cast a heavy shadow on the diplomatic process. The first, to be discussed at length below, was critical: it pertained to Egypt's emplacement of surface-to-air missiles near the Suez Canal. The second disagreement threatened to bring the second Rogers Initiative crashing down and pushed the relations between Jerusalem and Washington to a very low ebb. During the interim between the conveyance of the American initiative to the two countries and their replies, the Egyptians and the Soviets had moved surface-to-air missile batteries to within 40 to 60 kilometers of the Canal, reinforced existing batteries (14 to 17 missile sites), and constructed new missile sites.[67]

This vigorous activity did not escape American eyes; but, unlike the Israelis, they were willing to let it pass while they focused on arranging the cease-fire. On August 5, Cline, the director of the INR, contacted Argov, the Israel Minister in Washington, "for a totally off-the-record conversation." Cline told him that during the past month the United States had identified approximately 100 new missile sites in Egypt, deployed to within 30 kilometers of the Canal. Missiles had been installed in about a third of them, and the Egyptians kept shuttling the SAMs from one site to another. On the basis of the most recent information available to the Americans, Cline estimated that there were a total of 250 missile sites in Egypt and that four SA-2 missile batteries had been moved to within 5 miles of the water line.[68]

Cline emphasized that there were no SA-3 batteries in proximity to the Canal—a zone the Americans defined as extending 30 kilometers west of the waterline, whereas the Israeli definition was 50 kilometers. The United States had told the Soviets that it would take a dim view of the placement of missiles

manned by Soviet crews in the 30-kilometer zone. Despite the anxiety occasioned by the movement of missiles, Cline said, there were also several "encouraging aspects." First, "the feverish pace" at which the Egyptians and the Soviets were reinforcing the missile network seemed to reflect their intention to honor the standstill provision after the cease-fire came into effect. Second, the Soviets had not installed any surface-to-air missiles within 30 kilometers of the Canal.[69]

The new situation resulted in Israeli casualties and created a significant threat to its air operations over and west of the Canal. Swift diplomatic action vis-à-vis the Americans was needed to neutralize the missile threat. In a series of talks that Rabin held with Kissinger and Sisco separately between August 4 and 6, he emphasized this point, especially the Soviets' expanded involvement in the conflict. For example, Rabin mentioned the aerial battle on July 30 and noted that just the day before, August 3, the Egyptians and Soviets had moved three missile batteries (SA-2s and SA-3s) within ten to 20 kilometers of the Canal. These batteries went into action as part of an ambush of IAF planes, Rabin said, and had downed one Phantom and damaged another. Israel had agreed to accept the cease-fire on July 31—but the military situation on the Canal front had changed since then. The Egyptians and the Soviets were planning to move up missile batteries to the waterline, under the protection of the cease-fire, and Israel could not allow that. Hence Israel had decided not to accept the cease-fire proposal if the Soviets and Egyptians created new facts on the ground so close to the Canal.[70]

Rabin told Kissinger and Sisco that there were two alternatives. The first was a diplomatic process that would end with the missiles' rollback to behind a line running 40 to 60 kilometers west of the Canal. The second was for the Americans to provide Israel with the means to destroy the missiles. If it proved impossible to remove the sites within ten to 20 kilometers of the Canal through diplomacy, the start of the cease-fire must be delayed. Should the missiles remain in their new emplacement, Rabin said, Israel would respond by attacking them at the first possible opportunity and also by striking Egypt in areas in which it was "less immune." Moreover, because of the threat posed by the SA-2 and SA-3 systems, Rabin emphasized to Kissinger and Sisco, as Prime Minister Meir had done on August 4 to Ambassador Barbour, the urgency of supplying American equipment to Israel. Rabin repeated Israel's requests for military hardware and aircraft, including electronic countermeasures (ECMs), cluster bombs (CBUs), and Shrike missiles for taking out radar installations, in part to facilitate attacks on the new missile sites.[71]

In fact, as Rabin wrote to Jerusalem, Israel was well aware that even "the great United States" did not have a full technological solution for countering Soviet weapons and that political considerations in the Pentagon, as well as the State Department and White House, which approved the sale of the Shrikes, prevented the transfer of equipment that could facilitate an Israeli attack on the Egyptian–Soviet missile network. The Pentagon's excuse was that "it did not want to provide ineffective weaponry to Israel and mislead it that it would be able to deal with the SAMs." "It appears that in the American administration, an order from the president is not always binding," Rabin observed.[72]

Sisco fully understood the problem that Israel now had to deal with, but replied that he saw no feasible way to get the missiles pulled back to 50 kilometers west of the Canal. He added that the United States had not asked Israel to suspend its military operations; as long as no cease-fire was in effect, the standstill provision did not apply to either side. But Sisco rejected Rabin's assertion that the start of the cease-fire should be delayed and said that Israel's desire to destroy the missile sites was incompatible with its acceptance of the American proposal.[73] He added that Israel would have to bear the responsibility for the diplomatic and military fallout of an attack and that it would have ramifications for Israel's relations with the United States.[74]

When Kissinger met with Rabin he linked the cease-fire to Israel's arms requests. He asked whether Israel intended to use the military equipment if it were received before the start of the cease-fire, and Rabin replied in the affirmative. Kissinger asked whether Israel would agree to accept the cease-fire in exchange for an American commitment to provide the requested equipment, thereby effectively forestalling the impending attack. Rabin's reply left no room for doubt: If the Egyptians and the Soviets did not withdraw their forward surface-to-air missile batteries, whether at their own initiative or as the result of an American demarche, Israel would not accept the cease-fire and would take steps to destroy them. Rabin added that Israel would act against the missile batteries even if the United States did not provide the equipment it had requested.[75]

The conversations with Rabin made a poor impression on the Americans. Kissinger commented that Israel had completely failed in its presentation of the problem of the missiles to American public opinion, and that most senior administration officials believed that a cease-fire was essential and that Israel was preventing it. Sisco and his colleagues in the State Department had no "satisfactory explanation" for the position the Israeli ambassador had stated earlier that day. Something in the Israeli position had roused the lines of communication between Washington and Jerusalem. At 9:30 on the evening of August 5, Rabin contacted Sisco and Alexander Haig, Kissinger's deputy at the National Security Council, and asked to revise the Israeli position he had presented earlier. First, Israel would act, directly or indirectly, to destroy the forward surface-to-air missile sites. Second, Israel would observe the cease-fire as of the day it took effect, as long as an agreement on monitoring it had been reached first. Third, Rabin explained that he was "in no position to say that the foregoing is conditional," as he had said previously in his meeting with Kissinger. In addition, he left the impression that the missile sites would be destroyed, with or without American military assistance.[76]

Kissinger relayed Rabin's arguments to Nixon later that night (at 10:18 pm), along with the assessment that Israel would attack the missile array before the cease-fire took effect. Kissinger believed that Israeli officials were "approaching again a state of extreme agitation" and added: "I would guess that the Israelis, if they don't hit tonight, will strike within the next 48 hours. Rabin does not talk idly."[77] After updating Nixon, Kissinger called Rabin (at 11:10 pm). He wanted to guarantee that if Israel struck the missile sites, the president would not learn

about the attack from the morning newspapers, but that Israel would give the United States "a few hours warning" before the operation. Rabin replied that Israel indeed intended to maintain "freedom of action" and that it intended to strike the missile network directly and indirectly "prior to close fire" [*sic!*].

On the one hand, the Israeli ambassador wanted to send Nixon and Kissinger the soothing message that elimination of the missiles was not a condition for accepting the cease-fire; on the other hand, he again emphasized that until the cease-fire began, Israel would feel free to act as it saw fit to destroy them. "Understand you completely" was Kissinger's reply. When Rabin reported on the conversation to Jerusalem, he wrote that "there was nothing in his [Kissinger's] words that hinted at any limitation whatsoever" on the planned military operation.[78]

Another point of disagreement related to Israel's attitude towards Jarring's mission and the Rogers Initiative's idea of renewing negotiations under his aegis on the basis of Resolution 242. For the State Department it was important to implement the principle of "stop shooting and start talking" as soon as possible, so Sisco explained to Rabin that Rogers had made it clear to U Thant and Jarring that the United States would continue to pursue a cease-fire, but that, whatever its starting date, Jarring could begin talks with the sides at once. In other words, for the Americans the cease-fire was not a precondition for the resumption of Jarring's mission; they had no intention of confounding the mission, which was Jarring's responsibility, with the cease-fire, which the United States was working on.[79]

But Israel had many reservations, reflected in the wording of its reply to Rogers. It wanted to draw a line separating its reply to Rogers from its agreement to the principles of talks mediated by Jarring, as provided for in Rogers' initiative. So when Jarring contacted the Egyptian and Jordanian representatives at the UN and asked their approval for him to deliver the American document in his own name (as in the initial proposal to the sides), they consented, whereas the Israelis were evasive. When Jarring met with Yosef Tekoah, the Israeli ambassador at the UN, on August 4 and raised the matter, Tekoah replied that he was not authorized to add anything beyond Prime Minister Meir's public statement.[80] This resistance was reported straight to Sisco, who began to feel anxious. He contacted Rogers and asked him to immediately call Eban and tell him that Israel must give Jarring its consent to receive the report. Sisco even dictated two possible formulations for a reply, one of which Eban could decide to pass on to Tekoah.[81]

On August 5, Barbour had a "four eyes only" meeting with Prime Minister Meir. His report on it suggests that domestic politics lay heavily on Meir. She told Barbour "categorically" that Israel's acceptance of the original American document verbatim would lead to the resignation of additional ministers (in addition to the six who had already quit), "including perhaps that of herself." For this reason, it was impossible to accept the document as worded. Barbour tried to explain that all of Israel's demands, as expressed in her reply to Rogers, were included in the American initiative in keeping with Resolution 242, but to no avail. Meir remained firmly rooted in her position, saying that any change in

the Israeli declaration exceeded her authority and required approval by the other ministers. After much effort, Meir and Barbour reached agreement on the text of the declaration that Tekoah would convey orally to Jarring regarding "the Israel government's acceptance of the U.S. government peace initiative" and the Israeli government's willingness to appoint a representative to talks to be mediated by Jarring, in accordance with its statement of August 4.

Israel's position complicated the situation and made it difficult for Jarring to get the talks underway. The Americans were afraid that were Israel's demand for a slight modification of the wording of the proposal accepted, not only would it reopen the negotiations about the Rogers Plan, it would also be interpreted by the Egyptians and the Soviets, and "with justification," as an Israeli rebuff of the initiative. This would endanger the Jarring mission as well as the cease-fire. Barbour mentioned this to Meir but also expressed understanding of her political problems and calculations. He attempted to explain this to Rogers and Sisco, and emphasized "that [the] Israelis have come far in their lights in abandoning insistence on direct negotiations and acknowledging [their] readiness to withdraw."[82]

The next day, August 6, Tekoah conveyed to Jarring the text of the message Meir and Barbour had agreed on. But when Jarring asked him whether the Israeli government agreed to the American proposal as worded, Tekoah again said that he could not reply in the affirmative. This waffling initiated a frantic day of exchanges between Washington and Jerusalem that constituted a nadir in US–Israel relations. Sisco repeatedly asked Rabin to find an immediate solution to the problem, because it was impossible to revise the text of the American proposal and impossible to retreat from Jarring's statement. Fed up, Rabin erupted in anger: "[The] U.S. has built this monster and must now determine how to cope with it."[83] In another exchange with Sisco, Rabin conveyed a message from Meir in which she said that she was "dismayed over the latest development [… and] shocked at the behavior of the United States placing before Israel a fait accompli." And from there it only got worse:

> The Prime Minister has told me to tell you that the conduct of the US Government is an insult to Israel—its Government and people. You have taken upon yourselves to place words in the mouth of the Government of Israel which we have never agreed to say. This attitude bears the mark of dictation—not consultation. Your whole approach has the gravest implications as to the relations between our two governments. Your conduct seriously questions how we can embark on the process of negotiation.[84]

Sisco promised to pass this statement on to his superiors, though he found it "unjustified." Meir, still furious, demanded to speak directly with Sisco. What followed was a very unpleasant conversation between the two, with Rabin and Argov listening in. According to Rabin's account, Meir was bitter and implied that the United States had "forged Israel's signature." Sisco was shocked by this accusation: "What do you mean 'forged'?" Meir replied, "You notified Jarring that we had accepted the initiative before we accepted it!" She explained that the

previous day she had reached an agreement with Ambassador Barbour, and now the American administration was backtracking on it. It was impossible to compose answers in Israel's name while it had reservations about the wording of Jarring's letter.[85]

"It was a dialogue of the deaf," as Rabin put it in his memoirs, a "tragic conversation." Replying to Meir, Sisco again emphasized that it was impossible to modify the document or add anything to it, and that "the report Jarring would present is the key element of the U.S. proposal." The Israeli government had no choice but to approve the text of the document. Meir replied that Sisco was fomenting a political crisis that would lead to the collapse of her government. No Israeli government would approve it. Meir wondered out loud why the United States was demanding that Israel do this. Why should Israel allow Jarring to say something in Israel's name that it had not agreed to? Israel had agreed to a withdrawal, to a limited cease-fire, and to indirect negotiations. Israel had done everything in its power, in full recognition that this was an American proposal, but why was it required to do this too? Israel's demand was that Jarring say that the withdrawal would be to safe and recognized borders, and not just a withdrawal.[86]

Sisco's answered adamantly that there could be no negotiations about on the text of the American proposal. Moreover, after Egypt and Jordan had accepted the initiative, it was Israel that was now piling up difficulties. Meir interrupted and asked, "is this a threat that the world will find that Jordan and the UAR are peace-loving people?" Sisco apologized if his words had implied a threat and promised to pass on her position to the President and Secretary of State. Meir retorted that she asked him to tell Nixon that the understanding and agreement she reached with Ambassador Barbour "was as far as Israel could go." Israel was a democratic country, not a dictatorship, she said, and expressed her sorrow that it had not been possible to reach an agreement.[87]

It was "basically a technical" matter, something that was "almost inexplicable," was the response of State Department officials to the difficulties Israel was now piling up: "The Israelis have raised a needless obstacle." This response exemplifies the depth of the chasm between the Israeli and American positions. As absurd as it may sound, Israel did not understand why the United States declined to accept its consent to the Rogers Initiative but not to the report that Jarring was supposed to submit to U Thant. On the other hand, the United States did not understand why it was unclear to Israel that the Jarring report *was* the Rogers Initiative.[88] "There is no one who understands the Israeli position," Sisco told Rabin on the morning of August 7. "I was equally in the dark as to which portion of the text Israel agreed to and which she opposed," Rabin later wrote in his memoirs. "I had a horrible feeling of crisis. We were at one of the low points in Israeli–U.S. relations."[89]

After the testy conversation with Sisco, Meir told Rabin to request an urgent meeting with Kissinger. At 10:30 pm, Rabin arrived at the White House with Argov, and said, in Meir's name, that she believed that "we were approaching one of the most critical moments in United States–Israeli relations as the result

of some misunderstanding and that a serious problem existed." Rabin reviewed for Kissinger the entire saga of the misunderstanding of the past three days: the talks with Sisco, the political crisis in Israeli, the understandings reached with Barbour, the willingness to state a diplomatic compromise in writing. But Israel could not agree to the Jarring report, since, according to its text, Rabin explained, Israel committed itself to a framework for negotiations that did not accord with its positions on the borders, the essence of peace, the means to peace—in other words, almost everything. Kissinger did not understand what the big deal was all about. He did not see the differences between the Israeli formulation and the American proposal, or why Israel rejected the American version. Rabin's and Argov's attempts to explain merely increased his perplexity. However, Kissinger promised to convey the situation to Nixon and try to find a solution that would ensure the Israeli starting position at the beginning of negotiations. He made it clear, however, that "the best Israel could achieve would be a statement of its interpretation, but the U.S. would not accept its interpretation." He ended the meeting by saying that "this seemed to be a lesser case than others they had made in the last couple of days and lived with."[90]

Despite all the difficulties, and in an effort to overcome the obstacle, State Department officials tried to contact U Thant the first thing on the morning of August 7 to get him to publish a statement that he had been in touch with Jarring and asked him to begin a process with representatives of Egypt, Jordan, and Israel, but without referring to the text of the American initiative. Even though this step was supposed to be made without Israel's consent, the State Department, as noted previously, was more worried about how the Soviets and Egyptians would react that about the Israeli response.[91]

The arm-wrestling between Israel and the State Department continued the next day, as the latter continued its quest for a compromise text that U Thant could use to announce the cease-fire and start of negotiations through Jarring.[92] Throughout the morning of August 7, Sisco worked feverishly with Barbour in Jerusalem and with Rabin in Washington in search of a way out of the imbroglio. Barbour was asked to inform the Israelis that Egypt had agreed to the cease-fire arrangement and was willing for it to take effect at midnight.[93] But it added two stipulations: Israelis must not swim or fish in the waters of the Suez Canal, and Israel would do nothing to aggravate the situation on the Syrian and Jordanian fronts.[94]

At 3:00 pm Washington time, after a number of phone calls and one brief face-to-face meeting between Sisco and Rabin, the latter was invited to meet Rogers, in a final attempt to reach an agreement before the Secretary General released his statement.[95] Rogers began by saying that the United States had expected Israel to follow the example of Egypt and Jordan and announce its acceptance of the initiative, while expressing its reservations in a separate document. In this way, "Israel could have its cake and eat it too." Because it had not done so, Rogers explained, it was impossible to see how at this stage Israel could retract its acceptance of the American initiative, especially after Egypt and Jordan had accepted it.[96]

And then Rogers dropped a bombshell. Because the United States, the Secretary General, and Jarring were interested in an immediate start to the negotiations, in less than an hour, at 4 o'clock that afternoon, U Thant was going to announce that the cease-fire would come into effect at midnight on August 7. It was impossible to remove the text of the American initiative from the announcement and it was impossible to launch the initiative without publishing the text of the declaration. The American initiative, Rogers noted, protected Israeli interests. Sisco repeated that, after the announcement was made, Israel could state that it had already clarified its terms for accepting the American initiative in its official reply to the United States. In other words, Sisco said, "the substantive weight of the document" by Jarring would depend on the degree to which Israel "exaggerated its importance." Rogers added that were Israel to publicly declare its rejection of the text, "it would be a catastrophe."[97]

Rabin was left almost speechless. He asserted that the United States was leaving Israel no time to respond or to study the text of the announcement that would be published. In effect, he said, the Americans were unilaterally confronting Israel with a fait accompli. Rogers and Sisco disagreed with Rabin, but the Israeli ambassador tried to avoid an argument (which would only waste valuable time, he told his hosts) and asked permission to relay the news to Jerusalem immediately. Thirty-five minutes after the meeting ended, U Thant's statement was released.[98] The Americans' obstinate position had left Israel no choice. "We have no illusions that the United States will drop any of the sections of its initiative as they were formulated," Eban wrote to Rabin on August 7, "but we have the right not to have words put in our mouth."[99] At midnight between August 7 and 8, 1970, the cease-fire between Egypt and Jordan, on the one hand, and Israel, on the other hand, took effect.

Meir addressed the nation on television on Friday evening, August 7:

> We have reached this stage due to our military steadfastness and our political struggle. Ahead of us still lie difficult trials, and what we need is great internal unity, founded on the assurance that our way is the right one. With all our profound desire that the cease-fire—and not only on this front alone—should be a first step towards peace, we must remember that our road to peace is still a long and hard one.[100]

In the Arab world, the responses to Egypt's acceptance of the Second Rogers Plan ranged, as could be expected, from favorable to total rejection. The moderate states, such as Lebanon and Tunisia, took a positive view of the Egyptian step; some saw it as a "faint glimmer of peace for the first time in 23 years" in the region. The radical Arab countries, including Syria and Iraq, were outraged by the acceptance of the American initiative, which they attacked as a dangerous plan and a conspiracy against the Arabs, like the Balfour Declaration and Resolution 242.[101]

On the other hand, during the first days after August 7, Bergus reported from Cairo that the cease-fire had been received with general agreement and there was

"a feeling of relief and gratification," even "euphoria." At the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, after he conveyed the news of the Israeli acceptance of the cease-fire, there was an outburst of spontaneous emotion, with "hugging and kissing, Egyptian style" and "even more touching." Bergus wrote Rogers about the "spontaneous smiles and hand waves I got from [the] crowd passing [the] Foreign Office when I departed. The Egyptians just can not bring themselves to hate the United States."[102] In the Cairo suburbs, the merchants saw it as a sign that peace was close and expressed their hope that in its wake foreign investors would find opportunities in Egypt, which would lead to prosperity and jobs. But people in the city itself and in Alexandria did not place such high hopes in the cease-fire agreement and saw it as only the first step on a long road to peace. Bergus thought that if there were diplomatic progress during the 90 days of the truce and the sides adhered to the terms of the American initiative, it would become difficult for Nasser to win broad public support for renewing the War of Attrition.[103] After three years of exchanges of fire, air attacks, and artillery barrages, and commando missions, with hundreds killed and thousands wounded, quiet was restored to the Suez Canal.

Notes

1 Mohammed Hassan al-Zayyat to Prof. Morroe Berger, "No. 18," February 23, 1971, ISA, FM, 4548/7.
2 Note that on June 2, the Soviet Union submitted its own cease-fire proposal, which the United States preferred to ignore. See *FRUS* 1969–1976, Vol. XII, Doc. 159, "Memorandum of Conversation," June 2, 1970, 484–9.
3 "Memorandum, Your Meeting with the Senators on the Middle East/Draft Memorandum for the President," June 3, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2047 Pol, 27 A/I.
4 Ibid.
5 "Deliver to Ambassador at Opening of Business June 19," June 17, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 096540," June 17, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
6 "State 096540," June 17, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
7 Ibid.; "Tel Aviv 3200," June 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I.
8 "Tel Aviv 3200," June 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I.
9 Ibid.
10 "State 097781," June 20, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Tel Aviv 3200," June 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I.
11 "Weekly Summary," June 20, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2640 Pol, 2-5 UAR.
12 "State 096867," June 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 130–3.
13 "State 096867," June 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
14 Ibid.; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 130–3.
15 "State 096867," June 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 130–3.
16 Forty-four Phantom jets would be sent to Israel by the end of June, three planes during July, and three during August. By June, 88 Skyhawks had been sent to Israel; the rest were to be delivered by the end of 1970.
17 "New Initiative on Political Settlement," June 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 096867," June 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 130–3.

18 "Your Meeting with Dobrynin, Saturday, June 20," June 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XII, Doc. 170, "Editorial Note," June 20, 1970, 526–8.
19 "Secretary's Announcement on US Middle East Initiative," June 25, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
20 Nasser, *al-Majmuah al-Kamila*, 519–27; "State 101540," June 26, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
21 "State 102504," June 26, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
22 "Cairo 1422," June 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1423," June 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
23 Nasser, *al-Majmuah al-Kamila*, 536–40; "Intelligence Brief, UAR–USSR: Nasser Visits Moscow," June 30, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2640 Pol, 2-5 UAR.
24 "Intelligence Brief, UAR–USSR: Nasser Visits Moscow," June 30, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2640 Pol, 2-5 UAR; Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*, 93; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar*, 198–202; Schueftan, *Attrition*, 72, 335–51; Fawzi, *Ḥarb al-Thalath Sanawat*, 386–98.
25 Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*, 91; Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar*, 200–2.
26 "Joint Soviet–Egyptian Announcement of 17 June 1970," July 18, 1970, ISA, FM, 4604/11; Sharaf, *Sanwat wa-Ayam ma' Gamal Abd al-Nasser*, Vol. 1, 370–2.
27 "Joint Soviet–Egyptian Announcement of 17 June 1970," July 18, 1970, ISA, FM, 4604/11.
28 "State 105543," July 1, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
29 The interview is at www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/conversation-with-the-president-about-foreign-policy; "No. 6," July 2, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/5; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 134, "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," note 3, July 15, 1970, 466–8.
30 "No. 6," July 2, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/5; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 134, "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," note 3, July 15, 1970, 466–8.
31 "Tel Aviv 3488," July 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 1475," July 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 1480," July 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I.
32 "Tel-Aviv 3442," July 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 115441," July 17, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2079 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
33 "Israeli Evidence of New Missile Sites in Canal Area," July 1, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I; "Tel-Aviv 3442," July 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 115441," July 17, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2079 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
34 "Tel Aviv 3623," July 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 110909," July 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
35 "Cairo 1611," July 22, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1614," July 22, 22 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Department of State, Division of Language Services, No. 17988," July 22, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 146–9.
36 *Gamal Abdel Nasser Speeches*, "The speech given by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the opening of the 4th session of the National Conference from Cairo University," July 23, 1970. http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1289&lang=en [Arabic]; "Cairo 1626," July 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Telegram to Missions 466," July 23, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 149–50; James, "Egyptian Decision-Making," 102.
37 "No. 488/*het*," July 24, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7; "Cairo 1703," August 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
38 "Intelligence Brief, UAR: Nasser's Question and Answer," July 29, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1703," August 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "No. 488/*het*," July 24, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7.

39 "Cairo 2302," October 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2069 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
40 Ibid.
41 "Memorandum of Conversation, Review of Prime Minister Meir's Visit," September 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2385 Pol, 7 ISR; "State 155110," September 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2056 Pol, 27 A/I.
42 "State 117177," July 22, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 118347," July 23, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27 A/I.
43 "Memorandum of Conversation, Middle East," July 23, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2054 Pol, 27 A/I.
44 Ibid.
45 "State 118300," July 22, 1970, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I, NA; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 136, "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel," July 23, 1970, 470–2.
46 "State 118300," July 22, 1970, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I, NA; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 136, "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel," July 23, 1970, 470–2.
47 "State 118300," July 22, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Tel Aviv 3933," July 25, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "No. 270," July 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7; "No. 268," July 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7.
48 "Tel Aviv 3933," July 25, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "No. 270," July 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7; "No. 268," July 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7.
49 "No. 210," July 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7.
50 Sisco also told Rabin that because no limits had been placed on arms supplies to the Arab side, there were no limits on American shipments of arms to Israel.
51 "No. 210," July 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7.
52 Ibid.
53 "U.S Replies to Israeli Questions," July 27, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/10.
54 "No. 227," July 27, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/10.
55 "No. 226," July 27, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/10.
56 "State 120681," July 27, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 225," July 27, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7.
57 "Text of the Government Statement," July 31, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7.
58 "Dinitz to Rabin in Washington," July 31, 1970, ISA, FM 7058/7-A; "Rabin to Dinitz," July 31, 1970, ISA, FM, 938/18.
59 "State 124229," July 31, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 257," July 31, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7.
60 Ibid.
61 "Dinitz to Rabin in Washington," July 31, 1970, ISA, FM 7058/7; "Israel Reply to MidEast Initiative," August 3, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 126614," August 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
62 "State 125220," August 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 126614," August 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; Adamsky, *Operation Kavkaz*, 143, 170–2.
63 "Prime Minister's Announcement at the Knesset," August 4, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7; English text in *Israel's Foreign Policy*, Chapter XII, Doc. 20, "Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Meir, August 4, 1970," at https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook1/Pages/20%20Statement%20to%20the%20Knesset%20by%20Prime%20Minister%20Meir.aspx. The English text there is somewhat abridged and has been filled in from the Hebrew original cited here.
64 "Telegram to Missions 618," August 4, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7; "State 125220," August 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
65 "Telegram to Missions 701," August 8, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/8.
66 Kissinger to Rabin. See Rabin, *Rabin Memoirs*, 181.

67 "State 126614," August 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 39," August 5, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "Meeting between Israeli Ambassador Rabin and Mr. Kissinger on August 5 1970," August 6, 1970, Box 2389 Pol, ISR-US, NA; "Military Sitrep: July 31–August 6," August 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
68 "No. 47," August 5, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
69 Ibid.
70 "State 126614," August 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 39," August 5, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "Memorandum, Meeting between Israeli Ambassador Rabin and Mr. Kissinger on August 5 1970," August 6, 1970, Box 2389 Pol, ISR-US, NA.
71 "No. 945/*yud-het*," August 5, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/8; "State 126614," August 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 39," August 5, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "Memorandum, Meeting between Israeli Ambassador Rabin and Mr. Kissinger on August 5 1970," August 6, 1970, Box 2389 Pol, ISR-US, NA.
72 For Meir's conversation with Barbour, see "To N.R. 21," August 4, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "No. 39," August 5, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "No. 270," July 25, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/7; "Rabin—Top secret," August 4, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
73 In Rabin's report to Jerusalem about this conversation with Sisco, he wrote:

> Sisco replied that he completely understood our problem […]. He certainly did not believe in the possibility of diplomatic activity on their part that would lead to the withdrawal of the missile deployment […]. *So the only way he sees, if this is indeed Israel's approach, is to provide us with the means so that we can try to smash the missile system*" [emphasis added].
>
> See "No. 39," August 5, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8

74 "State 126614," August 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
75 "Memorandum, Meeting between Israeli Ambassador Rabin and Mr. Kissinger on August 5, 1970," August 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2389 Pol, ISR-US.
76 "State 126615," August 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum for the Record," August 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2389 Pol, ISR-US.
77 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 142, note 10, "Memorandum of Conversation," August 5, 1970, 490.
78 Ibid; "No. 946/*yud-het*," August 6, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/8.
79 "No. 22," August 4, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "No. 20," August 4, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "State 125221," August 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
80 "State 125325," August 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
81 One version was softer and implied that Tekoah was "authorized" to inform Jarring of the Israeli acceptance of the American document, on the basis of the Prime Minister's speech. The second version was much more direct, in that it did not refer to Meir's speech and grounded the Israeli acceptance in a decision by the Government. See "State 125325," August 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
82 "Tel-Aviv 4175," August 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, The White House," August 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
83 "Memorandum for the Record, H. H. Stackhouse, Country Director," August 6–August 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
84 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 143, "Editorial Note," 491–2.
85 "Memorandum of Conversation, Jarring Report," August 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 143, "Editorial Note," 491–2; Rabin, *Memoirs*, 180–1.
86 "Memorandum of Conversation, Jarring Report," August 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
87 Ibid.

88 "Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, The White House," August 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I. See "Memorandum for the Record, H. H. Stackhouse, Country Director," August 6–August 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
89 Sisco called Rabin twice that morning. See Rabin, *Service Diary*, 298–9; Rabin, *Memoirs*, 182; "Memorandum for the Record, H. H. Stackhouse, Country Director," August 6–August 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
90 "No. 57," August 7, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/8; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 143, "Editorial Note," 492–5; Rabin, *Service Diary*, 298–9; Rabin, *Memoirs*, 182.
91 "Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, The White House," August 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
92 "Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, The White House," August 6, 1970, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I, NA.
93 A distinction must be drawn between the proclamation of a standstill cease-fire, which was preceded by a debate about the scope of the standstill clause and the deployment of the Egyptian–Soviet missile array, which was published by State Department spokesman McCloskey at 1:45 pm, and the announcement released in Thant's name. For the former, see *FRUS*, Arab–Israeli Dispute, 1969–72, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 144, Note 3, "Transcript of a Telephone Conversation Between Secretary of State Rogers and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs," August 7, 1970, 495. With regard to the provisions of the cease-fire agreement and the disagreement about the cease-fire clause, see Chapter 10 below.
94 Sisco spoke with Barbour at 8:10, 8:33, and 9:25 am, Washington time. See "Memorandum for the Record, H. H. Stackhouse, Country Director," August 6–August 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
95 Sisco spoke with Rabin at 8:15 am and again at 9:57. At 11:00 the two met in Sisco's office, after Rabin requested a meeting with Rogers but the latter was unable to see him (ibid.).
96 "No. 66," August 7, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
97 Ibid. Two days later, chastened by the tension between the State Department and Jerusalem, Rogers sent Meir a personal letter in which he expressed his "deep regret that any difficulty has arisen between us since over the weeks and months we have been working so closely together as good friends should." See "State 128626," August 8, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2064 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "No. 14," August 9, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; *FRUS*, Arab–Israeli Dispute, 1969–72, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 147, "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel," August 9, 1970, 500–1.
98 Ibid; "No. 64," August 7, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/8.
99 "Encrypted Outgoing Cable to Washington," August 7, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
100 "Broadcast to the Nation by Prime Minister Meir, August 7, 1970," ISA, FM, 7058/8; English text in *Israel's Foreign Policy*, Chapter XII, Doc. 21, "Broadcast to the Nation by Prime Minister Meir, August 7, 1970," at https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook1/Pages/21%20Broadcast%20to%20the%20Nation%20by%20Prime%20Minister%20Meir-.aspx.
101 For a survey of the reactions in Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria, see "Beirut 6217/1," July 29, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
102 "Cairo 1757," August 8, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 1784," August 12, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
103 "Cairo 1757," August 8, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 1784," August 12, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1826," August 15, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2640 Pol, 2-5 UAR.

10 Different perspectives

The violation of the cease-fire

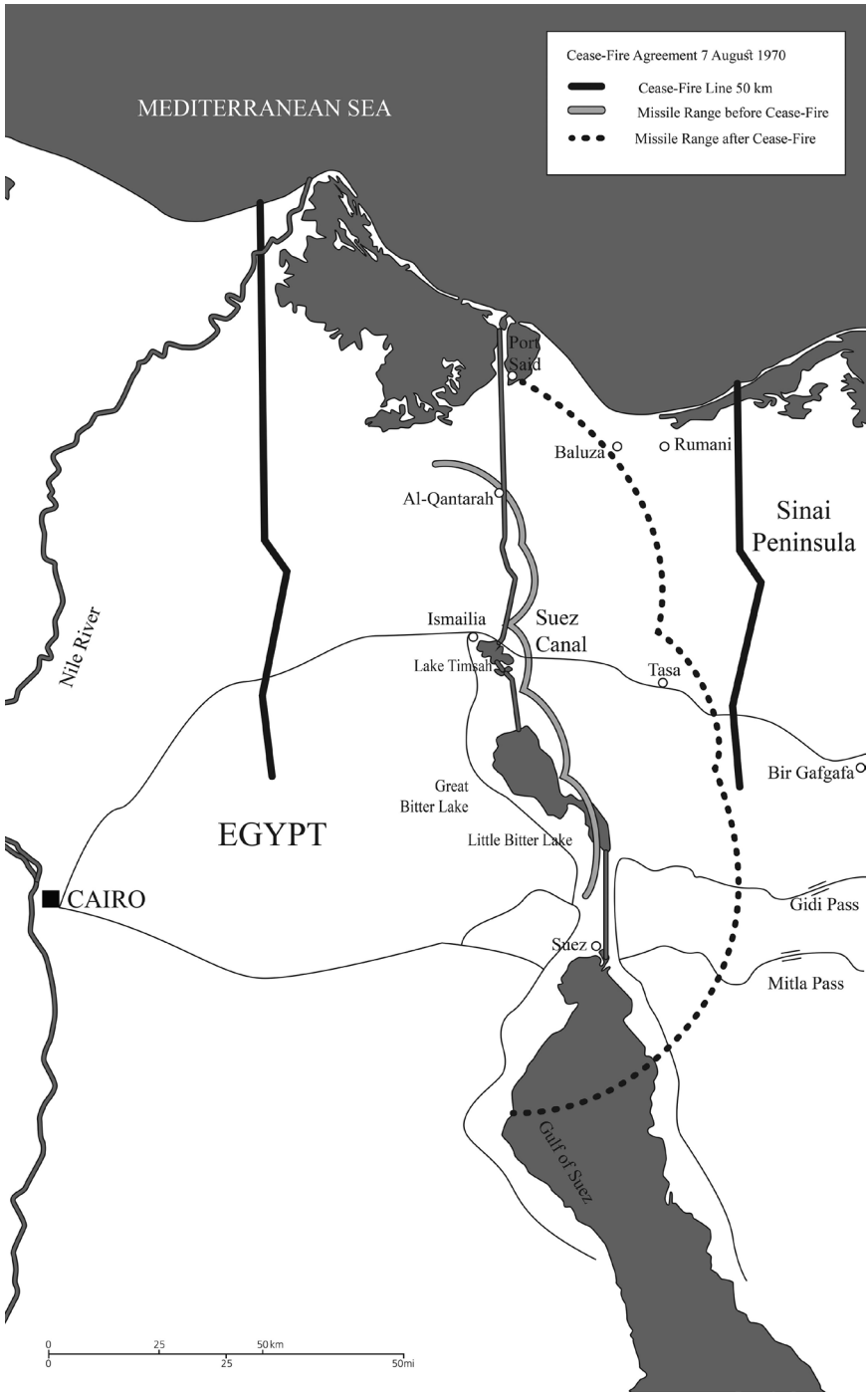
> We discovered the deception only a few hours after the cease-fire came into effect. The planned violation continued, accompanied by repeated denials, even after we revealed the deception to the world.
>
> Golda Meir[1]

The installation of surface-to-air missiles near the canal

The State Department's hopes and expectations that the cease-fire agreement could break the logjam and pull Israel, Egypt, and Jordan into the diplomatic process, under Jarring's auspices, soon gave way to disappointment. The United States had indeed put an end to the exchanges of fire, artillery barrages, and aerial battles, but it failed to build trust between the sides and between itself and Egypt; and trust was the commodity that all the parties needed in order to move forward on the long road to resolving the conflict. The root of the crisis was that the Egyptians' reinforcement of their missile array on the western side of the Suez Canal right before and after the cease-fire took effect—a move that Israel saw as posing a concrete threat. The crisis also stemmed from Egypt's interpretation of the standstill clause (Article C) in the cease-fire agreement.

The cease-fire agreement, with the security arrangements it defined, was divided into six sections, of which the most important were as follows:

> Article B: Both sides will stop all incursions and all firing, on the ground and in the air, across the cease-fire line.
>
> Article C: Both sides will refrain from changing the military status quo within zones extending 50 kilometers to the east and the west of the cease-fire line. Neither side will introduce or construct any new military installations in these zones. Activities within the zones will be limited to the maintenance of existing installations at their present sites and positions and to the rotation and supply of forces presently within the zones.
>
> Article D: For purposes of verifying observance of the cease-fire, each side will rely on its own national means, including reconnaissance aircraft, and will be free to operate without interference up to 10 kilometers from the cease-fire line on its own side of the line.


Cease-Fire Agreement 7 August 1970
Cease-Fire Line 50 km
Missile Range before Cease-Fire
Missile Range after Cease-Fire
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Port Said
Baluza
Rumani
Al-Qantarah
Sinai Peninsula
Nile River
Ismailia
Suez Canal
Lake Timsah
Tasa
Bir Gafgafa
Great Bitter Lake
EGYPT
Little Bitter Lake
CAIRO
Gidi Pass
Suez
Mitla Pass
Gulf of Suez
0
25
50 km
0
25
50mi

> Article E: Each side may avail itself as appropriate of all UN machinery in reporting alleged violations to each other of the cease-fire and of the military standstill.[2]

But these terms were not honored, and each side complained about the other's violations. On August 9, Foreign Minister Riad protested to Bergus about an Israeli breach of the cease-fire. That morning, Riad said, 12 Israeli planes had overflown Suez City, apparently on a patrol mission. In addition, IDF soldiers had fired automatic weapons and mortars at an Egyptian position, but the Egyptians suffered no casualties and had not responded in kind.[3] Egypt also filed a complaint about shooting by Israel to the UN Truce Supervision Force (UNTSO). UNTSO identified a regular pattern of Israeli photo-reconnaissance flights, which constituted a clear violation of the cease-fire. However, August 9 was the only time Egypt submitted an official complaint to the UN.[4] From the other side of the Canal, Israel reported more flagrant violations of the cease-fire agreement and threatened to terminate it.

As we have seen, Egypt responded affirmatively to the Rogers Plan on July 22—but without providing a clear answer about one major issue, Article C of the cease-fire agreement, which forbade the two sides from improving their positions and reinforcing their military deployment within 50 kilometers east and west of the Canal. The State Department, aware of the importance of how Egypt interpreted this clause, asked Bergus to clarify whether Cairo had accepted the standstill principle or was being deliberately ambiguous in its answer. What the United States, and even more so Israel, feared was that Egypt would exploit the cease-fire to move surface-to-air missiles closer towards the Canal.[5]

Bergus returned to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry and made it plain that the military standstill was an inseparable part of the cease-fire. But when he asked Mohammed Riad, a counselor in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, whether this was clear to the Egyptian government, he received an evasive answer. The vague response, along with the many complaints by both Israel and Egypt, left Bergus feeling helpless. In fact, he lacked the tools to deal with the situation. "I would hope [the] department would give early consideration to drafting some rules of procedure re [the] handling of future complaints of violations," he wrote to Washington. "We could use some guidance out here."[6]

On August 10, Defense Minister Dayan and Chief of Staff Haim Bar-Lev informed Ambassador Barbour that on the previous day Israeli intelligence had detected Egyptian and Soviet movement into the military standstill zone. The Egyptians, they said, had seriously breached the standstill clause in the cease-fire agreement. This military activity, they said, had begun an hour before the cease-fire came into force and continued afterwards as well. In light of this development, Dayan requested military assistance from the United States, primarily Shrike missiles, in order to counter the threat posed by the missiles if the cease-fire collapsed; without it, the IDF would be at the Egyptians' mercy.

Dayan shared with Barbour his personal view of the recent developments at the Canal. He threatened that were the cease-fire to end and Israel found itself

facing an Egyptian missile umbrella over the Canal area, but the IDF lacked the means to deal with it, "then [the] alternatives for Israel will be to lose [the] war there on canal or [to] fight it in different way." In such as case, Dayan continued, he would recommend to the Israeli government to take off the gloves—"to hell with restraints"—and support wider hostilities, including attacks on military targets deep in Egyptian territory.[7]

With Dayan's threat hovering in the air, Bar-Lev provided details of the intelligence the IDF had collected. The Israel Air Force had conducted several reconnaissance missions between August 7 and 9; the photos showed that the entire length of cease-fire line, from ten kilometers north of Ismailia to ten kilometers south of Suez, was defended by an umbrella of surface-to-air missiles with a range of 20 kilometers. In addition, before August 7 the Egyptians had moved 17 artillery batteries into the Suez region. This meant that there was now significant artillery firepower there, protected by SAM missiles, and that three-quarters of the Canal was out-of-bounds for Israeli planes.[8]

The next day, August 11, Rabin met with Sisco in Washington. The heavy atmosphere in which they had been interacting during the previous weeks was unchanged. Rabin began by saying that the American announcement of the cease-fire was an unprecedented step in the relations between the two countries. The United States did not have the right to make statements in Israel's name, Rabin said, especially after Prime Minister Meir had said explicitly that she was unwilling for its text to be issued in Israel's name. "The United States is allowed to threaten Israel, it is allowed to abandon Israel if it wishes, but it may not speak in Israel's name if it has not been authorized to do so."[9]

It was important for Rabin to begin with the message about the crisis between the two countries, because it backed up the report about the new Egyptian violations of the cease-fire. Israel had frequently warned that Egypt was liable to violate the cease-fire and had demanded concrete means of monitoring it, but had never received a workable American response on this matter. And you see, Rabin told Sisco, 12 SA-2 batteries and two SA-3 batteries have been installed within 30 kilometers west of the Suez Canal. As a result, all the Egyptian artillery was protected by surface-to-air missiles. Egypt and the Soviet Union had clearly violated the cease-fire, Rabin declared, and now the question was what the American administration intended to do about it. If the United States could not persuade the Egyptians and the Soviets to move the missiles back (and that was to be expected), Israel would urgently require the means, including cluster bombs and Shrike missiles, to deal with the renewed missile threat if the cease-fire collapsed.[10]

The two countries found themselves in a bitter disagreement about this matter. Despite the detailed intelligence data, the State Department rejected Israel's determination that Egypt had flagrantly violated the military standstill in the Suez Canal area. To monitor the standstill clause, the Americans had wanted to have a U-2 fly over the Canal before the cease-fire came into effect and photograph the two parties' current deployment, especially in the zone 50 kilometers west and east of the Canal to which the standstill clause applied. When the

United States contacted Israel and Egypt for approval of the reconnaissance mission, both refused. The Egyptians saw it as an American attempt "to spy" on them on behalf of the Israelis and flatly turned down the request.[11]

Surprisingly, Israel also refused the American request to allow the U-2 to overfly its airspace. Dayan instructed Eli Zeira, the military attaché in Washington, to turn down the request and to add that were such a reconnaissance mission conducted, Israel would intercept the planes. The result was that during the crucial 48 hours when the Egyptians moved the missiles forward, the United States had no way of confirming the Israeli charges. The Americans knew that the air-defense network had been redeployed towards the Canal between July 22, the day Egypt accepted the Rogers Plan, and midnight of August 7, when the cease-fire came into effect; but they rejected Israel's claim that missile batteries had been moved after that and even dismissed the charge as an excuse for reneging on the agreement and avoiding participation in the talks under Jarring's auspices.[12]

To make matters worse, on August 9 the Americans conducted a reconnaissance flight over Sinai, instead of over the Egyptian side of the Canal, without Israel's approval. When Argov, the Israeli Minister in Washington, conveyed to Atherton the great anger that mission had triggered in Israel, the latter replied that the administration was furious at Israel's lack of appreciation, given that great effort had been invested to comply with the request for such a flight. Several days later the State Department admitted that the overflight of the Israeli positions had been a mistake and apologized, but it was insulted by the Israeli threat that "maybe we won't shoot you down, but will force you to land in Lod [airport]."[13]

On August 12, Rabin, Argov, and Zeira met with Sisco, Atherton, and two representatives of the INR to compare the two sides' information about the location of the SAM sites on the eve of the cease-fire and afterwards. The Americans relied on information they had from the end of July and from August 9, 1970, when the reconnaissance flight took place; on that basis, they asserted there had been no changes in that period. Because there was no proof that the missile batteries had been moved forward, Sisco said, he intended to issue an American communiqué rejecting the reports that Israel was publishing. Rabin's response was adamant: the information from Israel was not a formal announcement, but an official American denial of the facts would compel Israel to respond with an official confirmation. Sisco evinced understanding of the Israeli position, backtracked, and said the United States would announce that it was studying the claim that the missiles had been moved forward. But if Israel issued an official statement on the matter, even not in connection with a violation of the cease-fire, the United States would challenge it as long as Israel could not provide unambiguous proof.[14]

The meeting between Sisco and Rabin laid bare the deepening crisis of confidence between Jerusalem and Washington. The magnitude of the breach was manifested at a meeting of the inner group of ministers (Golda's "kitchen cabinet") on August 13, which discussed the Egyptian violation of the cease-fire

and ways to deal with it. Defense Minister Dayan proposed linking the cease-fire to the start of the negotiations under Jarring's auspices. Israel would not appoint a representative to the talks as long as the Egyptians and the Soviets did not move the missiles back and the Americans did not deliver the promised military equipment to Israel. Prime Minister Meir agreed. "My feeling is that if we separate the cease-fire from Jarring, it means we have accepted a fait accompli [the missiles' installation along the Canal]."[15]

Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Yigal Allon proposed setting up a meeting between Nixon and Meir. She agreed, adding,

> we absolutely have to tell the Americans that this matter is very complicated. We are willing to go there [the negotiations], but we are asking to talk with you in the clearest and most committal way—where are we going? From Egypt, voices; from the Soviet Union, missiles; and from the United States, nothing! How far are we going together and at what point will we part company?

However, the Israeli leadership still vacillated about the appropriate response to the violation of the standstill agreement: should it embark on a military operation despite the limitations imposed by the cease-fire, or perhaps only lodge a diplomatic protest, which might become public, and not send a representative to the peace talks? At the end of this difficult session, those present decided that Israel should make it plain to the Americans that it would not join the talks mediated by Jarring as long as there was no understanding between Israel and the United States about the violation of the cease-fire by Egypt and the Soviet Union. To this, Meir added, "we have to make it clear to Nixon: we are not willing to start negotiations when the Egyptian cannon and Soviet missile are pointed at our head."[16]

Meir's remarks reflected Israel's sense of being caught in a double bind, caught between the shackles of the cease-fire agreement and its dependence on American promises to supply it with weapons. If Israel decided to launch a military operation to destroy the missile batteries, it would come out the loser on two fronts: the world would accuse it of aggression and violation of the agreement, while the United States would not supply the military equipment, especially aircraft, it needed so desperately precisely because of the Egyptian and Soviet build-up. So the diplomatic option was the only way out of the imbroglio without stirring up international public opinion and American wrath. Israel decided to protest the Egyptian–Soviet violations of the cease-fire but to continue to comply with the agreement.

On August 13, 1970, after reports about the Egyptian violation of the cease-fire started leaking to the media, and both the press and the opposition parties began demanding explanations, Defense Minister Dayan, addressing the Knesset, made the details of the cease-fire agreement public and also enunciated Israel's demand that the United States take steps to have the missile batteries moved back. Dayan's speech infuriated Washington, where the harsh feelings about Israel were no less intense than those in the other direction. As the Americans saw the matter, the

prospects of a pullback of the missiles had been slim to begin with, and now Dayan's public demand had made the odds for a successful American request to Egypt and the Soviets close to nil. What is more, Dayan's unilateral action contravened the understanding between Israel and Egypt that the details of this agreement would be confidential and published only by mutual agreement.[17]

Dayan's announcements in the Knesset undermined the trust the Americans were trying to develop between Israel and Egypt and came in the middle of a decision to respond favorably to the Israeli request for major arms deliveries. On August 14, Deputy Defense Secretary David Packard told Rabin that the Israeli request for electronic and military equipment had been approved—mainly Shrike missiles and an upgrade of 16 Skyhawk planes. Some of the aid package, whose total value was estimated at $7 million, would be transferred to Israel already in the coming days. However, Packard wanted to verify with Rabin that Israel would not use this equipment unless the cease-fire agreement collapsed and there was a renewal of the fighting, and then only under the following conditions: Israel would operate exclusively within "50 miles" west of the canal, would use the cluster bombs only against military targets, and the deal would not be made public.[18]

If the Americans thought that approval of the military aid would calm Israel and repair the crack in the relations between the two countries, they were mistaken. On August 17, Barbour met with Eban and conveyed the State Department's concern about the leaks to the media that Egypt had violated the cease-fire. The feeling in Washington was that the Israeli government did not fully support the cease-fire agreement and that some of its members wanted to sabotage it. On top of that, the administration was starting to suspect that Israel was emphasizing the Egyptian violations of the cease-fire in order to exert pressure on the United States and obtain more weapons. The United States had already resolved that Israel would not find itself in a position of inferiority if the cease-fire collapsed, Barbour emphasized, so there was no need for pressure and scuttling the agreement as a way to ensure American aid. To emphasize the dimensions of the crisis between the United States and Israel, the ambassador added that if Rabin asserted that Israel was suffering "a crisis of faith in the United States," the American response was that "the crisis is two-way."[19]

With Barbour's remarks still echoing, Eban said that there was a need to mend fences on both side; public statements by the Americans that cast doubt on the Israeli charges did not help reduce the tension between Jerusalem and Washington.[20] After all the bitter pills that Israel had had to swallow, including proclaiming its willingness to withdraw and accept territorial compromise, it could expect that the cease-fire would be honored. Instead, Eban said, "we had been made fools of." In light of recent developments, what was the value of Arab verbal commitments weighed against the real territorial concessions that Israel would make in future negotiations? Consequently, the key for repairing bilateral relations was the supply of military equipment and doing something about the missiles. Even if the Americans could not have them pulled back, they were not entitled to question the truth of the Israeli complaints. It was not enough that the

Soviet Union was undermining Israel's security; now the United States was questioning the accuracy of its statements, Eban complained.[21]

The next day, pursuant to his instructions from Secretary of State Rogers, Barbour requested an urgent meeting with Eban. He again emphasized that the issue of the cease-fire would not be a matter for public discussion, but would be addressed in diplomatic channels only, and stressed the need that Israel "promptly" appoint its representative to the Jarring talks. Barbour also conveyed an oral message from Rogers to Eban, namely, that after a review of the intelligence material collected by the United States,

> there is no doubt that the UAR improved its position before the ceasefire went into effect and some of this activity may in fact have continued into the period after the ceasefire became effective, which would constitute a violation of the standstill.

However, the United States still did not have unequivocal evidence to back a demand that the Egyptians pull back the new missile installations or an explicit accusation that they had violated the agreement. The Americans were planning to contact Egypt to express their concern about the violation of the cease-fire and make it plain that they would continue to monitor its implementation. The United States attached supreme importance to meticulous observance of the cease-fire and the military standstill.

Barbour emphasized that after the conversation between Sisco and Rabin on August 11, when the former stressed that there was no possibility of persuading the Soviets and the Egyptians to pull back the missiles, the military aid package to Israel had been approved. This assistance, Barbour said, included extremely sensitive items "which we have never made available to any other country." In addition, a joint American–Israeli effort to compare their intelligence data was taking shape, so that in the future the two sides could discuss these matters in such a way "that the rule of reason [would] be applied." The United States had no intention of concealing the violations of the cease-fire, but their occurrence had to be verified after joint diplomatic and intelligence consultations. Israel could be certain that the violation of the cease-fire affected the United States to the same extent that it affected Israel, because of the American fears of a confrontation with the Soviet Union.[22]

The content of the meetings between Barbour and Eban and the many public statements by senior Israeli and American officials demonstrate the depth of the distrust between Israel and the United States. The Americans were hoping to make progress on the diplomatic track and initiate talks between Israel and Egypt under Jarring's auspices, while Israel wanted to focus on an issue that senior administration officials considered to be marginal. Defense Secretary Melvin Laird made this very clear on the ABC news program *Issues and Answers* on August 16:

> It is very difficult to prove or disprove what happened twelve hours before the ceasefire went into effect […] either before or after that twelve-hour

> period using the best kind of intelligence techniques that we have available. I think the important thing for us now is to move forward towards the negotiations and not debate what went on twelve hours before [the start of the cease-fire] or twelve hours afterward.[23]

To make matters worse, the American assessment was that Israel was publicizing its charges that Egypt had violated the terms of the cease-fire in order to put pressure on the United States and even sabotage the diplomatic effort to implement the Rogers Plan. "Propensity of the Israelis to create their own problems continues to amaze us back here. They are giving [the] impression of going out [of] their way to cast doubts on [the] ceasefire" the State Department wrote to Ambassador Barbour in Tel Aviv.[24]

Israel would get much more from the current administration if it stuck to a "low-key silhouette" instead of exerting public pressure, Sisco told Argov in Washington. Unlike the Democratic Johnson administration, "you no longer have the political hostages you had before." Consequently, the debate should be restricted to the private diplomatic channel and not be conducted in public. Israel must overcome its fear of a suspension of American aid and get onto an objective track, Sisco said. But then he added, in a threatening tone, that the public dispute between Israel and the United States endangered the American "commitment" to Israel to maintain its balance of armaments vis-à-vis Egypt.[25]

Israel's displeasure with the State Department's attitude and actions pushed Prime Minister Meir to send Simcha Dinitz, her political advisor and confidant, to Washington. On August 15, Dinitz and Rabin met with Kissinger and his deputy, Alexander Haig; the Israelis did not view the talks as successful. Dinitz and Rabin explained that the advance of the missiles closer to the Canal and the Soviet involvement in Egypt posed a serious threat to Israel, but the American administration was delaying its response to the clear breach of the cease-fire agreement. In light of the recent developments, Dinitz said, Prime Minister Meir wanted an urgent meeting with President Nixon. Kissinger rejected the idea out of hand. A summit meeting between the two leaders might undermine the peace talks that were the centerpiece of the Rogers Plan and paint the United States as favoring the Israelis over the Egyptians. Kissinger proposed, instead, that Rabin meet with Nixon and brief him on Israel's allegations.[26]

Two days later, on August 17, Rabin met with Nixon and Haig in the Map Room at the White House. If Rabin hoped he might be able to modify the American line in any way, he was disappointed. Even though Nixon evinced understanding of the Israeli claims about the Egyptian violation of the standstill clause, about the extent of Soviet involvement in the region, and Israel's domestic concerns, he explained that it was important to pursue the diplomatic initiative. It was also important for the United States to make a conscious and overt effort to achieve peace in the Middle East. The mood in the United States was conciliatory, Nixon said, and conciliation was the current American approach to its affairs not only in the Middle East but also in Southeast Asia. Both the American public and the entire world were delighted with the progress that had been achieved

after the cease-fire, Nixon added. Hence it was important to continue the negotiations and Israel must not allow itself to be blamed for breaking the cease-fire.

Rabin discovered just how conciliatory and cautious the American position was when he again raised the idea of a meeting between Meir and Nixon. The president replied that although he was willing to meet her, this was not the appropriate time for a visit. A meeting with Meir at present would not be accepted with understanding, because the peace efforts had already begun. "These were most difficult times for Israel and […] Israel [needs] to demonstrate a maximum of self restraint," Nixon said. Not only the American public and American Jewish community expected this, but also world public opinion, the president concluded.[27]

Despite this unbending response, the United States could not totally ignore Israel's allegations. In order to exert some pressure on Egypt and the Soviets, on August 19 State Department spokesman Robert McCloskey issued a communiqué stating America's conclusions about the Israeli charges that Egypt had violated the cease-fire.

> We have concluded that there was forward deployment of surface-to-air missiles into and within the zone west of the Suez Canal around the time the cease-fire went into effect. There is some evidence that this was continued beyond the cease-fire deadline, although our evidence of this is not conclusive.

McCloskey stressed that the evidence of the movement of missile batteries after the start of the cease-fire had come from Israeli sources, and consequently the United States had not been able to verify the information.[28]

Meir and Eban were critical of the American decision to issue an official statement about the violation of the cease-fire, because the process of cross-checking the two countries' data was in full swing, but also and especially because of the State Department's attempt to obscure the serious nature of the Egyptian breach of the standstill clause. In a note to Rogers before McCloskey's statement, Eban had written that if the United States decided to publish the communiqué while Israeli and American teams were still sitting together in Washington, studying the details of the intelligence information and trying to come to a conclusion, Israel would respond as it saw fit. "You must understand that our credibility is being tested and our credibility is essential to us."[29] But the State Department believed that further delay in publishing the announcement "would only give the Israelis more time to build up [a] public campaign," especially after Israel conveyed additional evidence of the Egyptian violations of the cease-fire, whose study required more time. During the interim, the United States "would appear to be hesitant and undecided."[30]

The Israeli and American media's coverage of the allegations of cease-fire violations did not escape the Egyptian media, which reported on the Israeli complaints. Cairo did not issue an official denial that there had been violations. Its line was that the charges were part of the Israeli effort to frustrate the American

diplomatic initiative, torpedo the Jarring mission, and undermine the cease-fire. But Bergus reported that the Egyptian public believed that missile batteries had been moved closer to the Canal after the cease-fire went into effect; many saw this as "an effective answer" to the voices in the Arab world that criticized Egypt's agreement to the cease-fire on the grounds that it left the Arabs in a position of inferiority. Others believed that it actually strengthened Egypt's position in advance of negotiations to achieve a settlement.[31]

The Americans continued to accumulate intelligence evidence, some of it forwarded by Israel. Consequently, Sisco suggested to Rogers that "as a minimum" the United States should emphasize to the Soviets and Egyptians that it was imperative to honor the basic principles of the cease-fire agreement. The feeling in the State Department was that Egypt was trying to test "the parameters of the cease-fire-standstill," as well as the Israeli and American surveillance capabilities. Another reason for addressing the Soviet Union and Egypt, according to Sisco, was the need to maintain America's credibility with the Israelis, out of a desire to maintain real influence on it and get it to adopt a flexible attitude in the negotiations. On this basis, the State Department decided to make Cairo aware of the evidence it had of the cease-fire violations. "This whole matter has been handled in the wrong way by the Israelis," Sisco wrote to Rogers, "but unfortunately the evidence is such that they have a case which we must take into account."

On August 19, Bergus met with Foreign Minister Riad. Following his instructions from Rogers, he presented him with "specific instances of Egyptian hanky-panky together with map coordinates." The Egyptians were stunned. As Bergus wrote Sisco, if they ever had "any illusions they could kid us, they had lost them now."[32] The American communication to Egypt had two parts: a reference to the Israeli claims that the standstill provision had been violated as soon as the cease-fire took effect, and charges of additional violations identified by American intelligence on its own. With regard to the Israeli complaints, Bergus explained that although it was impossible to verify them unequivocally, there was strong evidence that Egypt had breached the cease-fire. From the American findings, which correlated with the Israeli claims, it seemed that "between late July and August 11 there was buildup of operational missile sites." Egypt's attempt to gain a last-minute military advantage before the cease-fire took effect, Bergus told Riad, did not contribute to the efforts to create trust between the two sides, which was essential for the successful start of the peace process. Nevertheless, because the evidence was not conclusive, the United States had not publicly indicted Egypt for violating the agreement.[33]

In addition to the information about the violations that began the moment the cease-fire took effect, Bergus also referred to additional and more substantial data that the United States had gathered from its own reconnaissance flights over the Canal. The photographs revealed "some missile related activity in [the] period August 11 through 14." This exploitation of the cease-fire to alter the military status quo was explicitly incompatible with the standstill clause of the agreement; all the more so would similar activity endanger not only the

entire cease-fire but also the negotiations, which Egypt was hoping would yield, with American assistance, an Israeli withdrawal as part of a package deal. Consequently, any attempt to convert unmanned or dummy sites into operational installations would be considered a violation of the agreement.

Just as after it received and verified the Israeli reports, Bergus said, the United States had decided to convey this intelligence to Egypt in confidence, despite the intense pressure it was under to publish it, out of a desire to preserve the climate of trust between Washington and Cairo. In addition to a freeze on the construction of new sites or other changes in the military status quo in the cease-fire zone along the Canal, nothing could do more "to restore confidence in U.S. and Egyptian good faith" than quietly pulling back the military installations introduced into the standstill zone in recent weeks.[34]

Bergus was trying to convey firmness and show that it was impossible to fool the United States about compliance with the terms of the cease-fire. But he also was careful to present the American willingness to keep the diplomatic channel open so as to maintain a basis for mutual trust with the Egyptians. Foreign Minister Riad saw the matter differently. He divided his response into three main points. First, the United States was playing two different and contradictory roles, and this was problematic for Egypt. It was trying to serve as Israel's advocate by providing it with intelligence support (information, maps, and photos from U-2 reconnaissance flights); but also, through its diplomatic initiative, to be a mediator. But "if the United States was playing the role of Israel's protector, what about the Arab countries? Egypt had not brought missiles into its territory to put them in a museum," Riad protested, "but to protect itself."

The second point was the lack of progress in the Jarring talks. Egypt and Israel had accepted the diplomatic initiative and the cease-fire had gone into effect; so what was Jarring waiting for? Time was running out, Riad said, and the agreement set a time limit. The cease-fire had no meaning unless Israel was serious and wanted peace, he said. Finally, and building on the previous point, Israel's statements and actions did not lead Egypt to believe that Israel truly desired peace. Israel had accepted the American initiative only because it had been forced to do so.[35]

The meeting between Bergus and Riad revealed the fragility of the basis for trust between the Americans and Egypt. The gulf between Washington and Jerusalem made the vulnerability of Rogers' initiative unmistakable. In reaction to Riad's charges, the State Department tried to make it clear that the American commitment to Israel did not affect the role the United States was playing in the diplomatic efforts to achieve peace and to monitor the military standstill. The American administration had a responsibility to both sides to maintain quiet in the region. If Egypt alleged Israeli violations of the agreement, it could transmit the charges to Washington, which would study them seriously. But the United States could not turn a blind eye if Egypt continued to breach the cease-fire.[36]

In fact, it was only two days later that the State Department again had words with Cairo. On the night of August 21, Bergus woke up a sleeping Mohammed Riad, a counselor in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, to inform him that the

United States had evidence of three fresh Egyptian violations of the cease-fire. Because the Egyptian leadership, including Foreign Minister Riad, was in Alexandria for talks with King Hussein, Bergus met with Muhammed Riad at 10 o'clock the next morning.[37] Bergus began by saying that the United States now had incontrovertible evidence, which had been cross-checked carefully, of blatant Egyptian violations of the cease-fire agreement. The precise information, with map coordinates, identified new SA-2 batteries, radar stations, and fortifications that had been built in the cease-fire zone between August 14 and 18 (and some of them, it seemed, after August 11).

This time, too, Bergus continued, the United States preferred a diplomatic demarche to publication of the information, to show its goodwill and in the hope that Egypt would restore the military status quo as of the time that the cease-fire took effect. But whereas previously the United States had not cast blame on Egypt because the evidence was inconclusive, and allowed it "the benefit of the doubt," now the information was clear and undeniable. Consequently, if Egypt failed to rectify the situation immediately it would bear the consequences of placing the cease-fire and peace talks "in jeopardy."[38] Bergus tried to push Riad into providing a swift response to the American charges and said that the sooner Egypt replied, and the more positive its reply, the better it would be. The United States wanted "to get the show on the road," Bergus said, and added that the administration was interested in a settlement and an Israeli withdrawal.[39]

On August 24, Egypt provided its first response to the Israeli and American allegations, and in effect revealed its interpretation of Article C of the cease-fire agreement, the standstill clause. That article, Foreign Minister Riad told Bergus, effectively denied Egypt the right to reinforce its air-defense system, but placed no meaningful restrictions on Israel. The construction of the new missile installations was essential to defend Egypt against the threat posed by the Israeli Air Force. Riad added that limitations should also have been placed on the supply of weapons to Israel, because new equipment bolstered its offensive capacities against the Egyptian defensive positions along the Canal.

In fact, Riad noted, the United States was shipping electronic equipment, aircraft, and offensive equipment to Israel. This was a "violation in principle" of the assurances that Rogers had given Egypt when he unveiled his diplomatic initiative on June 19, and was also a "violation of [the] cease-fire standstill."[40] Riad added that from Bergus's remarks in the previous conversations he had learned that the Americans interpreted the standstill clause "in a way that was convenient for Israel"; but Egypt interpreted it by its own lights. Indeed, to date, Egypt had heard nothing from the United States about Israeli violations, especially the incursions into Egyptian airspace and construction of fortifications within 50 kilometers of the eastern bank of the Canal.[41]

Riad followed this introduction with Egypt's response to the American charges that it had violated the cease-fire. The Egyptian High Command had confirmed that no new missiles had been introduced to the 50-kilometer zone and that none would be as long as the cease-fire was in effect. Riad asked to clarify two issues in order to avoid misunderstandings in the future. First, the

Egyptian air-defense command was entitled to relocate missiles among sites within the 50-kilometer zone. Second, Egypt was entitled to rotate missiles into the zone to replace missiles taken out of it. Riad promised that no new missile sites or installations would be established, but insisted that the Egyptians had the right to "maintain and repair" existing sites, whether manned, temporary, or dummy sites, including those that had been destroyed or damaged.[42]

In practice, the Egyptian interpretation of the standstill clause was tantamount to its abrogation, because its inclusion had always been intended by the Americans to prevent either side from establishing fortifications near the Canal that would endanger the other side if the cease-fire collapsed and hostilities recommenced. So the State Department refused to accept Foreign Minister Riad's arguments. An immediate protest was sent to Cairo through Bergus, accompanied by a warning that continuation of the Egyptian activity would place the entire cease-fire agreement "in grave jeopardy."[43] Even now, however, there was no official American protest or assignment of blame. The State Department preferred to adhere to a conciliatory approach, despite the ample evidence of Egyptian and Soviet breaches of the cease-fire, and even though it believed they were continuing to upgrade the missile network along the Canal, "probably in accordance with a previously developed plan." The feeling in the State Department was that the United States was coming across as powerless and as lacking the military or political means to take steps against Egypt and the Soviets that would not harm itself more than it harmed them.[44]

Despite everything, Rogers and Sisco did not see the construction of the fortifications and introduction of SA-2 and SA-3 batteries as "a major change in the military situation along the Canal." They also knew it would be difficult to persuade the Israelis that this was the case, especially after it was clear that the cease-fire agreement had been violated. The two men concluded that the longer it took to put a stop to the Egyptian and Soviet activity along the Canal, the more difficult it would be for the United States to guarantee that Israel would observe the cease-fire and send a representative to the Jarring talks. Consequently, Rogers and Sisco agreed that the only way out of the present diplomatic thicket involved continued support of the cease-fire and progress in the negotiations. It would also require a demand that Egypt and the Soviet Union stop their violations of the agreement, while "in effect acquiescing in them," asking Israel to observe the cease-fire, and providing it with additional military assistance.[45]

On August 22, at a meeting between Barbour and Eban, the United States updated Israel about the Egyptian violations. Unlike Israel, the United States stressed the events that had taken place after August 11, which it could corroborate with certainty, but not those that occurred immediately following the onset of the cease-fire. Barbour told Eban that the United States had proof of three violations of the standstill agreement by the construction and forward redeployment of missile sites, and also referred to another Israeli complaint of August 17. Barbour added that the administration took the matter seriously and had passed on the information and demanded a response by the Egyptians and Soviets. However,

the ambassador asked Israel not to publish the information until those responses had been received. Efforts to remedy the situation must come before a public statement.[46] Barbour pressed Eban for Israel to appoint a representative to the talks under Jarring's auspices as soon as possible, so that both countries would be optimally placed, both for themselves and vis-à-vis world opinion, to pressure Egypt and the Soviets about violations of the cease-fire without creating the impression that Israel was holding up the talks.[47]

But the State Department's attempt both to serve as an honest broker and to monitor the cease-fire was doomed from the outset. The Egyptians were suspicious about the American reconnaissance flights over the Canal and transmittal of the Israeli complaints. On the other hand, the Israelis were bitterly disappointed by the American reaction to the Egyptian violations of the cease-fire and refused to cooperate with the State Department in what they viewed as a flawed diplomatic plan. The present situation, Eban told Barbour, was proof of the Egyptian and Soviet disposition to cheat on an international agreement of major importance and evidence of how little trust could be placed in the future in an Egyptian commitment to a peace agreement.[48]

What is more, the Israelis wondered why, after the scale of the Egyptian violations of the agreement had become evident to everyone, and especially to the skeptics in the administration who had asserted that Israel had ulterior motives for sabotaging the cease-fire agreement, the State Department was still stubbornly refusing to publish the new findings and preferred to explore the matter with Cairo and Moscow through private channels. Publicity would make things difficult for the side that was violating the cease-fire, Eban explained, whereas keeping quiet only encouraged it. Thus far there had been a major gap between the administration's public statements, which left room for the inference that it was not convinced that the Israeli complaints were true (on the basis of McCloskey's statement), and the Americans' certain knowledge of the situation on the ground—a gross violation of the cease-fire—as evident from the information it had conveyed to Israel.[49]

The lack of trust between Israel and the United States continued to grow, especially after Riad delivered the Egyptian reply to Bergus, with its interpretation of the standstill clause and demand that the Americans investigate the construction of Israeli fortifications on the east side of the Canal. The Israeli perception was that, even after so much evidence had been amassed, the administration had no intention of reacting seriously to the Egyptian violations of the cease-fire. In a conversation with Argov, Atherton dismissed this argument, to which the Israeli replied, "we judge by the results."[50] And, in a step that astonished Israel, the Americans consented to Foreign Minister Riad's request and asked the Israelis for permission to send a mission from the defense attaché's office in Tel Aviv to the places where Egypt alleged Israel was violating the cease-fire.[51] When Atherton brought up the matter with Argov again, the latter wondered whether this meant that the United States was drawing a parallel between Israel and Egypt. There is no suspicion about Israel, Atherton replied. The United States was asking for Israel to help it fulfill its role "as an honest broker of the cease-fire" and as part of its efforts to persuade Egypt that its position was not biased.[52]

In fact, the State Department believed that Israel too was violating the standstill clause. "My hunch," Bergus wrote from Cairo, "is that both sides are stretching the concept 'maintenance' to the outermost limits."[53] Barbour, who had reached a similar conclusion, wondered whether the Egyptians would agree to a proposal to dismantle the military installations constructed after the cease-fire had come into effect in return for an American promise to pressure Israel to do likewise, should it be determined that Israel had violated the standstill. "There would seem to be no harm in [the American government's making] such assurance to the UAR."[54]

Bergus took a harder position and believed that it would be impossible to make any progress with Egypt about its violations of the cease-fire if the United States did not take a balanced and unbiased position about its allegations of Israeli violations. As long as Israel was dragging its feet and not allowing the Americans to investigate what was taking place on its side of the Canal, the United States could not serve as an honest broker, as it had promised the Egyptians it would be. Bergus went further and linked the Soviet charges that the American reconnaissance flights were violations of Egyptian sovereignty and the resulting tension between Washington and Moscow with the fact that the United States was "not policing Israeli activities with same zeal [it was] putting into surveillance of the UAR side."[55]

Finally, after an extensive round of consultations and the collection of additional intelligence material, on September 3 the administration sent a sharp note to Moscow and Cairo, including a comprehensive and precise description of the evidence, ranging from the construction of new missile sites, through the reinforcement and renovation of existing sites, and finally to the deployment of forces and missiles in the area to which the military standstill applied. In addition, McCloskey told a press conference that "our latest evidence confirms that there have been violations of the cease-fire standstill agreement." He added that the United States was conducting a dialogue with the Soviets and Egyptians about this "through diplomatic channels" and would not permit any harm to Israeli security. However, McCloskey emphasized the importance of the peace talks with Jarring: "We believe it is of the utmost importance that the talks between the parties under Ambassador Jarring's auspices proceed forthwith."[56]

It is important to observe that, despite the sharp note, the United States did not want to go all the way by issuing a strong communiqué that denounced Egypt and the Soviet Union. McCloskey employed mild language about the Egyptian violation of the cease-fire and declined to answer several questions about the matter. The administration went no further than this, in the hope that Egypt would refrain from further violations but also in the knowledge that the status quo ante was irretrievable. In addition, the American protest cited only events from August 10 on, whereas Israel asserted that most of the forbidden military redeployment was carried out between August 7 and 10. Of course this dispute, too, did nothing to improve the chances that Israel's demand that the missiles be pulled back would have a positive result.[57]

On September 4, the day after they received the note from Washington, the Egyptians categorically rejected the American allegations and denied the accuracy of the intelligence material that accompanied it. Foreign Minister Riad told Bergus that War Minister Fawzi had burst out laughing when he saw the material and said that the Americans' information was absolutely mistaken. For his part, President Nasser was taken aback by the American reaction. Riad asked Bergus what had motivated the administration to publish these charges. In light of Dayan's threatening statements, the publication of the charges was tantamount to the United States giving Israel a green light to attack Egypt. The feeling in Egypt was that the American administration might be "colluding with Israel in a planned attack on Egypt," because the present situation was strongly reminiscent of the circumstances that had preceded the June 1967 war. These false charges, Riad said, had reduced Egyptian confidence in the United States from 10% to 0%.[58]

Summing up, Riad had a message for Bergus and the administration: if the cease-fire collapsed, the situation would be worse than it had been before. If the agreement fell apart because the United States gave its blessing to an Israeli attack on Egypt, a severe deterioration in America's relations with the Arabs would be inevitable. The American allegations, Riad said, left Egypt with the conclusion that the United States had adopted the Israeli position in full. If the United States wanted to serve as a mediator, it must make some effort to regain Egypt's trust.[59]

"I believe the Egyptians have been severely shaken by this latest demarche," Bergus wrote to Washington after his conversation with Riad. President Nasser had been "preoccupied" all night with the American charges. Bergus estimated that the Egyptians had concluded that their only feasible option was to deny the American allegations "as blandly as possible." But he heard something much more serious in Riad's statement:

> I believe the Egyptians (and Russians) have an obsession over the danger of another surprise attack from Israel. There was a consistent note of fear in [Riad's] presentation. My guess would be that they are now in final stages of disposing their defenses in the Canal Zone against this contingency.[60]

The Egyptian and Soviet violations of the cease-fire quickly became the main stumbling block to talks mediated by Jarring and ultimately put an end to the peace initiative. In keeping with the Rogers Plan, on August 13 Jarring contacted the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Israeli representatives at the United Nations and asked them to transmit to their respective foreign ministers his invitation to begin negotiations towards a settlement, under his auspices. In late August, representatives of the three countries did meet separately with the special envoy, but only briefly.[61]

On September 6, Foreign Minister Eban sent Rogers the Israeli Government's response to the Egyptian violations of the military standstill and the request that it begin negotiations through Jarring. Eban wrote that Israel would not engage in

negotiations as long as the Egyptians failed to honor the agreement in full, meaning as long as they refused to remove the missiles that had been installed along the Canal after the cease-fire went into effect. "We cannot acquiesce in the UAR and Soviet attempt to bring us into political negotiation while they simultaneously undermine our security and destroy our negotiating freedom." He added that Egypt's military redeployment seriously upset the military balance in the region, to Israel's disfavor, "through the wanton violation of an agreement which Israel accepted out of confidence in US assurances." In light of the situation, Israel expected the United States, as the party that had initiated the cease-fire agreement and talks through Jarring, to exert maximum influence to restore the military status quo ante and thereby resolve the crisis.[62]

Three days later, on September 9, Heikal, on behalf of Nasser, sent Bergus a message to be conveyed to Washington. Nasser expressed his concern about the American charges that Egypt had breached the standstill clause and about the administration's position, in which there were gaps that Cairo did not understand. He emphasized that Egypt had accepted the Rogers Plan "in good faith" and wanted it to succeed. "We really and honestly are keen to reach a settlement on the basis of [Security Council] resolution 242."[63]

In view of the recent events, Nasser sought to explain the Egyptian position. He denied the charges against Egypt and insisted that no missiles had been moved or new batteries installed after the cease-fire took effect, with one exception, which was the result of a local error, and Egypt had reported it. Nasser added that as Egypt understood the agreement it had the right to rotate missile batteries within the cease-fire zone, but had not done so. In this connection, Nasser complained about the American intelligence reports.

> In some of locations you (Bergus) specified in your memorandum there is absolutely nothing […] I am astonished that Israelis claim missiles were moved on the night of the 7th while you say they were moved on the 10th. I don't understand this.

However, "to be fair," he admitted that a number of missile sites that had been attacked and demolished by Israel were being rebuilt; Egypt saw this as part of the maintenance work permitted under the agreement. To buttress the Egyptian claims, Heikal attached to Nasser's note a list of the missile sites that the United States claimed were manned but that the Egyptian War Minister insisted did not exist at all, were not manned, were dummy installations, or had been manned before the cease-fire took effect.[64]

The conversation between Heikal and Bergus was not enough to calm the air. The crisis of confidence between Cairo and Washington merely got worse. On September 14, Foreign Minister Riad announced the postponement of his trip to New York. The United States had frozen its peace initiative, he said, and accused the Americans of undermining the Forum of Four. What is more, if Jarring could not carry out his mission according to the American plan, the Forum of Four must take the initiative and provide Jarring with new instructions.

The United States had created the current situation, Riad asserted, by its baseless charges that Egypt had violated the cease-fire and by breaking its promise not to provide Israel with warplanes as long as the political initiative continued.[65]

The next day Riad convened a press conference in which he took an even harsher tone against the Americans. Having learned that the United States was going to provide Israel with massive economic assistance, to be followed by additional warplanes, which, he asserted would maintain the enemy's military superiority, "I can say that the United States has thus ended its initiative."[66] But despite his criticism of the United States and declaration that the American peace initiative was over, Riad said that this did not mean that the Jarring mission, too, was dead. He had instructed Zayyat, the Egyptian representative to the Jarring talks, to continue to cooperate with the UN mediator as long as there was a chance of implementing Security Council Resolution 242. Egypt would honor the cease-fire as long as Jarring continued his mission, but would not commit itself to extending the agreement after the expiration of the 90-day period.[67]

Bergus had long felt that the United States should show a willingness to conduct a more balanced policy with regard to Egypt; his talks with Riad and Heikal reinforced this idea. He concluded that there might be some truth in the Egyptian reaction to the American allegations. So after hearing from Riad that the American charges were based on faulty intelligence, Bergus promised that the United States would re-examine the information at its disposal.[68] After his talk with Heikal, he wrote to Washington:

> I am willing to accept a large degree of hocus-pocus in [Heikal's] presentation, but [I] think we would be mistaken in dismissing it all as a smokescreen and not worthy of further checking on our part and frank discussion with [the] Egyptians.[69]

Riad's statements on September 14 and 15 made Bergus uneasy, however. In his view, Riad had directed his words at Western Europe, especially the diplomatic representatives in Cairo, in order to further isolate the United States and Israel. Bergus's main fear was that Riad's remarks would be taken at face value by the Western European diplomats, especially on two key points: First, that it was the American administration that had suspended the dialogue with Egypt after the charges it leveled on September 4; second, that the United States had turned a blind eye to the allegations of Israeli violations of the cease-fire. What is more, according to Bergus, the Western European diplomats refused to see the reinforcement of the Egyptian air-defense network as posing any threat whatsoever to Israeli security or world peace. On the contrary, they think that the "US government is a prisoner of Israel; that the US government talks too much; and above all, that the US government lacks the finesse and style necessary to deal with the complicated Near East situation."[70]

So to escape its isolation and bolster its credibility with the Arabs and the governments of Western Europe, Bergus proposed that the United States declare that both Israel and Egypt had violated the principle of the military standstill

included in the cease-fire agreement. Because he held that Israel, too, had violated the cease-fire, Bergus concluded that some compromise could be reached with the Egyptians. His recommendation was that in the next round of talks with Egypt "we admit that we have verified Israeli violations." Bergus added that the Egyptians should be told that the administration accepted their interpretation of the standstill clause and that repairing missile sites damaged by Israeli air raids was maintenance permitted by Article C. In return, however, the United States expected some "Egyptian symbolic rectification," in the form of a suspension of the construction of new sites in the cease-fire zone.[71]

Because Cairo rejected its advances, the State Department looked for cooperation from Moscow; but there too it failed. The administration believed that the military freeze at the Canal would not have been broken without the massive assistance and encouragement that Egypt received from the Soviets. This led to the conjecture that the Soviet Union wanted to torpedo the Rogers peace plan, because its success might be detrimental to Soviet interests in the Middle East. To this could be added the Soviet bitterness, which increased after Rogers floated his unilateral plan without consulting with the Kremlin.

When the American ambassador in Moscow, Jacob Beam, met with Vladimir Vinogradov, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, to discuss the Egyptian violations of the cease-fire agreement, the latter replied that the Soviet Union was not party to the agreement and had no responsibility for any breach of it. It was entirely a matter between Washington and Cairo. It was true that Moscow had responded positively and sympathetically to the Egyptian decision to accept the American peace plan, remarked Yuli Vorontsov, the Soviet chargé d'affaires in Washington, to Richard Patterson, the State Department counselor, but it was a wholly American initiative and the Soviet Union was not a party to it. Control of the forces in the region rested solely with Egypt, and the Soviets would not interfere in Egyptian decisions related to the cease-fire.[72]

Was the Egyptian agreement to a cease-fire duplicitous from the start?

As mentioned above, the cease-fire produced euphoria in Egypt. The Spanish ambassador told Bergus that his Egyptian friends were "in heaven" following the Egyptian acceptance of the American initiative and that "they now euphorically expect full-scale peace within the next three months."[73] The question we must ask, however, is whether Nasser and his close advisors accepted the cease-fire initiative in the expectation that it would lead to diplomatic settlement—or whether they had an ulterior motive they kept to themselves. In retrospect, it does seem that Nasser agreed to Rogers' proposal and the cease-fire so that he could exploit it to complete the deployment of the Egyptian air-defense system on the Suez Canal front, which had begun many months earlier. According to Mohamed Abdel Ghani al-Gamasy, who at the time was the Deputy Director of Military Intelligence for Reconnaissance, the starting date of the cease-fire caught the Egyptian military in the middle of their project to advance missiles

towards the Canal. In the few hours that remained before zero-hour, the Egyptian forces worked frantically to complete the air-defense network and in fact did so without violating the cease-fire. The next morning, Gamasy wrote in his memoirs, the Israelis found themselves facing a new strategic situation. "This was the first brick in the structure which led to victory in the October war," he noted proudly.[74]

Like Gamasy, Heikal wrote that the announcement of the impending standstill cease-fire, "which was something new for us," took Egypt by surprise. It suddenly had to complete all its military preparations within a few hours. Nasser called and asked him to try to gain time—six hours, to be precise—during which the Egyptians could station dummy missile batteries near the Canal. The assumption was that the Americans would photograph the area "from their satellites" the moment the cease-fire took effect, Heikal wrote. After they had the dummy sites on film, Nasser would be able to replace them with operational missiles later. Heikal made various excuses to Bergus and gained the precious six hours requested by Nasser. Thus, "by some miracle of improvisation the fake missile sites were prepared overnight ready for American photography by dawn the next day."[75]

Support for the idea that the Egyptian acceptance of the cease-fire was not accompanied from the start by an intention to violate it clandestinely emerges, rather unexpectedly, from a conversation that Aharon Yariv, the head of Israeli military intelligence, had with Joseph Zurhellen, the deputy chief of mission in the American embassy in Tel Aviv, and the American defense attaché there. Yariv agreed with the Americans' appraisal that Egypt had accepted Rogers' proposal because it wanted to reach a settlement, albeit on its own terms. Egypt's consent to the diplomatic initiative and the cease-fire was not meant as a tactic under whose cover Egypt would install new military positions. The emplacement of the missiles in the standstill zone was a long-term strategic plan and not directly linked to the cease-fire; only the timing was coincidental, Yariv said.[76]

According to him, the Soviets and Egyptians had decided many months earlier to establish an air-defense array on the Egyptian side of the Canal, in order to deprive the Israel Air Force of its freedom of operation there and provide a defensive umbrella for the Egyptian artillery during the War of Attrition. When it emerged that the Americans were about to declare a cease-fire, the Soviets and Egyptians worked frantically to complete the missile network before it took effect. When the United States proposed August 6 as the effective date for the cease-fire, the Egyptians asked for a delay until midnight on August 7, giving them another full day during which they could move missiles into the standstill zone. In this way, they would not be seen as the side that rejected the American proposal and frustrated the cease-fire and negotiations scheduled to follow it. But because they didn't quite make the deadline, they continued to advance the missiles after midnight on August 7 and during the next day. During these hours of supreme effort, the Egyptians were able to move multiple missile batteries into the standstill zone defined by the agreement.[77]

Had there been an immediate protest about the violation of the agreement, Yariv said, Egypt would have been compelled to suspend the work immediately and deal with the charges against it. But the Israeli Government held its peace and did not issue an official communiqué about the matter until August 13. The Egyptian leadership concluded from this that the Israelis were not certain that there had been violations or did not know how strongly to react. And even when the United States finally spoke up (not until August 19), Yariv added, its reaction was moderate, with the claim that there was no incontrovertible proof of Egyptian violations. Cairo concluded that the Americans did not take the charges that missiles had been moved forward seriously. Their goal was to start up the Jarring talks and they were less interested in dealing with the mutual recriminations between Israel and Egypt. Indeed, Yariv explained, after their first swift charges of Israeli breaches of the cease-fire (IAF planes had flown over Suez City), the Egyptians desisted. They did not make further allegations against Israel, even when it conducted several operations that Egypt could have denounced it for. So it was possible that the Egyptians came to the conclusion that they could continue to build new missile sites and finish the work on existing ones.[78]

Ultimately, Yariv concluded, Egypt's commitment to its project of constructing new missile sites was finalized before the United States decided to take a firmer line on the basis of new intelligence data, and Cairo was loath to give up its military achievement. America's "impact on Egyptians never reached [the] critical point," Yariv said, that would persuade the Egyptians that there would be a price to pay—the termination of the negotiations for a settlement—for their stubborn determination to complete the strategic blueprint defined in advance, namely, the construction of an air-defense system along the Canal. The Egyptians and Soviets assumed that they could win on both fronts, or at least postpone the choice between completing their military plans or beginning negotiations.[79]

"Yariv's presentation […] becomes really fascinating," was Bergus's reaction to the statement by the head of Israeli military intelligence.[80] Taken together, the testimony of Gamasy, Heikal, and Yariv attaches a large question mark to the assertion that Nasser accepted the Rogers Initiative mainly in order to beef up the missile array near the Canal. It is true that the Egyptian president had never given up his plans for war and his dreams of reconquering all of the Sinai. Right after the 1967 defeat, according to War Minister Fawzi, Nasser instructed him to produce a plan to recover the peninsula, "Plan 200." In the summer of 1968, the Egyptian armed forces began exercises in crossing the canal, advancing, and conquering the territory, under the codename *Tahrir* ("liberation"). In early 1969 they carried out a strategic and tactical exercise, which then became an annual event, in which all branches of the armed forces participated, simulating a combined offensive to retake the Sinai Peninsula.[81]

However, despite these presumptuous and at the time quite unrealistic military plans, Nasser needed a cease-fire to end the War of Attrition, which had cost Egypt dearly. Israel had once again given a public demonstration of its military superiority, especially in the air. Egypt suffered heavy losses of life and

property; despite investing immense resources in the war effort, it had not come away with any positive results and had become increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union and its goodwill. So an end to the fighting now, after he managed to regain the bargaining position he had lost, was the best he could hope for. Nasser had not realized his objective and wiped out the shame of 1967, but he had kept the Middle East at the top of the international agenda, frustrated the acceptance of the status quo at the Canal, and seen the crystallization of principles he could live with for future negotiations on peace and the occupied territories. For now, it was a great achievement that for the first time since the adoption of Resolution 242, Israel's official response to the Rogers Plan included the principle of withdrawal. More than anything else, Nasser had erected the infrastructure for the next war, in which the Egyptian wall of missiles would provide a suitable answer to the IAF's superiority and a defensive umbrella to the forces that, when the time came, crossed to the Israeli side of the Canal.

The "old lady's" visit and the death of the Sphinx

Against the background of the new crisis that erupted after the Egyptian deployment of missiles along the Canal and Israel's refusal to join the talks with Jarring if the missiles were not pulled back, Prime Minister Meir arrived in Washington on September 17. She attached great importance to the visit, since it took place in a period that was difficult for her both politically—a coalition crisis—and militarily—the violation of the cease-fire agreement and the civil war in Jordan ("Black September"). Her planned meetings with the President and the Secretary of State were an opportunity to clarify Israel's position on the missile threat and the Soviet involvement and to further tighten the cooperation with the United States. For the Americans, it was an opportunity to rebuild the trust between the two countries and to look for new ways to get the peace talks on track.[82]

Meir had two meetings with Rogers on September 18. The talks were conducted in a cordial and positive atmosphere, but no major decisions were taken about the future or on matters related to the recent developments in the Middle East. The discussions dealt chiefly with the crisis posed by the violation of the cease-fire and its implications. Meir attempted to push the Americans to take a firmer stand against the Egyptians and Soviets, but Rogers stuck to his moderate line and displayed restraint. With regard to the peace talks, Meir stated Israel's opposition to a return to the lines of June 4, 1967. Rogers replied that the whole world expected a full Israeli withdrawal, or at most with slight territorial modifications. He also urged Israel to think about ways to move ahead in the talks with Jarring, since time was not on Israel's side. Here too Meir was inflexible. She noted Israel's willingness to begin peace talks with the Arabs, but asserted that the efforts to renew them were pointless in light of the Egyptians' and Soviet's unreliability. If Israel acquiesced to the violation of the cease-fire, it would be starting the negotiations from a position of weakness. The deployment of the missiles along the Canal during the cease-fire was a test case, and it showed that Nasser could not be trusted. Somewhat surprisingly, Rogers did not

argue with Meir's obstinate position. If Israel was going to be stubborn about it, "we can live with it," he said. But "we do not like it and consider it non-policy." In any case, the United States could not agree that no steps be taken towards the peace talks and hoped that Israel would be flexible on conditions for their renewal.[83]

Between her two meetings with the Secretary of State, Meir also met with President Nixon. The atmosphere that prevailed between them was warmer than that between Rogers and Meir. No doubt the Prime Minister wanted to exploit the debate within the administration, between Kissinger and Rogers, about the appropriate American response to the violation of the cease-fire. Rogers still wanted to push Israel to renew the talks with Jarring, whereas Kissinger, supported by Nixon, preferred to take a harder line against the Soviet Union.[84]

Nixon said that he was aware of the problems that the violation of the cease-fire caused Israel. He was not naïve and was well aware of the Soviet's motives and actions in the Middle East. As proof, he said that the moment he was informed of the breach of the cease-fire agreement he had ordered an increase in the military aid package to Israel so that it could deal with the missile threat. Nixon stressed that the United States had identified the advance of the missiles towards the Canal and affirmed once again that he would not allow the military balance to be altered to Israel's disadvantage. Hence the United States would work in tandem with Israel to draw up the military aid package for 1971, including warplanes or any other equipment that Israel needed. All of Israel's requests, Nixon summed up, would receive "sympathetic consideration."[85]

Another aspect of the two leaders' talks related to the negotiations. Meir again emphasized her rejection of the Rogers Plan of December 1969 and the borders it envisioned between Israel and the Arabs. But Israel did accept the president's formula of a withdrawal to "defensible borders."[86] Still, even though Israel wanted peace, it could not agree to the current situation, that is, to beginning negotiations with the Soviet gun, in the form of the missile batteries, pointed at its head. Consequently, the administration must now confront the Soviet Union and demand that the missiles be pulled back. Otherwise, the negotiations would not be renewed. Nixon responded that he would contact the Soviets about the violation of the military standstill and advance of the missile batteries, but doubted there would be any positive response. Israel must display a willingness to begin negotiations. Meir disagreed; negotiations could be carried out only from a position of equality, she said, and that was not the situation in light of the Soviet involvement.[87]

The American expressions of support had somewhat lowered the anxiety level in Israel. The administration undertook that, for the moment, it would not push the Israeli leadership to participate in the Jarring talks. It also took a favorable view of increased economic and military aid to Israel, especially warplanes. This, from Israel's perspective, was supposed to help it prepare for the next round with the Arabs and to replace the aircraft lost during the War of Attrition. As a direct result, despite the threat posed by the Egyptian artillery and SAM batteries to Israeli aircraft and troops on the Suez front, Meir had been able to

maintain the status quo for now. She was also able to evade the American pressure and stay out of a diplomatic process that was liable to lead to territorial concessions and even a settlement with the Arabs. That was something she did not want and could not accept on the terms proposed by the Arabs. Israel could live with the status quo and stalemate for quite some time. As Argov told Atherton, clearly reflecting the Israeli political position, "the present situation is not so bad; there is no war."[88]

Ten days later, on the afternoon of September 28, Nasser bid farewell to the Emir of Kuwait in a ceremony at the Cairo airport. The Emir had come to Cairo with other Arab leaders as part of the efforts to resolve the crisis that had erupted in Jordan at the start of the month and was threatening to bring down the Hashemite regime. Nasser was not feeling well. After the Emir left, he asked to be taken straight home. At 8 o'clock that night, Bergus sent an urgent cable to Washington: "For past hour strong rumors have circulated in Cairo that Nasser has died reportedly not from natural causes … something unusual is happening." Within three hours, Sadat announced that President Nasser had suffered a heart attack at 6 o'clock and had died 15 minutes later.[89]

Nasser's sudden death at age 52 left Egypt in shock. Hundreds of thousands of citizens, adults and young people, men, women, and children, poured into the streets. In addition to the heavy grief at the loss of the leader, many Egyptians feared a vacuum that no one could fill. On Thursday, October 1, Nasser was buried in an impressive ceremony. Sura 112 of the Quran was inscribed on his tombstone: "Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him" (trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali). The country declared 40 days of mourning for the lost leader.[90]

The eulogies streamed in. Condolence delegations arrived in Cairo from all over the world, including the United States. An American delegation headed by Elliot Richardson, the newly appointed Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, landed in Cairo on the day of the funeral. President Nixon received the news of Nasser's death while aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Saratoga* in the Mediterranean. He expressed his amazement at the unexpected death of the Egyptian president. "The world has lost an outstanding leader," he said, who had devotedly served the Egyptian people in particular and the Arab world in general. "This tragic loss requires that all nations, and particularly those in the Middle East, renew their efforts to calm passions, reach for mutual understanding, and build lasting peace."[91]

A number of ambassadors at the United Nations expressed their countries' condolences for Nasser's death and paid their last respects to the Egyptian ruler. Yost, the American ambassador, described Nasser as a man who had led his country into a new age and possessed "extraordinary energy and magnetism." He embodied the Egyptians' new hope and pride in their destiny and their country's future, which had swept up the entire Arab world in its wake. "It was Mr. Nasser's fortune to come to leadership in a time and place of sharp conflict, in which he will be remembered as a formidable protagonist," added Yost. The American administration was grateful that his last years as president had seen an

improvement in the relations between the United States and Egypt and hoped that the process would continue. "The United States joins with all nations in saluting his memory, and extends profound sympathy to the people of his country," concluded Yost.[92]

Sadat became acting president. Sixty days later his candidacy was submitted for popular approval in accordance with the 1964 constitution. Sadat was a member of the Free Officers Movement that overthrew King Farouk in 1952, but had never risen to a position of power or become a central figure in the new regime. An American intelligence document stated that he had no authority whatsoever and served mainly in ceremonial duties. To exemplify just how gray a figure he was, he was described as "lazy but obedient." He was also said to be "anti-British, and at periods has been vituperatively anti-American." During the War of Attrition Sadat had criticized the United States for its support of Israel and had been opposed to Rogers Plan for a cease-fire.[93]

Despite the unity and strength that the leaders of the regime broadcast domestically, the State Department believed that "weakness and indecision in policy" could be expected for some time. The new regime would not revisit Nasser's decision about the American peace initiative, but it would also be less bold and less inclined to take risks and look for new channels to achieve peace with Israel. The assessment was that Nasser's heir would not launch a military operation, because "the UAR military are well aware of the punishment their men have received from Israel." Sadat was considered to be inflexible on Israel. Even though he had various diplomatic and military options available (and which of them he chose would depend on who was advising him), the State Department's appraisal was that Egypt under his leadership would continue to observe the cease-fire at least for the 90 days stipulated in the agreement.[94]

The American condolence mission was sent precisely with this in mind; that is, in addition to expressing their grief, its members were expected to clarify a number of political issues. While they were in the country, Richardson met with Sadat, Foreign Minister Riad, Heikal, and other senior members of the Egyptian leadership.[95] In their meeting on October 2, Richardson and Sadat discussed the violation of the cease-fire and the deployment of the missiles near the Canal. Richardson said that those were the two main obstacles to a renewal of the diplomatic efforts and consequently should be removed. Sadat replied that as long as he was acting president he would continue his predecessor's policies, despite his disagreement with Nasser about acceptance of the American initiative.

Nasser may have been the only Egyptian who believed that peace was the best way to resolve the conflict, Sadat said, and added his own hope, shared by the Egyptian government, that the talks under Ambassador Jarring's auspices would be renewed soon. He also expressed his willingness to discuss with the Americans the possibility of drawing up a "formula for rectification" of the issue of the missiles along the Suez Canal. He emphasized, however, that despite his willingness to do so, because of the destructive character of the Israeli bombing attack (they were using American bombs, he noted dryly), he would not order the Egyptian armed forces to pull back even a single missile from the Canal. In

general, Sadat shared with his American visitors the warm feelings that he and his people had for the United States and said that the two countries could hold a candid discussion of difficult and problematic issues, "as friends." Israel was the only obstacle to the establishment of close ties between the two governments.

Even though they had not resolved the problem of the new missiles on the western side of the Suez Canal, the Americans came away somewhat encouraged from their talks in Egypt. In a break with the past, Sadat had proposed establishing a direct channel to the Americans, without Soviet mediation. He evinced a willingness to continue in Nasser's path and to support the cease-fire and the Rogers Plan. And Foreign Minister Riad told Richardson that his country would like to continue the peace efforts and was willing to expand or extend the cease-fire beyond the 90 days set for it, but not for an unlimited time.[96]

On November 5, Sadat and the country's senior government and military echelons discussed the matter and decided to extend the cease-fire. Egypt agreed to take account of world public opinion, but announced that it would not agree to another extension. The fear among the leadership, according to *al-Ahram*, was that the calm along the Canal would serve Israel's interests and that the cease-fire would eventually crystallize into a permanent situation.[97] From this time on Sadat exploited almost every official speech to turn to his people and proclaim the main lines of his policy for resolving the conflict. He reaffirmed his country's desire for peace, but insisted that peace must be based on "justice and dignity," that is, the return of the land Israel had occupied in June 1967. He declared that he would not agree to a further extension of the cease-fire unless it included a firm timetable for an Israeli withdrawal and emphasized his willingness to go to war and make many sacrifices in order to recover Egypt's stolen land and rights.[98]

With Israel and Egypt entrenched in their familiar positions, the prolongation of the cease-fire did not produce any diplomatic progress. On February 2, 1971, Sadat convened the National Defense Council. At the same time, he informed his inner circle that they should not expect a renewal of the hostilities when the cease-fire expired. Despite the efforts to defuse the tension, the feeling was that Egypt was sitting on a powder keg.[99] After several days of deliberations by the Defense Council and the central committee of the Arab Socialist Union, it was decided to extend the cease-fire for another month, starting on February 7. The United States did not react to this announcement with great enthusiasm; it saw the stipulation of a terminal date as a violent tactic intended to exert pressure for the implementation of Resolution 242. Nor was the idea of drawing in a third party (the Security Council for the Forum of Four) to the Americans' liking.[100]

On March 5, two days before the official end of the cease-fire, Sadat invited Bergus in for a conversation and handed him a note for Nixon. He asked the American president to make vigorous efforts on behalf of peace, and in particular to push Israel to show more flexibility about an agreement.[101] Sadat told Bergus that during his visit to Moscow at the start of the month he had learned that the Soviet leadership was "very keen" on peace, even more than Nixon was. He devoted the bulk of the meeting with Bergus to the issue of the cease-fire and

the efforts to reach an accord. He explained that the speech he was scheduled to deliver on March 7 would not include an official announcement of a further extension of the cease-fire and that the question of when the fighting might resume would be left to the armed forces. Nevertheless, he didn't knock over the board. When Bergus asked Sadat if his February proposal for an accord was still on the table, the latter replied in the affirmative. But he attacked Israel and asserted that its answer to Jarring and refusal to withdraw to the June 4 lines were a direct challenge to himself. "Israel apparently thought he 'had no guts,' " reported Bergus, but "he would show the world that he had guts."[102] On October 6, 1973, Sadat indeed demonstrated courage and launched what seemed like a hopeless war. And six years later, on March 26, 1979, Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin showed courage of a different sort when they affixed their signatures to a peace treaty between their countries.

Notes

1 *Knesset Record*, Vol. 59, Seventh Knesset, Second Term, 114th Session, November 16, 1970, 147.
2 "No. 3040," August 11, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/10; *Knesset Record*, Vol. 58, Seventh Knesset, First Term, 99th Session, August 4, 1970, 2747–98; "State 126673," August 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2066 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
3 "Cairo 1761," August 9, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
4 "USUN 1665," August 14, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
5 "Cairo 1764," August 9, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27 A/I.
6 Ibid.; "Cairo 1767," August 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27 A/I.
7 "Ceasefire Violations," August 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 118," August 10, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
8 "Tel-Aviv 4259," August 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
9 "No. 99," August 11, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
10 Ibid.; "State 130238," August 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 129994," August 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
11 Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 151.
12 "State 131969," August 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 586–7; Rabin, *Memoirs*, 182.
13 "No 86," August 10, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; Ginor and Remez, *The Soviet–Israeli War*, 200–1; In his meeting with Eban, Barbour complained about the threatening tone used by some Israelis, as in this statement. See "No. 219," August 17, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
14 "No. 110," August 12, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
15 "Consultation with the Prime Minister," August 13, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/8.
16 Ibid.
17 "State 131969," August 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
18 As Israel read the situation, the United States did not view the violation of the military standstill clause as the collapse of the entire cease-fire; only a resumption of the shooting would be seen that way. For the meeting with Packard and the American clarifications, see "State 133643," August 17, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 134540," August 18, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "No 143," August 14, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8-A; Rabin, *Service Diary*, 303.
19 "No. 219," August 17, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "State 131969," August 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.

20 Eban was referring to Defense Secretary Laird's interview on *Issues and Answers* (see below); "No. 219," August 17, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; See "Backgrounder," August 17, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
21 "State 131969," August 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 219," August 17, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
22 "State 133639," August 17, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 240," August 18, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "Tel Aviv 4497," August 20, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
23 For a transcript of the interview, see "Backgrounder, U.S. Information Service, American Embassy," Vol. XI, No. 94 (MEF 5), August 18, 1970; "No. 219," August 17, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
24 "State 131969," August 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 196," August 19, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
25 "No. 196," August 19, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "State 131969," August 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
26 Rabin, *Service Diary*, 303–4; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 587.
27 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 151, "Memorandum of Conversation," August 17, 1970, 505–9; Rabin, *Service Diary*, 304–6; Rabin, *Memoirs*, 184–5.
28 "McCloskey's Announcement," August 19, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "The Missiles in the Canal Zone," August 20, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8. Earlier versions of the communiqué included, to Israel's intense displeasure, the following language "We have concluded that there was *some* [emphasis added] forward deployment of surface-to-air missiles into and within the zone west of the Suez Canal." See "State 133865," August 18, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 134543," August 18, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
29 "No. 241," August 18, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
30 "State 134543," August 18, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2067 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
31 "Cairo 1826," August 15, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2640 Pol, 2-5 UAR.
32 "Cairo 1857," August 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1859," August 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
33 "State 134543," August 18, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1857," August 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1859," August 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
34 "State 134543," August 18, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1857," August 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1859," August 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
35 "Cairo 1859," August 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
36 "Secret Cairo 1859," August 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 137361," August 22, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
37 "Cairo 1886," August 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
38 "State 136463," August 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1889," August 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
39 "Cairo 1889," August 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
40 "Cairo 1910," August 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1911," August 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1940," August 27, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
41 Riad provided a long list of map coordinates inside the 50-kilometer standstill zone where Egypt alleged that Israeli had built new fortifications.
42 "Cairo 1910," August 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 1911," August 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
43 "State 138163," August 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
44 "State 141836," August 30, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
45 Ibid.

46 "State 136463," August 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "No. 98," August 22, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8; "State 141836," August 30, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
47 "State 136463," August 21, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "No. 98," August 22, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
48 "No. 98," August 22, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
49 Ibid.
50 "State 138163," August 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 140618," August 27, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
51 "State 138163," August 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "No. 402," August 29, 1970, ISA, FM, 6854/8.
52 "State 138163," August 24, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 140618," August 27, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
53 "Cairo 1969," August 31, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
54 "Tel Aviv 4663," August 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
55 "Cairo 1969," August 31, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
56 "No. 23," September 3, 1970, ISA, FM, 4549/10.; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 152.
57 "State 141836," August 30, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 144257," September 2, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "FYI and Guidance are Q&A's which Followed Statement," September 3, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
58 "Cairo 2017," September 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 2019," September 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I. Daigle (*The Limits of Détente*, 141) quotes a discussion in the same vein between Riad and the British ambassador in Cairo.
59 "Cairo 2017," September 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 2018," September 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 2019," September 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
60 For Bergus's report, see "Cairo 2018," September 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I. Ghorbal, the senior Egyptian diplomat in Washington, also shared with Sisco Cairo's fears of an Israeli surprise attack on the Egyptian missile sites and positions near the Canal. He linked this to the Israeli surprise attack in June 1967, an event that was "still vivid in Egyptian minds." See "State 146351," September 6, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2069 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
61 "USUN 1646," August 14, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
62 "State 147014," September 8, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I; "State 153418," September 16, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2069 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
63 "Cairo 2063," September 9, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
64 Ibid.
65 "Cairo 2105," September 15, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2069 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Cairo 2111," September 15, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2069 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
66 "Cairo 2122," September 16, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2069 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
67 Ibid.
68 "Cairo 2017," September 4, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
69 "Cairo 2063," September 9, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
70 "Cairo 2115," September 16, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2069 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
71 "Cairo 2120," September 16, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2069 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
72 At Rogers' press conference on October 9, the Secretary of State evaded giving a clear answer as to the Soviets' role in achieving the cease-fire agreement. In effect, he did not deny the Soviet representatives' claims that the Soviet Union had not played an active role in drafting the cease-fire agreement. On the Soviet statements, see "State 149873," September 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2056 Pol, 27 A/I; *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XII, Doc. 203, "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union," September 5, 1970, 614–15; Kissinger, *White House*

Years, 591; Ginor and Remez, *The Soviet–Israeli War*, 201–3; For a summary of Rogers' press conference, see "State 167471," October 9, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2056 Pol, 27 A/I.

73 "Cairo 1784," August 12, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2068 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
74 Gamasy, *The October War*, 121.
75 Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*, 94.
76 "Tel Aviv 4858," September 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid. For more on the Israeli violations, see "Tel Aviv 5082," September 15, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2056 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 2073," September 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
79 "Tel Aviv 4858," September 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
80 "Cairo 2073," September 10, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2055 Pol, 27 A/I.
81 Fawzi, *Ḥarb al-Thalath Sanawat*, 199–204; Darwish, *Ḥarb al-Saat al-Sita*, 233.
82 "Visit of Prime Minister Meir and Next Steps in the Middle East," September 17, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2385 Pol, 7 ISR.
83 "Secretary–Prime Minister Meir Meetings September 18," September 25, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2385 Pol, 7 ISR; "Review of Prime Minister Meir's Visit; Other Middle East Questions," September 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2385 Pol, 7 ISR; "State 155110," September 19, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2056 Pol, 27 A/I.
84 "No. 63," September 17, 1970, ISA, FM, 7058/8.
85 *FRUS*, 1969–76, Vol. XXIII, Doc. 161, "Memorandum of Conversation," September 18, 1970, 547–51.
86 See Nixon interview, July 1, 1970 (see above, Chapter 9). The criterion for a settlement must be defensible borders, Meir said.
87 Ibid.
88 "Memorandum of Conversation, Current Middle East Situation," October 5, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2069 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
89 "Cairo 2230," September 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR; "Cairo 2232," September 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR.
90 "Egypt after Nasser: The End of the Beginning," November 14, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2640 Pol, 2-5 UAR; Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 166–7.
91 *The American Presidency Project*, "Statement on the Death of President Gamal Abdel Nasser," September 28, 1970. www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-the-death-president-gamal-abdel-na-the-united-arab-republic.
92 "USUN 2148," September 29, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR.
93 "State 159993," September 28, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR.
94 Ibid.; "Memorandum of Conversation, Implications of Nasser's Death," September 30, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR; "Internal Political Situation in UAR," October 13, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR.
95 "State 160380," September 29, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR; "State 160771," September 29, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR.
96 "No. 20," October 6, 1970, ISA, FM, 4548/14; "Cairo 2262," October 3, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2641 Pol, 15-1 UAR; "Cairo 2301," October 7, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2069 Pol, 27-14 A/I.
97 *Al-Ahram*, November 6, 1971.
98 "Sadat Speech," November 13, 1970, NA,RG 59, Box 641 Pol, 15-1 UAR; "UAR Position on Ceasefire Extensions," December 1, 1970, NA,RG 59, Box 2070 Pol, 24–14 A/I; "Sadat Speech to Diplomats," December 16, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 1749 DEF, 12-5 ISR.
99 "Weekly Summary," January 30, 1971, NA, RG 59, Box 2072 Pol, 27-14 A/I. On the events during these months, Bergus wrote that all the diplomatic players, including the United States, were "now entering a critical period." With reference to the Egyptians'

sense of despair, he added, "our talks with Riad have raised [the] possibility that [the] Egyptians, for reasons not fully comprehensible to American minds, may be locking themselves into something approaching a suicide course." See "Cairo 0188," January 29, 1971, NA, RG 59, Box 2072 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

100 "State 012630," January 26, 1971, NA, RG 59, Box 2057 Pol, 27 A/I; "Cairo 0228," February 3, 1971, NA, RG 59, Box 2072 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 019201," February 3, 1971, NA, RG 59, Box 2072 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "State 020849," February 5, 1971, NA, RG 59, Box 2072 Pol, 27-14 A/I.

101 "Cairo 477," March 5, 1971, NA, RG 59, Box 2642 Pol, UAR–US; "Secret 478," March 5, 1971, NA, RG 59, Box 2073 Pol, 27-14 A/I; "Letter from President Sadat to the President," March 25, 1971, NA, RG 59, Box 2642 Pol, UAR–US.

102 "Cairo 477," March 5, 1971, NA, RG 59, Box 2642 Pol, UAR–US.

Summary and conclusions

There was no glory in the War of Attrition—not for the political and military leadership in Israel, not for the soldiers and airmen at the front, and not for the public at large. The truth is that no one even thought of it as a war, certainly not after the two previous rounds of active hostilities between Israel and Egypt in 1956 and 1967, with their brilliant outcome for Israeli arms. Historians of the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors have paid the least attention to the War of Attrition and given short shrift to its military and diplomatic aspects. It was not a miraculous victory like the Six Day War, or a national trauma like the Yom Kippur War. Only in 2003—33 years after the fighting ended—did the Israeli government authorize the IDF to issue a campaign ribbon to veterans of the War of Attrition.[1] Much the same applies to the Egyptians, who see *Harb al-Istanzaf* as an intermezzo between the two major rounds—the defeat (*naksa*) of 1967 and the heroism and victory of October 1973.

After the destruction, humiliation, and heavy losses of June 1967, Egypt was confronted by a major challenge that would shape its future in the Middle East. Its ability to change the situation was limited, however. A full-fledged military campaign to liberate its occupied territory was not considered seriously, because the country was still licking its wounds from 1967. That Israel would withdraw as a result of international pressure was more of a pipe dream than a realistic possibility. Egypt knew that the times had changed and that Israel could stand up to the UN, the United States, and the Soviet Union and deflect their pressure.

Nevertheless, during the nearly two years that elapsed between June 1967 and March 1969—the end of the Six Day War and start of the War of Attrition—President Nasser of Egypt showed no flexibility or inclination to compromise. He refused to give any serious thought to a diplomatic solution and held firm to the position that Egypt must recover all of the Sinai Peninsula before it would come to the negotiating table, and never acknowledged that his bargaining power, vis-à-vis both Israel and the United States, was close to nil. This was demonstrated in the waning days of the Johnson administration, when Secretary of State Dean Rusk proposed a diplomatic solution to his Egyptian counterpart, Mahmoud Riad. The plan accepted the Egyptian demand for an Israeli pullback from Sinai and offered a solution for the Palestinian refugees—but in the context of a peace treaty; and the Egyptians flatly rejected it for that

reason. Encouraged by its success in winning American agreement that Israel must withdraw, Cairo preferred to sit back and see whether the incoming Nixon administration would make it a better offer and force Israel to make greater concessions.

Nasser was sufficiently perspicacious to understand that despite Egypt's total dependence on the Soviet Union, the Americans held the only key to a political solution in the Middle East. Hence Washington was his main target and the focus of his diplomatic efforts. Alongside his desire to keep the status quo from freezing into a fait accompli, with Israel firmly entrenched on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal, Nasser hoped to exploit the Americans' explicit fear of conflict with the Soviets, especially after the changeover in Washington. His assessment was that if the Middle East threatened to explode again, the United States would have no choice and would compel Israel to agree to a settlement on terms favorable to Egypt. So despite his limited options, Nasser adopted a tactical approach whose main element was low-key fighting that would ultimately trigger a political process. This is why he launched, on March 8, 1969, what came to be known as the War of Attrition, which did lead to direct Soviet military intervention and American diplomatic initiatives, but proved unable to achieve his strategic objectives.

Nasser failed because he opted for an aggressive policy when the Americans, and especially the State Department, were looking for flexibility and compromise. Even though the new occupant of the White House hinted at a desire to renew diplomatic relations with Cairo and pursue a more balanced policy in the Middle East, Nasser was in no haste to soften his position. On the contrary, his letter to Nixon in January 1969 highlighted his unbending stance not only on the Middle East conflict but also on the conditions for renewing ties with Washington. He continued to refuse to conduct negotiations with Israel or sign a separate agreement or joint document with it. Nasser charged that the United States gave absolute support to Israel, blamed it for the events of June 1967, and did not retract his allegations of active American military involvement in the fighting, in support of Israel.

It is important to emphasize that Nasser's unwillingness to take the first step and explicitly request the renewal of relations cost him dearly. Like Rusk, William P. Rogers, the new Secretary of State, believed that Israel would have to withdraw from the territories won in 1967 if it wanted to have peace with its neighbors. The administration recognized Egypt's importance for checking Soviet influence in the Middle East and was aware that if Cairo signed an agreement with Israel, thanks to American mediation, other Arab countries would jump on the peace bandwagon. But Nasser believed that his bargaining chips, especially after the military escalation on the Canal front he initiated in March 1969, were sufficient to regain the Sinai without his having to make any commitments to Israel or the United States, and frustrated all of Washington's efforts to achieve a settlement.

Although the Nixon administration was not swept up by Nasser's ideas, it failed to read the map correctly and did not make appropriate political and

diplomatic preparations to deal with the situation. In the first months of the War of Attrition, the State Department could not figure out why the Egyptians were shooting and never saw the fighting as a long-term and deliberate situation planned in advance by Nasser and the Egyptian leadership. It was not his armed forces that motivated Nasser or threatened his regime, as the State Department thought, but Nasser himself who sent his forces into battle and sacrificed many soldiers and civilians in pursuit of his goals. Had the Americans diagnosed the situation sooner they might have made a serious attempt to achieve an overall diplomatic solution, or at least a cease-fire, during the early weeks of the fighting, thereby preventing the escalation of hostilities and heavy loss of life on the Canal front.

Israel, the object of all of Nasser's efforts, also failed to understand why the violence had been renewed and deliberately minimized the importance of some incidents. In Jerusalem, the Foreign Ministry's assessment that the Soviets were involved evidently derived from the complacent sense of security that prevailed after the Arabs' rout in June 1967. The idea that Egypt could embark on a serious offensive campaign after the loss of 80% of its military hardware seemed absurd. This datum, along with the Soviets' loss of prestige when their clients were trounced, led to the assessment that it was the Kremlin that was fueling the conflict and pushing the Middle East into another active confrontation. The goal of the violence, the Israelis believed, was to enable Nasser to satisfy most of his demands without having to make any quid pro quo. It is also possible, however, that Israel had a hidden agenda in blaming the Soviets. The frenzy that overtook it after Nixon described the Middle East as a powder keg, and even more so after senior administration officials and envoys came out in favor of a more balanced American policy between Israel and the Arabs, may have induced it to minimize the possibility that the volatility in the region would lead to a blow-up. The directors of Israeli policy in Jerusalem thought that a fresh local crisis or another war, so soon after a new president moved into the White House, might justify Washington's fears of a superpower confrontation and trigger a process that would end with the Americans and Soviets imposing an agreement on the sides, one that would be distinctly to Israel's disadvantage. If so, it is clear why Israel did everything it could to lower the flames at the Suez Canal and dismiss the possibility of a war even after it had in fact begun.

It was Nasser who came away as the winner in the early months of the renewed fighting. The escalation at the Canal quickly led to consultations among the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France—the "Forum of Four"—in search of a solution to the Middle East crisis. The Forum's Achilles' heel was its internal disunity. The split into rival camps—sometimes two against two, sometimes one against three—that disagreed about the nature of the appropriate solution and about how deeply the powers should be involved in outlining an agreement posed an insurmountable obstacle to its success. In practice, the Forum deteriorated into a repeat of the imbroglio that had thwarted the implementation of Security Council Resolution 242—the different interpretation of its text by the French and Soviets as against that by British and Americans.

What is more, the superpowers' regional aspirations took the air out of the Forum of Four and moved the focus to the Forum of Two. Even there, however, the Americans made no headway. As time passed, the United States had to keep floating new ideas and demonstrate a willingness to compromise at its ally's expense. The Soviets never rejected any proposal out of hand, but also never submitted a balanced and realistic working paper that might lead to a settlement in the Middle East. Eventually, and although the two-power dialogue continued, the State Department concentrated on drafting its own diplomatic initiative—an effort that peaked in December 1969—in the hope of breaking the logjam and making progress towards peace. Once again, Secretary of State Rogers was disappointed.

Rogers' nonstop skirmishing with Henry Kissinger, Nixon's National Security Advisor, did not contribute to the success of American diplomacy, to put it mildly. And whereas in the spring and summer of 1969 it was the State Department's view that prevailed, allowing it to draw up a formal and balanced proposal for ending the conflict, the fact that neither Israel nor Egypt was ready for an agreement made it impossible to reach one and led to further military escalation. Israel was adamant that the negotiations with Egypt had to be direct, with American mediation, and without any participation by the Soviets. The Egyptians viewed Israel's preconditions for negotiations as humiliating and hence would not even consider its proposals. Nasser took three decisions that ensured the failure of the diplomatic initiatives: he rejected any settlement that would involve recognition of Israel and that would produce a separate agreement that left out the other Arab countries; he accepted massive Soviet military assistance and increased his country's dependence on Moscow; and he ramped up the hostilities at the Canal to the point that the Soviets became actively involved in the fighting.

The last two decisions influenced the prospects for a settlement in three ways. First, the American willingness to reveal compromise positions for an Israeli–Egyptian accord, which included significant concessions on substantive Israeli demands, illustrates Washington's confidence than an agreement could be reached, even if this required exerting strong pressure on Israel, provided that the Soviets would twist the Egyptians' arm. But in the absence of a Soviet willingness to do so, both out of a desire to wring out additional American concessions and because of the advantages to be extracted from Cairo's dependence on Soviet might, all these diplomatic maneuvers were doomed. The first Rogers Plan was a missed opportunity, because for the first time since June 1967, and in fact since the end of the first Arab–Israeli war in 1949, the main and most urgent problems dividing Israel and the Arabs were all placed on the negotiating table. Their resolution would have put an end to the conflict and created a totally different situation in the region.

Another ramification of Nasser's decisions was related to the failure of Israeli intelligence to predict that the Soviet Union would become more deeply involved in the conflict, and perhaps intervene directly. After Israel began the *Priha* (Blossom) series of bombing raids on targets in the Egyptian heartland, in

a campaign that ran from January to April 1970, the American administration was strongly displeased, because it believed that it was the deep-penetration raids that had drawn the Soviet Union deeper into the War of Attrition. The State Department held that Israel had underestimated the vigor of the Soviet reaction to the *Priha* strikes and the strength of the Kremlin's commitment to Nasser. Finally, the Soviet reaction, sending its most advanced surface-to-air missiles to Egypt, with Soviet crews to operate them, as well as pilots, was quite unanticipated in Jerusalem and Washington. For the first time in the history of the Arab–Israeli conflict, the Soviet Union had been sucked into direct involvement. Now the United States felt compelled to respond before Israel and the Soviets came to blows. The Israelis wanted to see the Americans adopt a "deterrent position" against the Soviet Union, but Washington's response took the form of a diplomatic initiative for a cease-fire. The initiative move, which the United States felt compelled to make, was meant to rescue Israel from the thorny predicament in which it was entangled, was a major success for the Soviets and Egyptians.

Israel's assessment was very different. It knew that as early as November 1969, after the War of Attrition failed to achieve Nasser's objectives, Cairo and Moscow had reached agreement on the delivery to Egypt of SA-3 missiles, with Soviet crews. Subsequently, when Sadat and then Nasser visited Moscow in December and January, the Kremlin agreed to send pilots to help defend Egyptian airspace. This meant, the Israelis asserted, that there was no link between the deep-bombing raids and the expanded Soviet presence. The Soviets were exploiting the Arab–Israeli conflict in order to realize their own global and regional interests; the War of Attrition was only a smokescreen to cover their deeper penetration of the region.

The debate about what triggered the Soviet intervention had an impact on the relations between Washington and Jerusalem, precisely at a time when Israel was in desperate need of fresh shipments of American warplanes. As a result, the third effect of Nasser's decisions related to the link between a diplomatic settlement and the supply of aircraft to Israel. The continued hostilities at the Canal, and especially the Soviets' direct involvement in the fighting, pushed the State Department to draft a new plan, based on the principle of "stop shooting and start talking." In addition to their diplomatic cajoling, the Americans took advantage of their ability to influence the military aspect of the conflict by threatening to halt or delay deliveries of aircraft to Israel. This affected both sides. Egypt, which had been seriously pummeled by Israel's "airborne artillery," often hinted that any advance on the diplomatic front depended on the suspension of American shipments of Phantom jets to Israel. Israel repeatedly asked for more planes, in part because it felt threatened and was losing planes to the air-defense system the Soviets had built in Egypt. As the Israeli pleas for additional planes became increasingly urgent, the administration held back their delivery, because it saw their transfer as a factor in the escalation on the Canal front, but also as a serious blow to the prospects of initiating a diplomatic process between Israel and Egypt. The State Department chose the tactic of

freezing military assistance to Israel, as long as the balance of power had not been seriously shifted to Israel's disadvantage. So for more than ten months after Prime Minister Meir first asked for speedy delivery of the military equipment and warplanes that had already been promised, the United States refused to comply.

The American maneuver was supposed to lower the temperature of the conflict and present a balanced policy. More than that, however, it was seen as a carrot-and-stick tactic to pressure or reward both Israel and Egypt. The Egyptians were told that no additional planes would be supplied to Israel, beyond those already promised, as long as talks continued under the auspices of UN mediator Gunnar Jarring; Israel discovered that the Second Rogers Plan and the delivery of aircraft promised it in 1966 and 1968 had become a package deal. What is more, before it agreed to the cease-fire arrangement Jerusalem received several warnings from Washington to stop the deep-penetration raids so as not to undermine the emerging diplomatic process. This demand for restraint was not withdrawn even after it became clear that Egypt and the Soviets had violated the cease-fire agreement, giving Israel a valid excuse to attack the missile emplacements.

There are two important questions here: First, what did Nasser gain from the agreement? Second, could Israel have attacked and taken out the missiles near the Canal after it became aware that the Egyptians had violated the standstill clause?

Its acceptance of the Rogers Plan brought Egypt several benefits, both political and military. As the first party to accept the cease-fire proposal, it enhanced its image in the eyes of the international community, returned the ball to the Israeli court, and left Israel in a confused and uncomfortable position. Now it was Egypt that was displaying a willingness to begin peace negotiations that would require an Israeli withdrawal, while it was Israel that waffled, piled up obstacles, and was perceived as the recalcitrant party. Another factor was that Egypt had paid dearly for the War of Attrition it had initiated, in human life, in resources, and in infrastructure. Thousands of soldiers and civilians had been killed and thousands more had been wounded.[2] The Egyptian Air Force lost 115 warplanes. On top of this, the economy was paralyzed, because the Suez Canal remained closed and the fighting had turned the cities along its banks into ghost towns. The cease-fire provided Nasser with breathing room, and Egypt was finally able to begin the long process of military and civilian reconstruction. The fact that, after Nasser's death, Sadat kept extending the cease-fire (formally until 1971, and informally after that) demonstrates how desperate Egypt was for an end to the fighting, even with the wall of missiles it had installed as protection against the Israel Air Force. Another three years would pass before Egypt had the capacity to launch a frontal assault across the Canal with the goal of redressing the balance of forces in a way that would be conducive to a diplomatic settlement.

A third factor is that, after an extensive propaganda campaign in which Nasser asserted that it was the American supply of aircraft to Israel that had

triggered the Soviet involvement and Egypt's refusal to accept the State Department's peace initiatives, the Egyptian president believed that if Washington wanted the cease-fire plan to succeed it would suspend the deliveries of warplanes, which would seriously impact Israel's control of the skies over Egypt. Nasser was not mistaken in this; for many months the United States refrained from delivering aircraft to Israel, despite the Israeli cries of distress. Finally, after protracted planning, and even before the cease-fire took effect, Egypt began a massive deployment of surface-to-air missiles near the Canal, with Soviet assistance. Its agreement to a cease-fire was not a ploy to help it complete the missile array. However, as Yariv noted, when Israel and the United States did not react to the breach of the standstill clause within the first few days, Egypt felt able to continue to pursue the strategic maneuver that had been previously coordinated with the Soviets. To put it another way, it was not so much the cease-fire that facilitated the advance of the missile batteries as it was the American's tepid reaction, which included blatant skepticism about the Israeli charges of the violation. Washington's thunderous silence made it plain to Cairo that the State Department was so strongly committed to its diplomatic initiative that it was willing to cast a blind eye even when the facts made it clear that the agreement had not been honored to the letter.

On the Israeli side of the Canal, 17 months of persistent fighting had left their mark on the home front and the public mood. Even though the War of Attrition did not bring Nasser the expected fruits, Israel, like Egypt, though to a lesser degree, was showing signs of fatigue and burnout, accompanied by prominent voices of dissent. In the 17 months from March 1969, when the War of Attrition began, until the cease-fire in August 1970, the IDF had suffered around 750 deaths, bringing its total losses since June 11, 1967, to 1,438.[3] Israel was swept by increasing disquiet and a lack of trust in the political leaders, as a result of a war that struck many, and especially the younger generation, as pointless. These feelings received prominent public expression in the "high-school seniors' letter"[4] and Hanoch Levin's play *The Queen of the Bathtub*, which premiered in April 1970. Both represented a fierce protest against the perceived inability of the leadership to find a diplomatic solution to the continuing conflict with the Arabs even after the success of the Six Day War. So despite the IDF's ability to hold the Egyptian front, while there continued to be intermittent incidents the eastern front with Jordan, the War of Attrition had significant political, social, and psychological repercussions on the Israeli public. It can certainly be said that the roots of the protest that burst forth after the Yom Kippur War lay in the events in the late stages of the War of Attrition.

Another reason Israel agreed to the proposal of June 19, 1970, was Nasser's success in putting pressure on Israel merely by his acceptance of the key principle of the Rogers Plan—"stop shooting and start talking." From the moment he did so, on July 22, the State Department and White House focused most of the efforts on Israel and employed their "big guns"—mainly the suspension of Phantom jet deliveries to Israel—so that Jerusalem, too, would accept it. An Israeli cold shoulder to the American proposal, to which Egypt had already

agreed, and with which the Soviet Union had nothing to do, would have led to a major rift between Israel and the United States, precisely at a time when the Israelis were in greater need of American diplomatic, economic, and military support than ever before.

Nor can we ignore the effect of the Soviets' intervention in the war, and not just the supply of advanced surface-to-air missiles. The arrival of Soviet pilots and their active involvement in combat in early 1970 was a game-changer that totally altered the prevailing military equation. In light of the Soviets' direct intervention, Israel had to weigh its actions carefully and ultimately reduce the range of its deep-penetration bombing raids. Jerusalem and Washington were gripped by a climate of fear and anxiety: the United States was terrified that a direct Israeli–Soviet confrontation would lead to war between the superpowers, while Israel was simply outmatched by the Soviet Union. So we cannot overlook the weight of the Soviet factor in Israel's rational considerations about whether to accept the Rogers Plan for a cease-fire.[5]

The sum total of the factors reviewed above answers the question of whether Israel could have attacked the new missile emplacements. Clearly, that was impossible. First of all, there is no doubt that an Israeli military response would have blown up the cease-fire agreement and led to a new and more serious round of violence, in which the Soviet Union would have been involved. On top of this, the political damage to Israel from such an offensive would have been considerable. Not only would the international community have denounced Israel as the aggressor and as the party that had sabotaged the cease-fire, Jerusalem's relations with the United States would have suffered a grievous blow. Second, from the time it assumed the main burden of the fighting, in July 1969, the Israel Air Force had exemplified Israel's military superiority over Egypt. During the last months of the War of Attrition, however, the "flying artillery" had run into the Soviet-built rampart of SA-2 and SA-3 missiles and had started to lose aircraft. A broad aerial assault on the missiles in the strip running 50 kilometers west of the Canal would no doubt have led to heavy losses of IAF planes and crews, almost certainly out of all proportion to the benefit derived from knocking out the missile batteries.

In his memoirs, Yitzhak Rabin provided an excellent summary of Israel's problematic situation then. As he noted, the Americans said that they themselves lacked the means to counter the Soviet missiles. He himself opposed the proposal to attack the missile array after the idea arose following the discovery that the Egyptians had violated the cease-fire. "We don't have a military option. We do not possess an effective means to damage the missile system," he wrote.

> If we follow the military path we will lose twice over: we will be accused of violating the cease-fire (our argument that we were reacting to an Egyptian violation will fall on deaf ears), and on the other hand we will not be able to destroy the missile bases from the air, without paying a heavy price in aircraft and pilots. Such an attempt would come at a serious political cost that would not be balanced by a military success.[6]

Israel's decision not to respond militarily paid off in the end, because the American demand for restraint was balanced, as in the past, by a reward, both diplomatic and military: the Israeli refusal to engage in indirect talks through Jarring was accepted and economic and military assistance was promised. Thus the proposed solution was acceptable to Israel because it was compatible with its determination to prolong the status quo vis-à-vis Egypt.

In the second week of December 1970, after Nasser's death and Sadat's threat not to renew the cease-fire, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan paid an official visit to Washington. During his talks with senior administration figures, conducted in the shadow of the new situation in Cairo, he linked Israeli participation in the Jarring talks with an American commitment to supply arms (mainly warplanes) to Israel in the coming years as well: if the United States undertook to respond favorably to future Israeli requests, the Israeli government would begin talks with the UN envoy.[7] While Dayan was in Washington, Ambassador Walworth Barbour was instructed to inform Prime Minister Meir in Jerusalem that the United States would provide Israeli with 32 Phantoms in the first half of 1971. Two weeks later, on December 28, as Dayan had promised Nixon when the two men met, Israel officially announced that it would return to the Jarring talks, because, as the Government indicated in its statement, "the present political and military conditions enable and justify the termination of the suspension of Israel's participation in talks under the auspices of Ambassador Jarring."[8]

This decision was a total reversal of Israel's previous position that Egypt must pull back the missiles from the Canal before peace talks could get under way. Now Israel was willing to make do with an American promise of military assistance in return for quiet on the Suez front and its participation in the Jarring talks. Israel made its peace with the Egyptian breach of the cease-fire agreement—and paid a heavy price for this on October 6, 1973. It was only after the Yom Kippur War, with its thousands of casualties on both sides, and after bold new leaders came to power in both capitals, that Cairo and Jerusalem found the way to make peace.

Notes

1 State of Israel, Ministry of Defense, "Campaign Ribbons," www.mod.gov.il/Citizen_Service/clalim/otot/Pages/sing-war.aspx.
2 For example, in May 1970 alone, 1,000 Egyptians who were involved in building missile sites along the Canal were killed or wounded in IAF raids. For the entire period, around 4,000 Egyptians employed in the air-defense project were killed. See Riad, *The Struggle for Peace*, 140; Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*, 77.
3 Israel Ministry of Defense, Families and Commemoration Department, personal communication, May 1, 2019.
4 On April 28, 1970, a group of about 70 high-school seniors, most of them from Jerusalem and eligible for conscription soon after graduation, sent a protest letter to Prime Minister Meir, in which they stated their opposition to Israeli policy in Judea and Samaria, the continuation of the War of Attrition, and the Israeli government's refusal to respond positively to peace feelers from the Arab states. *Ha'aretz* published the letter without obtaining the censor's permission and gave the group a public platform.
5 Adamsky, *Operation Kavkaz*, 76.

6 Rabin, *Service Diary*, 302–7. The corresponding text in the English translation is much abridged. See Rabin, *Memoirs*, 185.
7 "Memorandum of Conversation," December 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2385 Pol, 7 ISR; "State 202631," December 11, 1970, NA, RG 59, Box 2057 Pol, 27 A/I.
8 *Israel's Foreign Policy: Historical Documents*, Chapter XII, Document 25, December 28, 1970; *Knesset Gazette*, Vol. 59, Seventh Knesset, Second Term, 134th Session, December 29, 1970, 723–5.

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