# A forum: Voices before the summit

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*Beginning on this page are a number of perspectives on the meeting this week at Camp David of President Carter, Israeli Prime Minister Begin and Egyptian President Sadat.*

*The views come from many points on the spectrum, politically or geographically, though they can hardly pretend to cover the full range of diversity of argument and proposals being offered for one of the world's more intractable problems.*

**There is a growing concern that the Israeli government misjudges its own long-run interests, and a fear that Israel, by crying wolf too often, may act out a self-fulfilling prophecy.**

By Mark Bruzonsky

Having accepted the burdensome obligation to orchestrate Arab-Israeli reconciliation, there is no road back. No longer can the U.S. defer to other than its own perceptions of American national interests in the Middle East.

American determination must extend even further. Though "even-handedness" has become something of a shibboleth on this topic, it is sometimes unavoidable to make judgments which involve taking sides. Ever since Sadat's "sacred mission" to Jerusalem last November it has been evident that Washington's and Jerusalem's perceptions of reasonable Israeli policies were more at odds than the differences between U.S. and Egyptian attitudes toward a feasible settlement.

Under the Begin government, Israeli policies and attitudes have, as predicted, collided head-on with those of the American government. As Harvard Professor Stanley Hoffmann, writing in the current issue of The New York Review of Books, puts it, "Both the Congress and the executive branch now more sharply distinguish between the American national interest and the Israeli interest. Both share a growing concern that the Israeli government misjudges its own long-run interests, and a fear that Israel, by crying wolf too often, may act out a self-fulfilling prophecy about Arab hostile intentions, with calamitous results for America's foreign policy."

In the coming weeks Carter will need to have the self-confidence to make these differences clearly known and to act accordingly. American policy at the summit will have to partially evolve in a responsive fashion. Still, the history of U.S. involvement in this conflict and the uniqueness of the current constellation of political forces in the region both require a firm, and if necessary unyielding, American game plan.

Decisions on an actual plan, on how to balance private and public pressures, on how far to push those who resist, on when and how to invoke American treaty guarantees and the possibility of American forces should all be pursued within the context of having decided to forcefully assert a posture essential to American interests.

For the past decade, American policy has provided, however subtly and reluctantly at times, such a policy framework. Today it needs to be made explicit.

The aborted Rogers Plan in 1970 grew out of Security Council Resolution 242, much as did the policies resulting from the Ford-Kissinger "reassessment" in 1975, the unoffi-

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cial Brookings Report later that year, and the formulations made by the current administration shortly after taking office.

Until recently, forceful American advocacy of an all-encompassing settlement was severely restrained by the unwillingness, even of the moderate Arab parties, to accept two necessities: to provide special, long-term security arrangements for Israel and to normalize relations with the Jewish state.

Sadat's dramatic leap historically altered the Arab moderate position. With his single act Sadat made it both reasonable and imperative for American policy to come out of the closet with a settlement outline that has always included six basic ideas:

*(1)* Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories with only minor, negotiated boundary modifications;

*(2)* Termination of all further settlement activity in occupied territories and agreement that only those settlements will remain which are mutually agreed upon;

*(3)* Elaborate security provisions to safeguard Israel's boundaries — including demilitarization, phased withdrawal of Israeli military presence, anti-terrorist arrangements, outside military observers and forces;

*(4)* Normalization of relations between Israel and her major Arab neighbors — including economic, cultural and diplomatic relations;

*(5)* Provisions for Palestinian self-determination and a solution of the refugee problem;

*(6)* An American security treaty with Israel which might include stationing of U.S. forces as a form of political glue to help maintain a settlement during the adjustment period.

Regretfully, such an American peace initiative, even if it should finally surface at Camp David, would now come when the political and psychological window Sadat opened is closing. Negligent at first, the Carter White House did not recognize the unique importance of the December through February period — a time when conditions were far more conducive to a successful American negotiating intervention and to major shifts in the positions of the parties.

With American interests now largely interconnected in the region, an Arab-Israeli settlement becomes an essential link in the fabric we have woven.

Strategically, and more recently financially and economically as well, our relations with the gulf oil-producing countries, especially Saudi Arabia, have been our major priority since World War II.

Historically, our commitment to Israel has taken on unique dimensions and come to represent a moral imperative.

Politically, American friendship with Egypt and Jordan, and potentially with other key Arab countries, is now recognized as a necessity. As Hoffmann notes, "only a settlement will consolidate the alignment of the so-called moderate Arab states with the U.S."

And only an Arab-Israeli rapprochement can remove the risk of the U.S. being placed in a position of impossible choices between competing vital interests.

Of course, American foreign policy is not solely determined by geo-political interests. Domestic political pressures have long acted to restrain otherwise desirable policies. And on this particular issue, the influence of the organized American Jewish community has often appeared overwhelming.

Just a few weeks ago, for instance, the new president of the umbrella organization which speaks on behalf of American Jewry, Theodore Mann, put President Carter on notice.

"It is possible that the administration will act again in a way that favors one side in the negotiations," Mann warned. "If it does, I feel confident that a widely united American Jewish community will loudly express its displeasure, as it has in the past."

Still, the American Jewish community is no longer parroting in unison Israeli slogans. Internally there are an increasing number of voices calling for reappraisal of former attitudes, criticizing Begin's xenophobic and zealous attitudes, and suggesting that Israel's basic interests are in evolving peaceful relations with her Arab neighbors, not in biblical fulfillment of territorial ambitions.

Among the most respected of these critics is Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, former president of the American Jewish Congress. Though Rabbi Hertzberg has been privately counseling Begin against his course ever since the Likud's victory in May 1977, this weekend he publicly but indirectly assaulted Begin by publishing a provocative challenge to the entire *weltanschaung* of most American Jews. His short essay appeared in Israel in the leading daily Haaretz and in England in The London Jewish Chronicle.

According to Rabbi Hertzberg, "The American Jewish community is not really fighting its present battles in contemporary terms." Having a fixation on the Holocaust and always acting to gain Israel's "approval" as if Israel were "the corporate head of the family," American Jewish leaders tend to be maximalists and have a most difficult time coming "to reasonable attitudes." "It is time that Diaspora leadership, and especially those in America, put aside childish attitudes," Rabbi Hertzberg suggests. "American Jews require policies not of confrontation in memory of the past but of cementing alliances for the future. So does Israel."

If President Carter can offer, however belatedly, the self-confident, assertive, decisive leadership he has only so far discussed, he will find far more support than he may imagine. Just 15 months ago the new president instructed the nation,

"To let this opportunity pass could mean disaster not only for the Middle East, but perhaps for the international political and economic order as well . . . I would not hesitate if I saw clearly a fair and equitable solution to use the full strength of our own country and its persuasive powers to bring those nations to agreement."

Camp David will be less a test of vision than of will, less a forum for deciding what should be done than of political potency.

Anwar Sadat is coming largely as observer. Begin and Carter are coming with swords drawn.