The Role of the Press in Shaping a New Middle-East: Egyptian-Israeli Relations from 1977-1979 as seen through the Headlines/News Articles, Opinion Pieces and Editorials of Three Major Israeli Newspapers: The Jerusalem Post, Yedioth Aharonoth, and Ha’aretz

by

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**Introductory Background**

Official Egyptian-Israeli relations did not exist until November 1977 with the arrival of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in Jerusalem to address the Israeli *Knesset*.\(^1\) Prior to that, the only regular contact between Egyptians and Israelis had been on the field of battle in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973.\(^2\) However, several months prior to Sadat’s visit, through the counsels of King Hassan II of Morocco, “the Arab head of state most receptive to the idea of dialogue with Israel,”\(^3\) the Israelis and Egyptians had worked on establishing covert diplomatic relations. Until this time, the only other known Arab head of state to have pursued clandestine talks with Israeli officials was King Hussein of Jordan. “In the summer of 1977, Israel’s director of military intelligence drew Begin’s attention to a scheme organized by Qaddafi [the Libyan Dictator] to assassinate Sadat.”\(^4\) This information was promptly passed on to Egypt via the Moroccan channel. Over the next several months, clandestine Egyptian-Israeli meetings occurred as Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan traveled on “three secret visits to Morocco”\(^5\) in order to obtain further Moroccan support for Israeli peace initiatives. On at least one of these visits he met with the Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Hassan Tuhami in order to discuss prospects for peace between Israel and Egypt.\(^6\)

Prospects for improvement in Egyptian-Israeli relations appeared bleak until Sadat stunned the world, including many of his closest friends and confidants, when he spontaneously announced to the Egyptian People’s Assembly in Cairo on November 9

\(^1\) The *Knesset* is the Israeli Parliament.
\(^6\) Ibid.
“I am ready to go to the Israeli parliament itself…and discuss it [peace] with them.”

Sadat’s surprise declaration was met with caution in Israel’s official circles. Israeli Defence Minister Ezer Weizman said: “If the Egyptian president indeed seeks peace and if his remarks concerning a visit to Israel were not window dressing, then I say ‘Ahalan wasahlan watafaddalu [welcome, in Arabic].”

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin told his close political advisor Shmuel Katz, “I did of course have some doubts as to whether it was seriously meant or just a flight of rhetoric. But I decided on the spot to take his speech seriously and to put him to the test.” Although the Israeli leadership may have soon sensed, and even dreaded, the enormous length of time that negotiations would take in order to broker a lasting peace, the Israeli public was jubilant following Sadat’s internationally covered visit to Jerusalem and his formal address to the Israeli people. Positive Israeli attitudes towards Egypt rose to 94 percent in a survey taken immediately after Sadat’s visit; more than 90 percent believed that Egypt was interested in peace, compared to only 40 to 60 percent in the time period ranging from the Yom Kippur War until Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem.

This sentiment was neatly summed up by Begin’s biographer Eric Silver: “For most Israelis, Sadat’s visit was a fantasy come true.”

Sadat’s decision to visit Jerusalem was widely viewed as a groundbreaking triumph for diplomacy. Professor Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov argues that “Sadat’s visit to Israel was a major turning point in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It changed the basic

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7 Sachar, Howard M. Egypt and Israel. p. 264.
10 Ibid. p. 59.
assumption that no Arab state would ever recognize Israel and make peace with it.”¹²

Nevertheless, the initial shock of Sadat’s Jerusalem visit eventually subsided, and the
Israeli and Egyptian negotiation teams worked on brokering the details of a future
Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement. Simply put, Sadat’s goals were clear. He wanted the
Sinai Peninsula conquered by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day-War, returned to Egyptian
sovereignty. He wanted to be perceived as defending the rights of Arabs living in the
West Bank and the Gaza Strip. And he also wanted the Arab World to follow his lead and
join him in negotiating with Israel. “Sadat knew what he wanted but not how to achieve
it,”¹³ writes Israeli historian Avi Shlaim. Israel, for its part, was looking for a bilateral
peace agreement with Egypt, including full normalization of relations between the two
countries. The balance of power in the Middle East led many Israelis to conclude that
removing Egypt from the conflict would considerably reduce the chances of future
military disputes in the region.¹⁴

Of course many stumbling blocks remained in the negotiations. The first Israeli
dlegation to visit Egypt arrived at the Suez Canal city of Ismailiya on December 25,
1977 and was not treated to a pleasant welcome. On the drive there Dayan rasped to
Begin: “Look! Not a single Israeli flag, not even a placard to welcome us!”¹⁵ Following
the talks, it soon became clear that Begin and Sadat were in need of mediation in order to
arbitrate major points of contention.¹⁶ Of these, there were many. There were Israeli

Peace, p. 59.
¹⁶ Stein, Kenneth W. Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin, and the Quest for Arab-Israeli
settlements, military installations, and the massive infrastructure in Sinai. Israel had invested approximately $12 billion in that critical buffer peninsula. There were differences between Egyptian and Israeli interpretations of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, which attempted to define the illegality of acquiring territory through war. There was the question of Sinai’s general demilitarization, Israeli access to Sinai’s oil, and of complete normalization between the two nation-states. Finally, there was the issue of ‘linkage,’ whereby a plan for autonomy for Arabs living in the West Bank and Gaza and agreement on the final status of Jerusalem would be linked somehow to any Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement. Israel was especially apprehensive about withdrawing from territory, questioning whether the concept of ‘land for peace’ made sense. Religious Israelis saw the West Bank or Judea and Samaria as they called it, as having powerful historical links to the Jewish people and demanded the right to settle the land unhindered. Meanwhile, more strategic critics of Israeli territorial withdrawals argued that land had quantitative and economic value, while peace is a largely abstract term.

During the first eight months of 1978, Egyptian-Israeli relations soured. In order to break the deadlock in the negotiation process and reduce already strained Egyptian-Israeli relations, United States President Jimmy Carter decided to bring the Egyptian and

17 Sachar, Howard M. Egypt and Israel. p. 305.
18 United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, or UNSCR 242, was a resolution passed at the United Nations requiring Israel to withdraw from ‘territories’ conquered in the 1967 Six-Day-War in return for the termination of all states of belligerency in the region. Both Egypt and Israel accepted the resolution, but they interpreted it in different ways. Egypt believed it meant an Israeli withdrawal from ‘all territories’ while Israel was convinced that it meant a withdrawal from ‘some territories.’
19 Judea and Samaria are the Biblical Jewish names given to the West Bank. I have used the terms ‘Judea and Samaria’ and ‘West Bank’ interchangeably throughout this essay.
Israeli negotiating teams together in September 1978 at the American Presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland, in order to reach an accommodation. After thirteen intense days of negotiation, an agreement was reached that was acceptable to all parties.\textsuperscript{22} The agreement was appropriately labelled: The Camp David Accords.

Using the Camp David Accords as its framework, it took an additional six months of negotiations between Egypt and Israel before they signed the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in March 1979.\textsuperscript{23} Professor and former United States National Security Council staff member William Quandt writes:

> The Camp David Accords, signed by the President of Egypt and the Prime Minister of Israel on September 17, 1978, were an event of historic importance in the modern Middle East. These agreements, hammered out in lengthy negotiations over a period of some eighteen months, set the stage for the signing of a formal treaty of peace between Egypt and Israel on March 19, 1979. With these two states at peace, and both closely tied to the United States, the strategic map of the Middle East was fundamentally altered.\textsuperscript{24}

The Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty marked the first official peace agreement between Israel and an Arab State. Thirty-one years of belligerence between Israel and Egypt had ended. A new era had been ushered in.

However, in the aftermath of the signing of the peace treaty Egyptian-Israeli relations remained dynamic. Egyptian President Sadat, the man who had “recuperated the whole of Sinai without firing a single shot,”\textsuperscript{25} paid the ultimate price for signing the peace treaty with Israel when he was assassinated by an Islamic fundamentalist at a military parade in Cairo in October 1981. In addition, upon concluding the peace treaty with Israel, Egypt was expelled from the Arab League.\textsuperscript{26} Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin also had to justify signing the agreement to his people. He spoke of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid. p. 201.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Shlaim, Avi. \textit{The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World}. p. 377.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Quandt, William. \textit{Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics}. p. ix.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Shlaim, Avi. \textit{The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World}. p. 381.
\end{itemize}
necessity for Israel to make concessions in security terms. Begin explained “that once Israel and Egypt were at peace the other Arab states would not dare to attack Israel, whereas in the absence of peace with Egypt the alternative might well have been war.”\textsuperscript{27}

By April 25 1982, the date that Israel completed the withdrawal from Sinai in accordance with the terms outlined in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty,\textsuperscript{28} Israelis were openly questioning whether the \textit{cold peace}\textsuperscript{29} they had received had been worth the difficult concessions they had made. Israeli diplomats residing in Egypt, and Israeli tourists traveling there frequently made reference to the tense, inhospitable atmosphere. Former Israeli ambassador to Egypt Ephraim Dowek wrote that “not a day passes without attacks in the [Egyptian] media against Israel, the Israelis and the Jews.”\textsuperscript{30} During the peace euphoria that had followed Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem and the signing of both the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty it was sometimes easy to forget that hostility and malice between the two peoples remained. According to Kenneth Stein, “the public spotlight, document-signing ceremonies, and media fanfare did not diminish many of the mutually distrustful perceptions Israelis and Egyptians possessed for one another. Though Egypt and Israel had signed a peace treaty, it was not marked by warmth and cordial relations. Instead a cold nonbelligerency characterized their subsequent relationship.”\textsuperscript{31}

In this essay I will carefully look at how three Israeli newspapers – \textit{The Jerusalem Post} (in English), \textit{Yedioth Aharonoth} (in Hebrew), and \textit{Ha’aretz} (in Hebrew) – portrayed

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{28} Ibid. p. 241.
\bibitem{29} Cohen, Raymond. \textit{Culture and Conflict in Egyptian-Israeli Relations: A Dialogue of the Deaf}. p. 3.
\end{thebibliography}
the three principal events in the development of Egyptian-Israeli relations from 1977-1979: 1) Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem 2) the Camp David Summit and, 3) the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. All three of these events were substantially reported in the Israeli press. I will argue that the newspapers perceived the Egyptian-Israeli peace process serving as an Israeli ‘national unifier’ and were supportive of it, with varying degrees of caution and scepticism. Each newspaper, however, had a distinctive slant on the issues, which depended on the editorial policy of the newspaper, if there was one, and the political sympathies of the target audience.
Chapter 1
Egyptian-Israeli Relations from 1977-1979 as seen through Headlines/News Articles, Opinion Pieces, and Editorials of The Jerusalem Post

Founded in 1932 as The Palestine Post by the Ukrainian-American-Jewish journalist Gershon Agron (born Agronsky), The Jerusalem Post has arguably been the most successful English language daily in the Middle East.\(^1\) Agron proclaimed that “the unsatisfactory relations existing in Palestine between the Jews and the British have led some Palestine Jews to the conclusion that an effort should be made to improve conditions by means of an English daily in Jerusalem.”\(^2\) The newspaper’s stated goal to further British understanding of the need for Jewish settlement in Palestine provoked some British and Arab opposition. In February 1948, the temporary offices of The Jerusalem Post were blown up by a perpetrator widely believed to have been part of a British-Arab conspiracy to harm Jewish interests in Palestine.\(^3\) Despite this and other setbacks, The Jerusalem Post played an integral part in the Yishuv’s\(^4\) battle against the British between 1945 and 1948, in which the Jewish community in Palestine unified in opposition to British rule in Palestine, especially the restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine.\(^5\) Agron, who served as the first editor of the newspaper, along with successor Ted Lurie, generally supported the Labour Zionist movement in the pre-state era, and the Israeli government after 1948.\(^6\) Nevertheless, both Agron and Lurie never hesitated to criticize government economic and social policies that they took issue with.\(^7\)

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\(^3\) Cohen, Yoel. "Jerusalem Post." Encyclopaedia Judaica. 240.

\(^4\) Yishuv - Hebrer for ‘settlement,’ was the name of the institution representing Jewish national interests in Palestine.


\(^7\) Ibid.
Following the 1977 election of the Likud,\(^8\) under the co-editorship of Ari Rath and Erwin Frenkel *The Jerusalem Post* struggled to find a way to tread the fine middle ground between support for the opposition Labour party and acceptance of the state of Israel’s elected government.\(^9\) Since *The Jerusalem Post* was owned by the Histadrut, Israel’s Labour Movement Federation,\(^10\) it was difficult to promote balanced debate since the Labour Movement Federation’s politics were very similar to those of the Labour political party. Its readership was comprised mainly of immigrants from Anglo-Saxon countries, foreigners residing in Israel, diplomats, and the elites of neighbouring Arab countries.\(^11\) However by the time Begin’s Likud came to power, it was estimated that one-third of the Israeli readership of *The Jerusalem Post* belonged to what could be described as the Orthodox camp – religious Jews who generally held right-wing opinions in opposition to the paper’s editorial line.\(^12\)

In late 1977, *The Jerusalem Post*, like the Israeli public and the rest of the world, was caught off guard by Egyptian President Sadat’s sudden announcement of his desire to visit Israel and talk peace with Israeli leaders in Jerusalem. Over the course of the next several years, the Egyptian-Israeli peace process would dominate the news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials of the newspaper. In this chapter I will be looking at these article types from the time of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 and the Ismailiya talks in December 1977, the Camp David talks in September 1978, and the weeks around the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in March 1979. In my study of Egyptian-Israeli relations in *The Jerusalem Post* I have

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\(^8\) *Likud* was the centre-right opposition party which took over the reins of power from Labour in 1977.


\(^11\) Ibid.

\(^12\) Ibid. p. 91.
looked at four editorials, two opinion pieces, ten news articles, and one unique commentary.

Unlike the other newspapers I analyze in this essay, *The Jerusalem Post*’s original target audience was not Israelis or Jews, but English speakers around the world. It sought to provide the international community with information that would help them shape their views on the Middle East. However, by the time of Sadat’s visit to Israel in 1977, *The Jerusalem Post* was increasingly providing Israeli perspectives to Israel’s growing Jewish English-speaking immigrant population, and Israel’s predominantly Jewish North American supporters.

Because of *The Jerusalem Post*’s close link to the left-leaning Labour party, it was not surprising that *The Jerusalem Post* moved easily into support for the Sadat initiative. In fact, Erwin Frenkel wrote: “When, therefore, in November 1977, Begin and Egypt’s Anwar Sadat sprang their dramatic surprise of a meeting in Jerusalem, we were more primed than Begin’s own party to hail the heroes of peace.”13 Due to the worldwide interest of event, the importance of *The Jerusalem Post*’s reporting increased dramatically. Knowing that its word meant something in the media world and not wanting to make any bold predictions which could later be proven incorrect, the paper adopted a cautiously encouraging editorial policy to the advancement of Egyptian-Israeli relations. Peace with Egypt became the ultimate goal for *The Jerusalem Post* as well as for many Israelis, but it was such a new objective that it was unknown and undecided how much Israel could, would, and should pay for it. As the time period 1977-1979 moved forward, *The Jerusalem Post* editorials gradually appeared less euphoric and more realistic. Predictions and illusions were replaced by careful analysis.

13 Ibid.
The four editorials which I examined represent this cautiously supportive perspective. While the first editorial, titled “Sadat’s Courage,” is nothing short of a congratulatory message to the Egyptian President and wholeheartedly embraced his initiative, there still remained fear of possible Egyptian duplicity. The editorial praises Anwar Sadat for being “the first Arab leader ever to set foot on the sovereign soil of the Jewish State” and “for not lacking in the courage of his convictions,” yet relents from endorsing him outright by stating that “while he has obviously not given up the military option, Mr. Sadat is now on a diplomatic (emphasis in the editorial) warpath.” Despite the caution shown regarding the Egyptian President, the editorial takes a parting shot at the government of Israel, perhaps specifically at Prime Minister Begin since the paper has been traditionally aligned with his opposition, by stating that “we should hope that Israel, for its part, is gearing itself for just such an accommodation,” perhaps anticipating that there would be those in Begin’s government who saw peace with Arab states as detrimental to their goals.

The second editorial analyzed, written only two days after the first one takes a very similar line. “Historic Mission” starts with a similar endorsement of President Sadat – “Hail to the chief of state of Egypt for the courage and the wisdom that have inspired his coming to Israel” – before encouraging a pragmatic approach to resolving both the Egyptian-Israeli and the Arab-Israeli conflicts. The editorial mentions that “he[Sadat] has drawn a sharp divide between those who, despite their admitted

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
differences, are openly committed to the search for peace, and those whose professions of peaceful intent are but a mask for rampant belligerence,”²¹ and that this peace will require “fresh ideas”²² and “an agonizing reappraisal of orthodox positions by both Mr. Sadat and Mr. Begin.”²³ Stressing the truly historical moment that Sadat’s visit indeed was, the editorial does relay a warning voiced in Washington that “Egypt and Israel might concert a separate deal that would destroy chances of an overall Middle East settlement.”²⁴

The third editorial, written in September of 1978, examined the American mediated Egyptian-Israeli negotiations transpiring at Camp David and re-emphasized caution and wariness of overly optimistic reports of progress. Nevertheless, The Jerusalem Post’s choice of title – “Hopeful start at Camp David”²⁵ – indicates the newspaper’s favourable predisposition towards an agreement. The editorial mentions the warmer personal relations developing between Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat and the optimistic “attempt by both sides to revive the spirit of the Jerusalem and Ismailiya talks.”²⁶ Yet, the editorial does also note the trickier issues being negotiated. The future of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), and Gaza are a proven “thorny issue”²⁷ in the talks, as is the recent past history of Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, when “diplomatic ‘withdrawals’ occurred whenever a tangible accord seemed within reach.”²⁸

The last of The Jerusalem Post editorials analyzed took on a more sombre tone, indicating that the Egyptian-Israeli peace talks had been in desperate need of salvaging.

²¹ Ibid.
²² Ibid.
²³ Ibid.
²⁴ Ibid.
²⁶ Ibid.
²⁷ Ibid.
²⁸ Ibid.
“Time to be serious”\textsuperscript{29} asks questions and demands answers. “Has or has not Mr. Carter offered Israel a mutual defence pact, and has Mr. Begin accepted with alacrity?” The Jerusalem Post wanted the public to know the details of any Egyptian-Israeli agreement. The caution previously noticed in the other editorials is specifically pronounced in this one, with encouragement not to turn Carter’s visit to Jerusalem into a “public relations extravaganza”\textsuperscript{30} like Sadat’s was, which could potentially breed false optimism, and to warn the Israeli public of a possible government decision to “railroad momentous decisions through without adequate public debate and ministerial and parliamentary reflection.”\textsuperscript{31}

As seen through the four editorials, The Jerusalem Post’s view of Egyptian-Israeli relations is characterized by an intense caution, which allows only for minor optimism. The issue at stake is deemed too important for reckless speculation, or to predict how things will play out. Instead the editorials elect to reaffirm Israelis’ existing suspicions of Egyptians and Arabs, critically assessing possible obstacles, while at the same time encouraging them to walk slowly along the protracted road to peace.

Opinion pieces, unlike editorials, generally reflect a single individual’s opinion and do not speak for a newspaper as a whole. The Jerusalem Post prides itself on featuring a diverse range of opinions from many different segments of society. The two opinion pieces that I examined – “After the Euphoria”\textsuperscript{32} from shortly after Sadat’s announcement to visit Jerusalem, and “Is There Still a Chance for Peace?”\textsuperscript{33} from shortly

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item \textsuperscript{29} “Time to be serious.” Editorial. The Jerusalem Post 8 Mar. 1979.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Goell, Yosef. “After the Euphoria.” The Jerusalem Post 18 Nov. 1978.
\end{thebibliography}
before the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty – represent constantly evolving Israeli perspectives on Egyptian-Israeli relations.

“After the Euphoria”34 was written as a warning to the Israeli people not to raise their expectations too high for Sadat’s upcoming visit.35 The writer, Yosef Goell, states clearly “that the trouble with euphoria is morning-after depression.”36 Any, and every, doubt of Egypt’s intentions needed to be voiced, as Goell recognized the importance of being prepared for “duplicity on Sadat’s part.”37 For him, this type of caution is indeed crucial for countries like Israel that are prepared to take large gambles with their national security for the sake of peace, and the writer is dismayed that the Israeli people and government do not seem to be critically analyzing the situation.38 Instead Goell presents the argument that “our [Israel’s] need to believe in miracles”39 and “a millennial cast of mind”40 obstructs the rational reasoning process needed “to restore a sense of balance and reality”41 to current circumstances.

Contrary to Goell who wrote his opinion piece right before Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem and the commencement of official Egyptian-Israeli relations, Likud Member of the Israeli Parliament Zalman Shoval wrote “Is there still a chance for peace?”42 in reaction to the new historical realities of 1979. In it, he outlines why he believed that prospects for an Egyptian-Israeli peace were diminishing. He specifically mentioned “…the fall of Iran, the hardening Egyptian position and the apparent U.S.

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
indecisiveness.” Shoval is clearly an adherent to the realist school of international relations theory as he writes first and foremost on the topic of national interests being the driving force behind the operations of nation-states. He describes what he sees as potential obstacles to a lasting Egyptian-Israeli peace which could prove too difficult to overcome. These obstacles include Egypt’s desire to avoid retracting her commitment to the Arab military alliance against Israel, the linking of an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty to the Palestinian-Arab issue, and ensuring continued flow of oil from Sinai to Israel following a future Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai. This last point became especially important following the downfall of the Iranian Shah who had provided large quantities of oil to Israel, and the rise of an anti-America and anti-Israel Islamic regime in his stead. Nevertheless, in addition to his overt writing on possible reasons why the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty could fail, Shoval nevertheless endorses pragmatism which could lead to peace, and encourages Prime Minister Begin to adopt “flexibility in semantics and firmness in essential matters” when dealing with both Egyptian President Sadat and United States President Jimmy Carter.

In addition to the editorials and opinion pieces analyzed, The Jerusalem Post also ran a commentary compiled by one of its reporters, on how the Hebrew press, through its many newspapers, covered Sadat’s visit. The title of a commentary naturally indicates a slant, with the piece running under the headline: “Hebrew Press on Sadat’s Visit: Deserves to win Israel’s belief.” However, the content proved to be much more complex than that simple phrase. The commentary outlined arguments made towards

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43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
both positively enhancing Egyptian-Israeli relations in light of Sadat’s desire to talk peace, and of wholeheartedly rejecting any development of Egyptian-Israeli relations for fear of Egyptian ulterior motives. To give some examples, the summary includes citations from a columnist for Ha’aretz (a Hebrew daily which will be the subject of my focus in chapter 3) who wrote that “Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem pulls the rug out from under the argument, used until now by all Israeli leaders, that the root of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the Arabs’ unwillingness to recognize Israel’s right to exist as a sovereign state in the Middle East.” The Jerusalem Post also summarized an editorial from the Israeli Labour Federation’s publication Davar, which, feared that “diplomacy may be the continuation of the war by other means,” and another from the mainstream Israeli daily Ma’ariv editorial which reflected on both possibilities: “If Sadat’s intention is peace not an ultimatum, his visit may open the way for negotiations that may be long and difficult, but will ultimately attain their end. If he is out only for a propaganda victory, he will cause deep disappointment to the people of both Israel and Egypt.” The commentary sheds light on the diversity of Israel’s Hebrew press and impresses upon the reader that a war of words is occurring in the marketplace of ideas between the many different reactions to the progression of Egyptian-Israeli relations. It is also clear that The Jerusalem Post believes that this war of ideas is a sign of Israel’s vibrant free press and democratic ideals and wants to make this accessible on the historic occasion of Sadat’s visit not only to English-speaking Israelis, but also to the broader international community.

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
Lastly, the ten news articles I assessed revolved around the three principal events in Egyptian-Israeli relations from 1977-1979. Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem in November 1977, the Camp David tripartite summit in September 1978, and the weeks preceding the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in March 1979 were all time periods which generated what could be defined as ‘great news’ and marketable headlines. *The Jerusalem Post* would certainly not have had any difficulty in selling newspapers on many of these days.

Stark differences can be found in the newspapers’ news articles regarding the Israeli mood surrounding the aforementioned events. The newspaper’s attitude to Egyptian-Israeli relations can also be gauged by the choice of headline, the placement of articles on the page, and the text chosen to describe the events that occurred.

*The Jerusalem Post*’s news articles from the time of Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 are cautiously optimistic, and refer to the building of a personal relationship between Sadat and Begin, as crucial for both Israel and Egypt to work as partners towards their common goal: peace. *The Jerusalem Post*’s diplomatic correspondent David Landau writes that “President Sadat will hear detailed and comprehensive Israeli peace proposals from Premier Begin,”51 effectively letting the world know that Israel will not stand idly by and watch Sadat’s visit as a spectator, but will be playing an active role in trying to resolve the age-old Egyptian-Israeli conflict.

A second perspective is offered in a news article by *The Jerusalem Post* Mideast affairs editor Anan Safadi, who writes that the primary goal of Sadat’s visit is to “break

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the psychological barriers between the Arabs and Israel.” According to Safadi’s article, after this is achieved, peace negotiations will progress rapidly, however, at the moment, Sadat has “no intention of concluding a separate deal with Israel.”

The news articles from the second time period are definitely tougher for The Jerusalem Post journalists to write than for both of the other time periods analyzed, due to the fact that the Camp David Summit, the subject of massive worldwide attention and interest, was not open to the public. Instead, reporters from many media sources, including The Jerusalem Post, had to rely on US official spokesmen or media leaks to acquire information pertaining to the progress of negotiations. The Jerusalem Post correspondents David Landau and Wolf Blitzer did their best to contend with the secretive setting and near-total news blackout. With headlines chosen such as “talks progressing as well as U.S. hoped” and “intensive American-Israel discussions; pressure denied,” the newspaper reflected the optimism prevalent in Israel regarding the Camp David summit. In addition to mentioning the major meetings that took place and at what times, The Jerusalem Post correspondents appear to emphasize the importance of the American role in reaching an accord at the summit. David Landau wrote that “Carter’s preference for conducting the tripartite session unaided, with Begin and Sadat coming alone too, means the heaviest possible commitment of presidential prestige to the outcome of this summit.” Later adding, “…in Israel particularly it has been a long-

52 Safadi, Anan. “Sadat’s main aim is to break…the psychological barrier.” The Jerusalem Post 20 Nov. 1977.
53 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
established rule never to court an outright rift with the White House.”\footnote{58}{Ibid.}\footnote{59}{Blitzer, Wolf. *The Jerusalem Post* Sept. 1978.}\footnote{60}{Landau, David. “Camp David talks move into make-or-break weekend: Intensive American-Israel discussions; pressure denied.” *The Jerusalem Post* 8 Sept. 1978. A1.}\footnote{61}{Ibid.}\footnote{62}{Ibid.}\footnote{63}{“Cairo: Treaty chances good, may ask changes.” *The Jerusalem Post* 8 Mar. 1979.} Wolf Blitzer added that “indications are increasing that the leaders of the U.S., Egypt and Israel are making progress in their intensive search for Peace in the Middle East.”\footnote{59}

Because of the increasingly important role of the United States in brokering an Egyptian-Israeli accord, it was clear that the fallout from the Camp David summit could be significant and this is stated overtly in one major headline: “Camp David talks move into make-or-break weekend.”\footnote{60} David Landau’s lede in one article endorses this perspective stating that “the Camp David summit is moving into an all-out attempt – some are calling it a last-ditch attempt – over this weekend to attain a measure of progress that would mean success for the three summiteers and renewed hope for the Middle East peace process.”\footnote{61} He adds several lines later that the possible outcomes for Camp David are either “agreement or further deadlock.”\footnote{62} In his article, all sides are attuned to the reality that there is a direct relationship between the failure, or even a perceived failure, of peace talks and further conflict.

While the news articles from the period of the Camp David summit represented the cautiously optimistic Israeli perspective of progress in Egyptian-Israeli relations, the reports from the period preceding the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in March 1979 embrace the Israeli perspective that following the success of the Camp David summit an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty is already a *fait accompli*. Headlines such as “Cairo: Treaty chances good, may ask changes”\footnote{63} and “Dayan: Treaty signing possible
‘within weeks’⁶⁴ exemplify the feeling that the momentum towards an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was irreversible. Nevertheless, following the signing of the peace treaty several weeks later, the publication of news articles in The Jerusalem Post representing dissent to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty abroad become more widespread, like Aly Mahmoud’s “Egypt’s leftists, Moslem Brothers, oppose ‘phoney’ peace with Israel.”⁶⁵

The pages of The Jerusalem Post served as Israel’s outlet to its English-speaking population, the international community, and the elites of neighbouring hostile countries, during the turbulent, exciting, beginnings of Egyptian-Israeli relations. The Jerusalem Post was responsible to its readers to provide, immediate, in-depth, news and analysis of the growing relationship between the two countries from the moment that Sadat announced his visit. As Erwin Frankel wrote, “thus, beyond the rhetoric, the fanfare, and the emotion of the Egyptian leader on Israeli soil appealing for an end to war, there had been a deep substratum of doubt. It was precisely this doubt that Sadat sought to assuage by the symbolic impact of coming to Jerusalem. With the help of media display, he succeeded.”⁶⁶ The Jerusalem Post also played a major role in combating Israeli scepticism of Sadat’s intentions. While projecting a uniquely Israeli position on events, the paper depicted a cautiously optimistic, pro-peace stance, which it unequivocally endorsed. This position was exemplified in the newspaper’s editorials, but can also be seen by an analysis of its news articles and opinion pieces.

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Chapter 2
Egyptian-Israeli Relations from 1977-1979 as seen through Headlines/News Articles and Opinion Pieces of Yedioth Aharonoth

Yedioth Aharonoth was founded as a Hebrew language daily newspaper in Tel Aviv in 1939 by Nahum Komerov. The following year the newspaper was acquired by the Mozes family. At first the newspaper struggled to succeed financially before the establishment of the state of Israel, and produced a two-page spread with a circulation of 30,000. In 1948 a conflict between the ownership and the editorial staff of the newspaper led to a walkout and the founding of a new Israeli Hebrew language daily Ma’ariv. In order to contend with the increased competition which resulted from the establishment of Ma’ariv, Yehuda Mozes appointed Dr. Herzl Rosenblum as editor of Yedioth Aharonoth. Rosenblum would hold the editorship of the paper for over forty years, during which Yedioth Aharonoth would surpass Ma’ariv in circulation and become the most widely read Hebrew language daily newspaper in Israel. Its tabloid-style news reporting made the newspaper particularly popular. With the largest newspaper readership in Israel, and arguably the widest range of mainstream contributors, Yedioth Aharonoth would play an important part in shaping the Israeli public’s perceptions of Egyptian-Israeli relations from 1977-1979.

1 Since Yedioth Aharonoth and Ha’aretz (the newspaper focused on in chapter III) are, unlike the Jerusalem Post, written in Hebrew rather than English, I have spent many hours translating what I perceive to be the relevant portions of the newspaper sources. I have attempted to be as diligent and meticulous as possible with my Hebrew-English translations, but since Hebrew is not my mother tongue, it is possible that someone else might have chosen to use a different word here and there. While I believe that a different choice of synonyms would not have affected the overall picture of the newspapers’ perspective, I think that it is important to mention that another translator might have translated or interpreted some Hebrew words slightly differently into English than I did. When translated into English Yedioth Aharonoth means The Latest News.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
As explained in the introduction to my essay, I have looked at headlines/news articles and opinion pieces from the three principal events in Egyptian-Israeli relations during these years: Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem, the Camp David summit, and the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Unlike *Ha’aretz* and *The Jerusalem Post, Yedioth Aharonoth* does not feature a daily unsigned editorial. I was specifically interested in examining the headlines of both the front pages and the news articles in order to better understand what the newspaper was trying to portray. Good headlines are instrumental in the success of tabloid-style newspapers like *Yedioth Aharonoth*. It is my intention in this chapter to demonstrate how the newspaper’s perceptions of Egyptian-Israeli relations wavered between cautious optimism and mild scepticism during this time period.8

Like many other Israeli newspapers, and external media outlets operating in Israel at the time, the news of Egyptian President Sadat’s willingness to visit Jerusalem caused an incredible outpouring of support for his initiative in the pages of *Yedioth Aharonoth*. Headlines such as “Begin said to his Assistants: ‘He is Really Coming!’”9 and “The Egyptian People are Excited; there is Real Happiness”10 exemplified these powerfully positive emotions. For the occasion of Sadat’s visit, and the subsequent beginnings of Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations in November and December 1977, I will focus on four opinion pieces relating to the feelings and rationale of Israelis who had to contend with a new era of Egyptian-Israeli relations.

8 In chapters two and three of this essay I have decided to classify the articles analyzed by time period, rather than by article type as in the first chapter. I feel that this gives the reader of this essay greater historical context in which to place the individual articles. Since all of the articles analyzed in this chapter and the next are translated from Hebrew, some of the translated article titles may come off as unnatural to native English speakers and therefore they should be examined in proximity to other articles from the same time period.

9 “Begin said to his assistants: ‘He is really coming!’” *Yedioth Aharonoth* 16 Nov. 1977: A1.

The first opinion piece is a satire written by Ziva Yariv. In “Political Discussion” Yariv described the convening of the Israeli cabinet in order to discuss what they plan to do in the wake of Sadat’s imminent arrival. Instead of deliberating on what their priorities should be when speaking with Sadat such as issues of national security, the cabinet unceasingly argued over how to officially welcome him. This culminated with the Israeli ministers bickering about how many trumpet ovations Sadat should be given upon his arrival. Different ministers proposed a different number of trumpet ovations: Yigal Horowitz proposed thirty trumpet ovations in honour of the thirty years since the founding of the state of Israel, while Hamar proposed ten trumpet ovations to recall the ten plagues of Egypt, and Erlich proposed five trumpet ovations due to the weakness of precision of the Israeli trumpeters. Begin is forced to arrive at a compromise of twelve and a half trumpet ovations. This satire’s bitter-sweet comedy provides insight into how some Israelis see their democratic institutions working and that there is real fear that their government might not be prepared to handle Sadat’s visit appropriately.

Amos Kinen takes a more serious approach to Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem compared to the satirical Yariv in “A Political Yom Kippur.” Kinen decides to focus on how the change of government in Israel from thirty years of Labour party dominance to Menachem Begin’s Likud party could possibly affect the progress of the peace process. Kinen also ascribes the initiative to Sadat, explicitly mentioning that it was the Egyptian president who took these first public steps towards Egyptian-Israeli peace. Kinen writes:

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12 Ibid.
In October 1973, Sadat succeeded in overcoming the water obstacle of Suez, surprised Israel and overcame the Arab barrier of fear towards Israel. In November 1977 Sadat succeeded in overcoming the political Suez Canal, surprised Israel and overcame the psychological barrier on the way to peace. The difference between then and now is that there is a different [Israeli] Prime Minister…

Kinen’s implication is that the Middle East has permanently changed with the rise to power in Israel of a more hawkish, right-wing government. Kinen remains optimistic at the prospect of peace, yet is left worried by the prospect of more of Sadat’s surprises.

The humorous Israeli title “How Should We Eat This?” of Boaz Evron’s opinion piece expresses profound disbelief that an Arab leader is actually visiting Israel and exceptional gratitude due to the fact that Begin was the Israeli Prime Minister at the time. Evron states that Begin’s predecessors would have sidestepped and ignored any Arab peace gesture. “They would have given an explanation, in the ways of their ‘expert’ commentaries, that all of this was nothing but ‘balloon propagandist consumption for the Western media.’” With this statement Evron shows his disdain for the former ruling Labour establishment, while at the same time promoting negotiations between Israel and any Arab leader that would be bold enough to advance the cause of peace. The message presented is that no Israeli political party, Likud nor Labour, has a monopoly on peace negotiations. Peace is a non-partisan objective.

In contrast to the more politically charged opinion pieces of Kinen and Evron, Bella Almog’s “To Travel to Cairo” defines the Israeli desire to be accepted as an equal among the nations of the predominantly Arab Middle East. In her opinion piece, Almog describes the desire of Israelis to travel to Cairo much like they would to anywhere in

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Evron, Boaz. “How Should We Eat This?” Yedioth Aharonoth Nov. 1977.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
Israel. She writes, “…just to travel to Cairo like Haifa, in order to sit at a coffee shop and see people”\textsuperscript{20} and “…to travel to Cairo only with Egyptian pounds and Israeli shekels, and to be able to exchange them without problems, and to not need dollars already\textsuperscript{21}.”\textsuperscript{22}

Almog has an idealistic desire to change the status quo between Israel and Egypt, to start looking at each other as friends working towards a common goal, and not as irreconcilable enemies. Almog sees an exchange of tourists numbering in the hundreds of thousands upon the conclusion of an Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement.\textsuperscript{23}

In November-December 1977, contributors to \textit{Yedioth Aharonoth}, like much of Israel, were optimistic and overwhelmed by the prospects of improved Egyptian-Israeli relations. Wild speculations and predictions were coming from every columnist of the left, right, and centre. However, there was also the occasional bout of wariness or disbelief in their writings. After thirty years of war with Egypt, Israelis had a difficult time believing that an immediate cessation of hostilities was realistic. Or, in the case of Ziva Yariv’s satire, some Israelis were secretly worried that the negotiators might be discussing subjects of lesser importance, rather than tackling the more difficult obstacles on the path to peace.\textsuperscript{24}

While Egyptian-Israeli negotiations commenced cheerfully, the initial wave of optimism surrounding them was bound to subside. After endless months of negotiating it became clear that both sides were going to need to budge from their rigidly-held positions

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} To this day it is impossible to convert Israeli Shekels into Egyptian Pounds in Egypt. Therefore Israeli tourists generally choose to convert American Dollars into Egyptian Pounds instead.
\textsuperscript{22} Almog, Bella. “To Travel to Cairo.” \textit{Yedioth Aharonoth} Nov. 1977.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Yariv, Ziva. “Political Discussion.” \textit{Yedioth Aharonoth} 18 Nov. 1977.
in order to find common ground. American mediation was brought in to fulfill this purpose, yet progress remained slow, difficult, and challenging.

In September 1978 United States President Jimmy Carter convened a closed door summit at Camp David, Maryland with both the Egyptian and the Israeli negotiating teams in order to break the deadlock. Yedioth Aharonoth greeted these high level negotiations with cautious optimism, choosing as the day’s headline “The [Israeli] Prime Minister: There is no People who Want Peace More than our People,”25 for the first edition of the newspaper reporting news from the Camp David summit.

Yedioth Aharonoth accurately portrayed Egyptian-Israeli relations prior to the Camp David summit: they had soured, and Begin and Sadat continued to cling to their long-held negotiating positions. The newspaper staff, however, appeared to have sensed that with a little American prodding, drastic changes could come about as a result of the Camp David Summit. Yedioth Aharonoth’s staff arranged interviews with the major actors in the Arab-Israeli conflict prior to the start of the summit in order to provide readers with the opinions of the people with political clout. Sadat was quoted as saying “the Camp David conference is the last opportunity [for peace],”26 while Begin countered by saying: “Camp David is not the last opportunity; in life there is always another opportunity.”27 Meanwhile Israeli Labour party chairman Shimon Peres agreed with Begin that Camp David was “not the last opportunity, but certainly a fateful meeting.”28

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27 “Begin: Camp David is not the Last Opportunity; in Life there is Always another Opportunity.” Yedioth Aharonoth 3 Sept. 1978.
Yedioth Aharonoth also turned to Palestine Liberation Organization29 chairman Yasser Arafat who bluntly stated: “Camp David is nothing but a Gigantic Bluff.”30

Yedioth Aharonoth, like all other media outlets, had a difficult time reporting from the closed-door Camp David summit. Without verifiable official information, opinion piece writers had a disproportionate monopoly on the coverage of the news of the event. Commentators were anxious to share their views. In the next part of this chapter, I analyze five opinion pieces and five news articles – which, of course, contained little verifiable news – from the time of the Camp David summit in order to gauge Israeli perceptions of Egyptian-Israeli relations at this time.

The first opinion piece from the time of the Camp David summit was written by a former high ranking Israel Defence Forces officer and Labour party politician Moshe Carmel. In “Facing the Hour of Truth”31 Carmel wrote “in order to bring the meeting at Camp David to a successful conclusion, a strong desire for the sincere goal of peace is not enough – it is crucial to raise new, practical, proposals that the other side can respond to.”32 Carmel acknowledged that an imposed Israeli solution was improbable as well as impractical. He affirmed the need to grant Sadat and the Egyptian side greater agency in the decision making process, making it clear that negotiations do not depend on Israel alone.33 Carmel argued that a strong peace was crucial. A flimsy peace between Egypt and Israel simply will not do.34 He wrote that “…and the peace will crack with time if it is not built up strongly by the two sides with all the possibilities for big breakthroughs,

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29 The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was considered by both the United States and Israel to be a terrorist organization until 1991. Most of the rest of the world recognized the PLO as legitimate from 1974 onwards when they received ‘official observer’ status from the United Nations.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
socio-economically and culturally, that in all times have come with countries making peace, following wars of thirty years.”35

In the next opinion piece examined, Labour Alignment MK Aryeh Lova Eliav argued in his “The Problems that will not Arise at Camp David”36 that peace is of paramount importance to all Israelis, regardless of political affiliation, and that the Labour party in opposition will vote to assist the government in the progress of any peace-making endeavour. Nevertheless, Eliav firmly believed that the politicians at Camp David avoided the root cause of the Israeli-Arab conflict, which in his view was finding a resolution for the Palestinian-Arab question. Until the Palestinian issue was resolved, Eliav believed that there would never be peace between Israel and the Arab world. He remained hopeful, however, and wrote passionately that “the most horrible peace – is much better than the ‘best’ war.”37

The third opinion piece analyzed was less political and more speculatory, and was written by Professor Benjamin Aktzin. In “Camp David: Possible Scenarios”38 Aktzin questioned what the public will ever really know about Camp David and wrote about possible indicators, or instances of foreshadowing, that the public can look for in order to know in advance whether the summit might fail or succeed.39 Aktzin painted the public as being ill-informed, arguing effectively that “the privacy of the issues in question make it certain that we will not know [what is going on].”40 He even proposed the possibility that King Hussein of Jordan will join Sadat, Begin, and Carter in negotiating

35 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
at Camp David.\footnote{Ibid.} That scenario, which could have changed the future of the Middle East, never played out.

The fourth opinion piece examined was “One More Step Forward”\footnote{Pa’il Meir. “One More Step Forward.” \textit{Yediot Aharonoth} 18 Sept. 1978.} written by Meir Pa’il. Pa’il put forward the argument that regardless of what happened at Camp David, significant advances in negotiations between Israel and the Arab states had occurred, and that these have forever changed the framework for negotiations between Israel and Egypt.\footnote{Ibid.} The outline for an agreement had been reached, now only the details need to be agreed upon. Pa’il writes: “Since Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem in November 1977, there have been three important positive developments in the political system of senior members of the Israeli-Zionist leadership.”\footnote{Ibid.} These developments included an Israeli commitment to evacuate at least half of the Sinai Peninsula, an Israeli belief that peace could be achieved through the evacuation of occupied territories, and a general affirmation of the right to self-determination for the Palestinian people.\footnote{Ibid.} Pa’il declared that if the current Israeli leadership was unprepared to make the painful concessions, which in his opinion are necessary for peace, that they should be removed from their positions and replaced by people who are capable of taking action on the peace process.\footnote{Ibid.}

The final opinion piece examined from \textit{Yedioth Aharonoth} from the time of the Camp David summit was a poem written by Ziva Yariv titled “The Festival of Peace.”\footnote{Yariv, Ziva. “The Festival of Peace.” \textit{Yediot Aharonoth} 20 Sept. 1978.} In the poem, which like her previous 1977 piece was somewhat satirical, there was also a tinge of idealism. Yariv describes the spirit of general optimism in Israel by writing about
the dancing of young Israelis in central Tel Aviv, and the dismay she felt at the close relationship forming between the government and the right-wing settler movement *Gush Emunim*. But most of all, it is her wish for a brighter future for her three-year old son which brings out the most powerful emotions in a reader. Yariv longs for her son to ask ten years down the road: “Mom, I heard that many years ago there was a war here. What is a war?”

Unlike the heavily detailed opinion pieces, the news articles emerging from the Camp David summit were laden with quotations from the important personalities in attendance as well as material from official spokesmen. There was not a whole lot of substance in the actual articles, and often it was the headlines and sub-headlines that highlight the major points of the article. In addition, the writers’ of the news articles were frequently forced to contend with vague statements and unofficial predictions and speculation. Despite these many problems, the newspaper’s regular news writers, Ilan Kfir, Ron Ben-Yishai, and Edwin Eitan kept on filing their stories.

Ilan Kfir, the *Yediot Aharonoth* senior correspondent at Camp David wrote most of the major stories during this time period, but as mentioned previously, they are often full of vagueness and are lacking in any meaningful information. Occasionally the news writers’ articles appear as little more than educated guesses of what could possibly occur. For example, Kfir quoted members of the Egyptian delegation at Camp David as saying: “If the two leaders [Sadat and Begin] leave the conference with a smile, we will know that the road to peace has been opened; but if Sadat leaves the talks with a tense face –

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49 Ibid.
we will know that peace in our time is still elusive.”

Several days later Kfir reported on the tour of the Israeli, Egyptian, and American delegations to the famous US civil war battle of Gettysburg. It is unclear whether or not Kfir actually accompanied the delegations on the tour, but he managed to quote Carter as saying: “All this Blood was Spilt for nothing.” Later, in a co-authored article by Kfir, Ben-Yishai, and Eitan, the headline read “Begin Invited Sadat to Play a Game of Chess – and Carter Joked: ‘Maybe this is the Way the Conflict will End.’” This kind of front page news implied that there was not much to write about.

At the conclusion of the Camp David summit, renewed optimism could be felt in the pages of *Yedioth Aharonoth* as specific details of the negotiations were leaked to the media in order to frame the agreement as being to everyone’s advantage. *Yedioth Aharonoth* portrayed the signing of the Camp David Accords as an Israeli victory for the cause of peace. The primary headline of the day following the signing promised “Peace with Egypt within Three Months.” And Begin was quoted as saying: “Peace Celebrates our Big Victory; Thank God that Sadat and I can say to Each Other: you are my Friend.” Evidently, the newspaper’s and Israelis’ perceptions of Egyptian-Israeli relations had reached a pinnacle at this point.

The news articles from the Camp David Summit continued to portray an image of cautious optimism similar to what was seen in the opinion pieces. However, the media

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51 Kfir, Ilan. “ ‘All this Blood was Spilt for nothing,’ said Carter to Begin and Sadat at the Historic Battle Site of Gettysburg.” *Yedioth Aharonoth* 11 Sept. 1978.
54 Ben-Yishai, Ron, Edwin Eitan and Ilan Kfir. “Begin: Peace Celebrates our Big Victory; Thank God that Sadat and I can Say to Each Other: you are my Friend.” *Yedioth Aharonoth* 18 Sept. 1978.
seemed more wary of the possibility of influencing the course of events through the mobilization of public opinion. *Yedioth Aharonoth* did not want to be blamed in any way for potentially derailing the peace process and was reluctant to take risks. Nevertheless, both the opinion pieces and the news articles consistently pushed the desire, and even the need, for Begin to succeed in negotiating a peace treaty with Sadat on behalf of the Egyptian people. The thought of the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab state, and the many benefits it could bring – such as ending the isolation of Israel in the Middle East, a tourism boom, an increase in bilateral trade, and more – was enough for many Israelis to support an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. But, as the peace negotiations continued to drag on, an ever-increasing number of Israelis began to feel greater scepticism at the prospect of peace with their Egyptian neighbour.

Despite the front page article in the Sept. 1978 *Yedioth Aharonoth*, which promised an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty within three months, it took nearly double that amount of time to officially conclude an agreement. Only in March of 1979 would the official Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty be signed, outlining the required commitments of both parties in order to bring about full normalization of relations between the two countries. The news headlines and the opinion pieces from the beginning of March 1979 had again shifted dramatically away from the optimism and the victory cries which followed Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem and the Camp David Summit. As the peace treaty was about to become a *fait accompli*, different interest groups were preparing for the public relations battle which was certain to follow, and mainstream commentators were asking:

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what are we getting now that we could not have agreed upon earlier?Interpreting the meaning of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty became a challenging and contentious battleground.

The news headlines from the weeks surrounding the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty referred primarily to the final issues that needed to be negotiated between the two parties. These issues included the timetable relating Israeli territorial withdrawals from Sinai; the normalization of diplomatic relations between Israel and Egypt; clauses that would make it incredibly difficult to ever declare war on one another again; and American security guarantees to Israel in the case of any Egyptian violation of the treaty.

A sub–headline for an early March news article written by Aharon Shamir stated: “a Peace Agreement is not Just a Piece of Paper; we will not Sign onto any Agreement that will Allow Egypt to join Against us in War,” while a headline for another one of Shamir’s articles read: “on the Streets of Cairo they are Once Again Speaking of the Hope for Peace.” These headlines exhibit some of the conflicting feelings experienced by the sides after many long rounds of negotiations.

By mid-March, however, Israeli perceptions of Egyptian-Israeli relations in Yedioth Aharonoth had improved substantially. The date of the treaty signing had been agreed upon, and there was almost a pervasive feeling in the Israeli newspaper that Israel and Egypt were now allies, which was not entirely true. Headlines and sub-headlines read: “the Egyptian Prime Minister: we will Forget our Past Losses, but it is Forbidden to

57 Shamir, Aharon. “A Peace Agreement is not Just a Piece of Paper; we will not Sign onto any Agreement that will Allow Egypt to join Against us in War.” Yedioth Aharonoth 5 Mar. 1979.
Ignore the Palestinian Issue”⁵⁹ and “we have an emergency plan in the event of an Arab boycott; - Cairo authorizes the agreement with Israel.”⁶⁰ The chief Egyptian concerns about signing a peace agreement with Israel appeared to be the expected alienation they would receive from the Arab world, and that they may be perceived as having abandoned the Palestinian Arabs.⁶¹ As if to re-assert this point, Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat used the media to publicly blast Sadat. The Yedioth Aharonoth headline read “Arafat: if Someone will Assassinate Sadat – it will be OK from my Point of View.”⁶²

Nevertheless, there were quite clear signs of a cold peace emerging between Israel and Egypt. The headline of a news article by Eliezer Stauch reads: “They are Saying in Egypt: Peace – There is no Need for Closer Relations with Israel,”⁶³ and a sub-headline quoting an official Egyptian source says: “we are expecting big investments from the west and from rich American Jews, but there are no plans for close economic relations with Israel.”⁶⁴ Needless to say, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty is a process which will take a long time to fully complete itself. It is a peace treaty which is unique among peace treaties.

The five opinion pieces examined from March 1979 reflect Israeli frustration at the ongoing, seemingly endless, negotiations. A common argument put forward is that the amount of time and focus that had been spent haggling over the minor issues had

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⁵⁹ Frost, Robert. “The Egyptian Prime Minister: we will Forget our Past Losses, but it is Forbidden to Ignore the Palestinian Issue.” Yedioth Aharonoth 16 Mar. 1979.
⁶⁰ Ibid.
⁶¹ Ibid.
⁶² Shamir, Aharon. “Arafat: if Someone will Assassinate Sadat – it will be OK from my Point of View.” Yedioth Aharonoth 19 Mar. 1979.
⁶⁴ Ibid.
caused people to lose focus of the larger picture. Opinion piece writer David Shacham blamed a small right-wing block in the Israeli parliament for holding up the negotiations. In “Conditioned Reflex”\textsuperscript{65} Shacham argued that “every time it seems, that there will be any sort of progress in negotiations and maybe, just maybe an agreement will be signed…there is an urgent request to be added to the day’s agenda coming from Geula Cohen, Moshe Shamir and Rabbi Druckman, like a conditioned reflex.”\textsuperscript{66} Shacham attempted to dispel the major fear of ordinary Israelis that withdrawing from the Sinai would be harmful to Israel’s security.\textsuperscript{67}

Amos Kinen took a wholly different view, arguing in “Yes and No and Good and Bad”\textsuperscript{68} that only a philosophically sound peace will succeed. Kinen pointed out that only a peace that both parties cannot accept would be just and viable. It was the ultimate compromise solution to the struggle.\textsuperscript{69} Kinen also discussed Begin, arguing that he is the only Israeli who can make the tough decisions in order to move Israel towards peace.\textsuperscript{70}

The Israeli singer Didi Manosi wrote a short poem that was published as an opinion piece under the title: “Do we Sign or not?”\textsuperscript{71} In its few short lines he promptly sized up the situation, mentioning the roles of both the left-wing peace movement \textit{Peace Now}\textsuperscript{72} and the right-wing settler movement \textit{Gush Emunim}, and their opposing views.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Kinen, Amos. “Yes and No and Good and Bad.” \textit{Yedioth Aharonoth} 9 Mar. 1979.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Manosi, Didi. “Do we Sign or not?” \textit{Yedioth Aharonoth} 11 Mar. 1979.
\textsuperscript{72} The Israeli Peace Movement – Peace Now or Shalom Akhshav – was founded in March 1978 advocating the return of the West Bank and Gaza for the sake of peace. They championed the signing of the Sept. 1978 Camp David Accords and promoted positive relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours.
regarding Egyptian-Israeli relations. Regardless of each group’s perspective, it was the American President Jimmy Carter who had to decide the final results of negotiations.\textsuperscript{73}

The last two opinion pieces examined, written by Silvi Keshet and David Landau respectfully, were written with the most emotion. In her “Peace without a Soul,”\textsuperscript{74} Keshet described her frustration with the ongoing negotiations and her view that what has been achieved in 1979 could have been achieved more than a year earlier with greater mutual trust between the parties.\textsuperscript{75} Landau, by contrast, offered an endorsement of Begin’s leadership in “The Last Moment’s Elevation.”\textsuperscript{76} He writes that “[Begin] carried himself well and gave the impression to Carter that he was a leader who was trusted by his people.”\textsuperscript{77} Begin was ready to make the tough decisions when they needed to be made.\textsuperscript{78}

\textit{Yedioth Aharonoth} provides a representative glance at how mainstream Israelis viewed Egyptian-Israeli relations from 1977-1979. While there was some scepticism of Egypt’s intentions, especially during the time period following the signing of the Camp David Accords and before the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, the cautious optimism surrounding each of the three events examined: Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem, the Camp David Summit, and the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, overshadowed everything else. The broad range of opinions expressed in \textit{Yedioth Aharonoth} demonstrates why it was – and still is – the most widely circulated newspaper in Israel.

\textsuperscript{73} Manosi, Didi. “Do we Sign or not?” \textit{Yedioth Aharonoth} 11 Mar. 1979.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
Chapter 3
Egyptian-Israeli Relations from 1977-1979 as seen through Headlines/News Articles, Opinion Pieces, and Editorials of Ha’aretz

Ha’aretz was established on June 18, 1919 as an Israeli Hebrew-language newspaper by a group of businessmen headed by Isaac Leib Goldberg and S. Salzmann.¹ The paper was originally based in Jerusalem, but later moved its publishing headquarters to Tel Aviv.² During the initial editorship of N. Touroff, the regular contributors to the paper were Hebrew writers and journalists who had primarily immigrated to Palestine from Russia and who espoused liberal-socialist political opinions.³ It was, however, the second editor of Ha’aretz, Dr. Moshe Gluecksohn, a German-Jewish immigrant to Palestine, who would make the liberal slant the very essence of the emerging newspaper.⁴ The left-wing liberal tilt of the paper has continued under the ownership of the Schocken family, who acquired the paper in 1937 and who have dominated it since.⁵ The entry for Ha’aretz in the Encyclopaedia Judaica states:

Ha’aretz was identified with the liberal wing of the Zionist movement. Its editorial policy was characterized by a minimalist stance on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and supported territorial withdrawal from territories captured in the 1967 war. Economically, the newspaper championed free enterprise in the face of the country's socialist ethos. It saw human rights as a supreme value. It supported separation of religion and state.⁶

The newspaper has always had a low circulation relative to other prominent Israeli newspapers, but its influence among Israeli decision-makers and international agents is far greater than its numbers would indicate.⁷ Its editorial page is avidly read by

² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid.
individuals with a vested interest in the Middle East. Through its prestigious lens, Ha’aretz reported on Egyptian-Israeli relations from 1977-1979 to its reading public.

As with the two previous chapters, which looked at Egyptian-Israeli relations through the pages of The Jerusalem Post and Yedioth Aharonoth respectively, in Ha’aretz I analyzed news articles, opinion pieces, and editorials from the three principal events in Egyptian-Israeli relations from 1977-1979: Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem, the Camp David summit, and the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

Ha’aretz greeted the news of Sadat’s declaration to visit Jerusalem and speak before the Israeli people with both optimism and disbelief. An inside page news article stated: “this type of proposal is the kind of policy about-face that goes against using official diplomatic channels,” indicating that the surprise felt by the Israeli public was most likely felt by many in government as well. In line with its long-held editorial position, Ha’aretz encouraged Menachem Begin’s government to take necessary steps and make the important decisions needed to achieve Arab-Israeli peace. Headlines such as “Begin’s answer to Sadat is that he [Sadat] will be received graciously in Israel,” and “I [Begin] will happily start talks with him [Sadat] towards attaining a real peace in the Middle East,” were put on the front page of the newspaper in order to arouse public support for the initiative, and to imply that direct negotiations with Egypt were the only viable way to attain Arab-Israeli peace. While policy differences between the Israeli and Egyptian positions remained, in addition to personal differences between Begin and Sadat, Ha’aretz believed these differences could be resolved over time if the goal of both

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8 Ibid.
9 “American Spokesman Praises Sadat’s Speech.” Ha’aretz Nov 1977
10 “Begin’s answer to Sadat is that he [Sadat] will be received graciously in Israel will be sent today to Cairo.” Ha’aretz 11 Nov. 1977.
11 Ibid.
sides was an unwavering commitment to the cessation of hostilities and the termination of the state of war. Tending to be more in line with Labour’s politics than Likud’s, Ha’aretz ran a quote from Israeli opposition leader Shimon Peres as a sub-headline, “Peres: There is a need for concessions on both sides,”12 tacitly supporting the Labour’s ‘land for peace’ philosophy. Ha’aretz news articles and headlines from this time period reflected the euphoria and sensationalism of Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem and Israel’s jovial response to his arrival. The newspaper supported peace with Egypt unequivocally and resolved to do everything in its power to make it a reality.

I examined four opinion pieces for this time period – two of which were written by Ha’aretz senior contributor Amnon Rubinstein, and one each written by Ze’ev Schiff and Uzi Benyamin. Ha’aretz’s opinion pieces tend to be more academically grounded, and less populist than opinion pieces written for other Israeli newspapers, including The Jerusalem Post. Many consider Ha’aretz to be Israel’s equivalent to America’s The New York Times, or Canada’s Globe and Mail. It is perhaps its eloquent writing which led to a greater semblance of authority in its words. Rubinstein wrote in his first opinion piece, “If Sadat will visit Jerusalem – my hand is shaking as I write these words – this will be one of those events that will be remembered by all the writers’ of history.”13 Undeniably, these are strongly emotional words, yet Rubinstein remained grounded in reality. He admitted that “even with a dramatic guest like this [Sadat], the Arab boycott of Israel can still be implemented,”14 conceding that one person faces barriers when trying to influence

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14 Ibid.
the policies of a multitude of nations. The Arab World can still attempt to isolate Israel, with or without the support of Egypt.

Rubinstein’s second opinion piece was written as “An Open Letter to Anwar Sadat.”\(^\text{15}\) In it, he attempted to deduce what the Egyptian President’s visit meant to the Israeli nation by evoking the historical trauma of the Jewish people, the establishment of the state of Israel, the genuine Israeli desire for peace with their Arab neighbours, and his personal experiences while serving as an Israeli soldier on the Egyptian front.\(^\text{16}\) Rubinstein felt that finally this Israeli desire for peace was being reciprocated. Rubinstein wrote:

I hope that through all the security services and the endless line of officials, that your ear will absorb another voice as well: the voice of the people. People who, if they could speak to you directly, would demonstrate before you their assessment of your character and the bravery of your heart; their hope that your mission will succeed; and their prayers for peace – Peace between Jews and Arabs here, in the Middle East, cradle of their cultures and religions.\(^\text{17}\)

By appealing to the powerful emotional effect of Sadat’s visit on the Israeli people, \textit{Ha’aretz} through the words of Rubinstein, essentially gave a statement to the world on behalf of the Israeli people concluding with:

I believe, Mr. President [Sadat], that this hope is shared by two peoples. We must understand the need to bring a fair peace to the Middle East. This land is the shared lifeline of two peoples and we can work out a resolution to the conflict between concern for the rights of the Palestinians on the one side and concern for the security of Israel on the other. Certainly we can resolve the conflict between Egypt and Israel – two of the oldest cultures of the Jordan and the Nile – which a large desert separates. Harder problems have been solved, when there was will and belief.\(^\text{18}\)

According to \textit{Ha’aretz}, peace negotiations between Egypt and Israel were needed to move forward. The columnists of the newspapers were convinced that the Egyptian-Israeli conflict could be resolved through perseverance and determination on the part of both sides.


\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
The opinion piece written by Ze’ev Schiff focused on two surprises that occurred immediately following one another. The first surprise mentioned was Sadat’s declaration to visit Jerusalem, but the second surprise echoed a widely held Israeli suspicion of Egypt’s intentions and has been less widely discussed. Schiff wrote: “The Commander-in-chief of the armed forces [IDF], General Mordechai Gur, who requested to warn the people of Israel of a possible military surprise on the part of Egypt surprised the Defence Minister and the government.”

General Gur felt that the rapid push towards friendlier relations with Egypt in the wake of Sadat’s announcement could leave Israel vulnerable to another surprise attack from Egypt similar to the 1973 Yom Kippur War. According to Schiff, Gur logically asked: why was Egypt, an enemy of Israel for thirty years, suddenly ready to negotiate peace with Israel? Evidently, he responded sceptically to Sadat’s intention to visit Jerusalem. It was fair to assume, Gur felt that Sadat could be planning a surprise attack, and as Commander-in-Chief he felt that it was his duty to warn the nation. However, Schiff also questioned whether Gur’s breaking of conventional Israeli protocol by ignoring Weizman, his boss and the Israeli Defence Minister, was the correct thing to do. It is worth mentioning that this major Israeli personality’s opinions on Sadat’s visit were not displayed prominently in either The Jerusalem Post or Yedioth Aharonoth.

The fourth opinion piece examined was written in December 1977 at the Ismailiya summit (the meeting between Begin and Sadat that followed Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem) by Ha’aretz policy analyst Uzi Benyamin who provided a more detailed look at both the Egyptian and Israeli negotiating positions. Definitions of sovereignty, and military issues,
were two of the major issues brought up during the lengthy talks, yet it quickly became clear that little would be accomplished at this time when dealing with the major points of contention between the parties.

The three Ha’aretz editorials examined from November 1977 would tend to agree with many of the assertions previously made in the opinion pieces. Sadat’s announcement was immediately welcomed by Haaretz’s editorial staff. This is not to say that the newspaper was not wary of potential damage to Israel’s interests, but rather that there was clear support given to any improvement in Egyptian-Israeli relations.

“Towards a Historic Meeting” was a groundbreaking editorial. Ha’aretz, which had a long history of taking a stance in opposition to the Israeli government, firmly endorsed Prime Minister Begin’s decision to invite Sadat to Jerusalem immediately following the latter’s decision to travel to Israel. The editorial focused on potential scenarios arising from Sadat’s visit, mentioning the creation of a possible rift in the Arab world’s opposition to Israel: “From Sadat’s words it appears that he knows the meaning of his visit; the expected opposition of several Arab leaders that will not be considered obstacle enough to remove him from his path.” The editorial also speculated on whether the goal of Sadat’s visit was merely to gain sympathy for Egypt among American and Western European public opinion.

A week later Ha’aretz ran an editorial with a hopeful, yet somewhat condescending tone vis-à-vis Sadat, evidently taking into account the new reality of the

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
situation. In “Speaking to the Egyptian People”  Sadat’s visit to Israel was imminent, not just a rumour, and the *Ha’aretz* editorial staff seized on this fact to address the major claim of Israeli sovereignty over a united Jerusalem. The editorial states to the Egyptian people: “Today your president makes Jerusalem the capital of Israel, and both he and his entourage will know that people of all religions enjoy in the unified city freedom of worship and access to all the holy sites of their religion.”  Needless to say, Egypt and the vast majority of the Arab world did not recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Yet the editorial seemed to imply that Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem, and his willingness to speak before the Israeli parliament in Jerusalem, granted *de facto* recognition to that Israeli claim. The editorial also re-asserted Israel’s desire for peace in writing, “Israel hopes that she will be defended by secure and recognized borders – extends her hand in peace to the Egyptian President and the Egyptian people.”

The last editorial examined for this time period assessed Sadat’s speech to the Israeli parliament, or *Knesset*, in Jerusalem. “Sadat at the *Knesset*: Impressive, yet disappointing” illustrates the anti-climactic Israeli national mood following the Egyptian President’s speech. Israelis were so optimistic for a breakthrough in Egyptian-Israeli relations that they had forgotten that they were dealing with a leader whose end goals might be the same, but whose road map to achieve them was fundamentally different from their own. *Ha’aretz* speaks of Sadat presenting Israel with “the most uncompromising Arab position” and that he does not want to arrive at a temporary agreement, but rather a more far-reaching, permanent settlement between Israel and the

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
entire Arab world. It is clear that “his [Sadat’s] eyes are not set upon a separate agreement between Egypt and Israel.” Clearly, this is contrary to what Israel and Ha’aretz prefer.

Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 and the subsequent Egyptian-Israeli talks at Ismailiya in December 1977 impacted positively on Israeli perceptions of Egyptian-Israeli relations. For thirty years the two countries had been enemies. Now there was a real chance not just for rapprochement, but for peace. Israelis saw Egypt as acting in good faith and Ha’aretz reflected that sentiment with popular pro-peace headlines, opinion pieces, and editorials. But there was also the overriding Israeli sentiment that the peace Israel desired and the peace that Egypt would be willing to give Israel would not be equivalent.

Following the Ismailiya meeting, Egypt and Israel agreed to form two committees: One to resolve political issues and one to appraise the military situation between the two parties. Little concrete action was taken, however, and progress was slow. In September 1978 United States President Jimmy Carter decided to convene a closed door summit at the presidential retreat at Camp David in order to re-energize the stalled peace talks. Carter was moved to action because he championed Arab-Israeli peace and desired to neutralize Soviet influence in the Middle East. But by this point in time, the frame of the negotiations had shifted. Egypt was no longer representing the entire Arab world as Sadat had first willed, but rather was negotiating bilaterally with Israel. Sadat’s goals were to regain Egyptian territory captured by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War and find a just resolution to the Palestinian question. Ha’aretz ran a series of

32 Ibid.
news headlines, opinion pieces and editorials reflecting on Israeli perceptions of Egyptian-Israeli relations during this time period.

Carter’s efforts to resume Egyptian-Israeli talks were so overwhelmingly supported by Ha’aretz and the Israeli public that he needed to lower the expectations of his supporters. Quoted in a Ha’aretz headline, Carter said: “there is no reason for unnecessary optimism, but also no reason for despair.”34 Other headlines in Ha’aretz framed the Camp David summit as initially optimistic with headlines such as “the Camp David Summit is entering high gear,”35 but then struck a more defeatist tone as leaks from the summit indicated that it could be heading for failure as “the United States starts with frantic activity in order to save Camp David from failure.”36 Sure enough the summit would succeed and the signing of the Camp David Accords would be announced at its conclusion. The goal of this chapter is not to conclude the reasons for the success of the Camp David Summit, but rather what Ha’aretz and the Israeli public perceived Egyptian-Israeli relations as having been at this point in time. In September 1978, at the conclusion of the Camp David Summit, Ha’aretz and Israelis were beginning to see Egypt in an extremely positive light; almost as a Middle Eastern ally.

The three opinion pieces – two of them written by Yoel Marcus – examined from Ha’aretz at the time of the Camp David Summit offered glances of different parts of the summit. The first opinion piece written by Yoel Marcus, “Today is Improvisation,”37 compared the anxiety and the suspense of the beginning of the Camp David Summit to Sadat’s arrival in Jerusalem the year before, and reached the conclusion that they are not

34 Marcus, Yoel. “Carter: there is no reason for unnecessary optimism, but also no reason for despair.” Ha’aretz 5 Sept. 1978.
nearly on the same level. Marcus argued that Sadat’s Jerusalem trip easily eclipsed the combined worldwide anticipation for the Camp David summit. Marcus also commented on the limitation of information coming out of Camp David. He wrote: “no one believes that these three people [Carter, Begin, and Sadat] have come to a meeting like this without alternatives. And until the content becomes clear at the end on the TV screen after a week or ten days, it will fill up the country with an ocean of assumptions.”

There is undoubtedly an Israeli fear of the perpetuation of unreasonable expectations.

The second Marcus opinion piece comes from later in the summit and summarizes the nine days spent at Camp David as being:

a group of grown-ups locked up at a resort. On the one hand they are behaving just like kids at a (Jewish) summer camp that borders Camp David – riding bikes, playing chess, swimming, running, playing sports like soccer and billiards, watching movies, they are even presented with daily presentations…On the other hand these people are behaving like politicians, as if the fate of the entire world, or at least the fate of the Middle East, depends on how they conduct their affairs there.

This illustrates Israelis’ perceptions of the Camp David summit. It is of monumental importance to the people of the Middle East, but it is difficult to know what is really going on there. Marcus concludes that “the Camp David summit was just another station in the long process of the Arabs accepting Israel,” echoing a widely held Israeli assertion as the reason for why peace has been elusive thus far.

Uzi Benyamin’s opinion piece “Begin Returning Home” focuses on the Israeli Prime Minister and the difficult decisions he has to make now that he is returning home to Israel. While he was at Camp David discussing matters of primary importance to Egyptian-Israeli relations, Begin was allowed to avoid the turmoil unravelling at the same

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
time in Lebanon which threatened Israel’s northern border. Now that Begin will be back in Israel, Benyamin argues that he cannot delay the difficult decisions any longer.\textsuperscript{43} Perhaps, Benyamin is advocating gauging possible Egyptian responses to an Israeli operation to quell Palestinian terror originating in Lebanon?

In addition to examining three opinion pieces, I analyzed four \textit{Ha’aretz} editorials written at the time of the Camp David summit. The first, “The Summit is at its Decisive Stage,”\textsuperscript{44} warns the Israeli negotiating team to exert extreme caution at Camp David and to be exceptionally diplomatic. Furthermore, it is important that “our [Israeli] delegation should however relate to the ideas of President Carter with the utmost respect”\textsuperscript{45} even if they are not in agreement with the Israeli position. In this “operational”\textsuperscript{46} stage of the Camp David summit, according to the article, it was crucial to understand what was at stake in terms of long-term Egyptian-Israeli relations.

The second editorial examined confronts the issue of a potential global oil shortage if the Camp David summit concludes unsuccessfully. “The Scarecrow Oil Shortage”\textsuperscript{47} argues that there is little connection between Egyptian-Israeli peace talks and a global petrol crisis, especially in the wake of recent disturbances in Iran.\textsuperscript{48} It also notes that there is often a direct connection between the failure of peace talks and the resumption of hostilities since peace has not been achieved.

The third \textit{Ha’aretz} editorial analyzed gives the reader the perspective of the United States potentially sacrificing Israel’s interests in order to achieve results at Camp

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} “The Summit is at its Decisive Stage.” Editorial. \textit{Ha’aretz} 12 Sept. 1978.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
David. The editorial questions whether the Israeli delegations decision to stay for an extra weekend was a sound decision. Perhaps they are walking into an “open ambush”? Has the United States decided to reach an agreement at any cost? *Ha’aretz* voices the concern of the Israeli people in being reluctant to sign any agreement which could even marginally compromise Israel’s security.

The final editorial examined is summed up accurately by its title: “Camp David: Struggling to Prevent Failure.” The editorial mentions the decision of the United States President to end the conference on September 17 1978 since “the continuation of the conference for longer than the expected time will cause him terrible damage in the eyes of the American public.” The *Ha’aretz* editorial suggests that a success at Camp David would be miraculous, even though, oddly, the success of the summit had already been publicly proclaimed by the date the editorial ran. Perhaps this was a purposefully made decision to keep expectations to a minimum? Upon the announcement of the signing of the Camp David Accords, Israeli perceptions of Egyptian-Israeli relations reached new heights.

The signing of the Camp David Accords did not, however, lead immediately to an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Rather, it indicated, a continuation of negotiations within the framework outlined by the accords. *Ha’aretz* would, in its headlines, articles, opinion pieces and editorials, cover the final dealings between the two sides during the weeks that preceded the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in March 1979.

March 1979 was the culmination of nearly eighteen months of Egyptian-Israeli negotiations. Despite the good will that had resulted from the signing of the Camp David

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51 Ibid.
Accords, American pressure was brought to bear on both sides in order to achieve a final agreement. Headlines such as “Official sources in Cairo; the Egyptian President is waiting today for a report from Carter regarding his discussions with Begin” and “In a dramatic attempt to bring about the signing of a peace treaty: Carter departs tomorrow for Egypt and Israel” emphasize the importance of the United States in Egyptian-Israeli peacemaking. The dependency is eye opening, yet not entirely surprising. A news article by Arnon Ben Nachum speculates optimistically on large-scale Egyptian tourism to Israel following the signing of a peace agreement. And the last headline analyzed, “He [Sadat] prefers to sign the three copies in Washington; but he is ready to go to Israel and for Begin to come to Cairo,” indicates an Egyptian willingness to compromise and a reason for Israelis to be optimistic. Peace between Egypt and Israel should not be seen as a zero-sum game.

The two opinion pieces examined from March 1979 were smaller and contained less substance than those examined for Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem and the Camp David summit. Nevertheless, they reinforce the prominent role of the American President in the final stages of negotiations and the strong desire of Israelis to see these negotiations brought to a successful conclusion.

“Pressure? What Pressure?” written by Yoel Marcus emphasizes that the countdown has begun to an agreement and that Begin has to be careful when choosing his points of contention with the final draft of the peace treaty, lest he offend the Americans.

52 Zarai, Oded. “‘October’: Sadat will depart on Tuesday or Thursday to sign the draft peace agreement.” Ha’aretz 4 Mar. 1979.
and reduce support for Israel amongst the American public.\textsuperscript{57} Several days later Yehudah Litagi gives \textit{Ha\'aretz} readers a different perspective, speculating that a final peace treaty will be signed promptly and that the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty will result in a drastic change in the status quo in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (this assertion would prove incorrect).\textsuperscript{58} Both opinion piece writers appear to accept the inevitability of an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, but they nevertheless urge caution when proceeding.

The three editorials analyzed for March 1979 proved far more substantial than the opinion pieces examined for this time period. The first editorial, “Camp David moves the Middle East,”\textsuperscript{59} endorses the need to assist President Carter in reaching an Egyptian-Israeli peace in order “to release him from the characteristically passive image of American policies in other regions of the globe.”\textsuperscript{60} It is instrumental that President Carter succeeds in his mission after he has invested so much time and effort in it.

The second editorial, “The Gap between Hope and Certainty,”\textsuperscript{61} focuses on the last remaining challenges that need to be overcome before a final Egyptian-Israeli agreement can be reached. The editorial calls for the fair treatment of Israel, arguing that the United States cannot be allowed to sacrifice Israel’s security interests in order to attain peace with Egypt and bring Sadat firmly into the anti-Soviet block.\textsuperscript{62}

Lastly, “There is no Need for a Referendum,”\textsuperscript{63} is written to respond to a small minority of Israelis who began a movement urging a popular referendum on an Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement when they saw that the proposed Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Litagi, Yehudah. “If the Peace will be signed.” \textit{Ha\'aretz} 8 Mar. 1979.
\textsuperscript{59} “Camp David moves the Middle East.” Editorial. \textit{Ha\'aretz} 6 Mar. 1979.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} “There is no Need for a Referendum.” Editorial. \textit{Ha\'aretz} 15 Mar. 1979.
would not suit their interests. The editorial dismisses the need for a referendum to placate this stubborn minority of Israelis since “when there is a clear majority in the Knesset and in the public, according to all forecasts and public opinion surveys, to accept the agreement and its approval,” it simply does not make sense to re-affirm this sentiment through referendum. Delaying the peace process will not aid it, and could provide time for dissenting voices to gain support through increased publicity.

The signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty took place in Washington, DC on March 26 1979 to the glee of Ha’aretz. With American mediation, the Egyptians and the Israelis (Sadat and Begin) had finally agreed to normalize relations sixteen months following Sadat’s first visit by an Arab head of state to Jerusalem. Ha’aretz had tailored its intellectually liberal pro-peace message to its more academic readership through its daily unsigned editorial in which the issues confronting Israel were addressed candidly. Ha’aretz acknowledged that the initial Israeli optimism that greeted Sadat in Jerusalem in November 1977 had tempered somewhat, but renewed joy had come about as a result of the signing of the first permanent peace treaty with the most populous and powerful Arab nation-state. In March 1979 Israeli perceptions of Egyptian-Israeli relations were positive and many expected only better things to come on the horizon.

64 Ibid.
Conclusion

With the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in Washington DC in March 1979 the Middle East underwent a drastic transformation. The treaty was seen as a historic achievement and encouraged those who sought to broker further Arab-Israeli peace treaties. Historian Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov wrote of the event’s potential impact on Arab-Israeli diplomacy: “The Israeli-Egyptian peace process...has been the only successful conflict resolution in the Arab-Israeli conflict, which could serve as a model or precedent for attempts to resolve the other bilateral disputes in the conflict.”\(^1\) It shattered the perception that the Arab-Israeli conflict was a zero-sum game based on uncompromisable interests.\(^2\)

In addition to ending thirty-one years of belligerency between Egypt and Israel, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty significantly impacted the lives of Jimmy Carter, Menachem Begin, and Anwar Sadat. For United States President Jimmy Carter, who had personally engineered the Camp David Summit, it was a moment of great personal victory and perhaps, the defining moment of his presidency.

For his part, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin – perhaps the only leader of a political party in the democratic world to have lost eight consecutive elections and had rebounded to win a ninth and a tenth – brought the Israeli people a peace treaty that had long been coveted.\(^3\) The absence of peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours had long been considered the Zionist movement’s greatest failure.\(^4\) Most of Israel considered him a hero, but he continually needed to justify the concessions he had made in order to

\(^2\) Ibid. p. 49.
acquire Egyptian-Israeli peace. For the sake of peace he decided to withdraw from territory which contained the resources for half of Israel’s energy requirements, and would have made Israel self-sufficient in oil.\(^5\)

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was an initiator and an innovator who was determined to overcome all obstacles in the Arab-Israeli conflict. His views, however, were not shared by many in the region. According to historian Kenneth Stein, “In most of the Arab world and for a portion of Egypt, he [Sadat] was not a hero, but he had engaged in heroic diplomacy.”\(^6\)

Throughout all this *The Jerusalem Post*, *Yedioth Aharonoth*, and *Ha’aretz* perceived Egyptian-Israeli relations from 1977-1979 similarly. While each newspaper exhibited a certain slant according to its respective background, editorial line, or worldview, the desire for a lasting Egyptian-Israeli peace proved to be the great unifier for the three newspapers. In this essay my most important findings were:

1) The Egyptian-Israeli peace process served as a ‘national unifier’ as can be seen in the three Israeli newspapers that I analyzed. While each newspaper made room for dissenting voices, Egyptian-Israeli peace was overtly supported by a majority of the Israeli public and the staff of each newspaper.

2) Each of the Israeli newspapers that I analyzed targeted its regular audience with the goal of garnering latent support for the Egyptian-Israeli peace process. *The Jerusalem Post* focused on English speakers and the international community, *Yedioth Aharonoth* on mainstream, middle-class, immigrant or native-born Israelis, and *Ha’aretz* on left-wing, liberal, socialist, and intellectual circles.

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3) The positions of both *The Jerusalem Post* and *Ha’aretz* were more overtly known as can be seen by their published daily unsigned editorial, while *Yedioth Aharonoth* tended to use a spectrum of opinion pieces to project its image of being a bastion of ‘mainstream’ Israeli opinions.

4) Cautious optimism and mild scepticism defined the coverage of Egyptian-Israeli relations from 1977-1979 in the three newspapers. All of the newspapers encouraged the success of peace process, yet they did not develop grand expectations for it. The newspapers reflect the fact that many Israelis continued to view Egypt’s true intentions with suspicion.

5) *Yedioth Aharonoth* exhibited the greatest scepticism out of the three papers regarding Egyptian-Israeli peace. This was especially prominent in the headlines/news articles and opinion pieces in March 1979.

6) *Ha’aretz* provided the most academic analyses of the issues at stake in Egyptian-Israeli relations.

Some other questions which arose as a result of my research were: How many Israelis had subscriptions to daily newspapers from 1977-1979? How much does the media influence public opinion and how much does public opinion influence the media? How effective were Israeli newspapers at transmitting information to the public from 1977-1979? And there are certainly many more questions which could be asked.

Looking at Egyptian-Israeli relations from a presentist lens inevitably leads to the conclusion that relations between the two countries have always been strained. Perhaps this is due to the volatility of the region and the disturbingly pervasive conflicts that have occurred since the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in March 1979. Menachem
Begin’s biographer Eric Silver has stated that: “Israeli-Egyptian reconciliation was like a premature rosebud stunted by a late frost. The border remained open, but the traffic was all one way. Hardly any Egyptian tourists visited Israel. Commerce was negligible. Cultural exchanges petered out.”⁷ Former Israeli Ambassador to Egypt Ephraim Dowek used harsher language to describe the Egyptian-Israeli relationship: “To this very day, Egypt does not recognize Israel’s legitimacy or its right to be an integral part of the region. It is ready to live with the fait accompli and maintain peaceful – but limited – relations with Israel and will do its utmost to prevent (or delay) Israel’s regional integration for fear of potential economic and political competition.”⁸ One is left to wonder if The Jerusalem Post, Yedioth Aharonoth, and Ha’aretz would have been as supportive in promoting Egyptian-Israeli relations had they known what they would amount to. Still, perhaps any kind of peace is better than war, and there is even the occasional hopeful sign, such as the Israeli Academic Centre in Cairo where Egyptians students and scholars meet with Israeli students and scholars on a regular basis for language study and cultural exchange.⁹ Maybe this is the beginning of a brighter future.

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⁷ Silver, Eric. Begin. p. 211
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