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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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Aug. 31  
1978

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ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT  
FROM: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI  
SUBJECT: Strategy for Camp David

For the talks at Camp David to succeed, you will have to control the proceedings from the outset and thereafter pursue a deliberate political strategy designed to bring about significant changes in both the Egyptian and Israeli substantive positions. I strongly suggest that you bear the following points in mind:

1. Sadat cannot afford a failure and he knows it; both Sadat and Begin think that you cannot afford failure; but Begin probably believes that a failure at Camp David will hurt you and Sadat, but not him. He may even want to see Sadat discredited and you weakened, thus leaving him with the tolerable status quo instead of pressures to change his life-long beliefs concerning "Judea and Samaria".
2. You will have to convince both leaders, but especially Begin, that failure at Camp David will have directly adverse consequences for our bilateral relations and in terms of Soviet influence in the region.
3. Sadat will define success in terms of substance, and in particular an Israeli commitment to the principle of withdrawal on all fronts. Begin will define success largely in terms of procedural arrangements and will be very resistant to pressures for substantive concessions.
4. You will have to persuade Begin to make some substantive concessions, while convincing Sadat to settle for less than an explicit Israeli commitment to full withdrawal and Palestinian self-determination.
5. Your most important meetings will be with each leader individually, not with both together. You cannot expect Sadat and Begin to reveal their fall-back positions in front of each other, but in private you may be able to move them toward greater flexibility.

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6. During the first round of meetings, you will want to re-establish a personal relationship with each leader, expressing your understanding of their concerns and appealing to their statesmanship. During the second and third days, you will want to be frank and direct in discussing substantive points. Begin in particular will need time to reflect on what you say. There will be a natural break in the talks on Saturday, and Begin should understand that you will be pressing for decisions on Sunday.

7. Both Sadat and Begin must starkly see the consequences of success and failure if they are to make hard choices.

-- Failure brought on by Sadat's intransigence would bring to an end the special US-Egyptian relationship. Even if Sadat is not held responsible for the collapse of negotiations, we would find it increasingly difficult to maintain the close ties of the past few years and the Soviet Union would find opportunities to strengthen its position in the area at Sadat's expense as well as our own. Sadat must be told that we cannot afford more surprise moves by him if we are to work together effectively for a peace agreement. We expect to be consulted before Sadat takes new initiatives.

-- Begin must see that US-Israeli relations are based on reciprocity. Our commitment to Israel's security and well-being must be met by an Israeli understanding of our national interests. If Israel is responsible for blocking progress toward peace in the Middle East, Begin should be told clearly that you will have to take the following steps, which could affect the US-Israeli relationship:

-- Go to the American public with a full explanation of US national interests in the Middle East (strategic relations with Soviets, economic interests, oil, cooperation with moderate regimes).

-- Explain the scale of US aid to Israel (\$10 billion since 1973, or nearly \$4000 for each Israeli citizen). Despite this, Israel is unwilling to reciprocate by showing flexibility in negotiations.

-- We will be prepared to spell out publicly our views on a fair settlement.

-- We will be unable to defend Israel's position if the negotiations shift to the UN or Geneva.

-- Both Sadat and Begin can be assured that progress toward peace will mean a strong relationship with the United States, including in the economic and security areas, and enhanced ability to control developments in the region in ways that will serve our mutual interests.

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8. The absolute minimum you want from each leader is the following:

-- From Sadat:

-- Acceptance of a long-term Israeli security presence in the West Bank/Gaza.

-- A five-year interim regime for the West Bank/Gaza; no independent Palestinian state; deferral of negotiations on borders and sovereignty until end of five-year period.

-- Acceptance of less than an Israeli commitment to full withdrawal and Palestinian self-determination as guidelines for negotiations.

-- Willingness to negotiate guidelines for West Bank/Gaza even if Hussein does not come in.

-- Repetition of "no more war" pledge; willingness to renew UNEF in October; honoring terms of Sinai II, including commitment to peaceful resolution of differences.

-- A willingness to negotiate seriously if an agreement on principles is reached.

-- From Begin:

-- Acceptance of all the principles of 242, including withdrawal and the "inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war," as applicable on all fronts.

-- Modifications in "self-rule" proposal in order to make it sufficiently attractive to moderate Palestinians to bring them in as participants and to increase prospects of their accepting its main features (open borders, some Israeli security presence, some Israeli rights to live in West Bank, self-government) beyond five years. These modifications require an Israeli acceptance of the principle of withdrawal; a moratorium on organized settlement activity, in contrast to the rights of individuals to acquire land on a reciprocal basis; a visible termination of the military occupation at the outset of the five-year period; devolution of authority for the new regime from an agreement among Israel, Egypt, and Jordan; and genuine self-government for the Palestinians.

-- Flexibility on the remaining issues of settlements and air bases in Sinai.

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9. Begin and Sadat are likely to try to shift the discussions to new proposals of their own. Begin may concentrate on details as a diversion from the larger issues. Sadat may try to enlist your support for a bold move on his part which will put Begin in the corner. The risk is that you could lose control of the talks and be diverted from the central issues either by Begin's legalisms or Sadat's imprecision. You should keep the focus on the large picture, and strategic choices, and refer new proposals or suggestions for textual language to the Foreign Ministers and Secretary Vance. With Sadat, you will have to hear him out on his new strategy without appearing to collude with him against Begin.
10. Both leaders will constantly be trying to get you to side with them on specific points. They will not hesitate to remind you of what we have said to them in the past. Begin will remember that we called his "self-rule" plan a "fair basis for negotiations," and Sadat will have very much in mind the promises made at Camp David. Your best defense against these efforts to manipulate you will be to concentrate on the future choices, on the strategic consequences of success or failure, and on the need for each side to transcend past positions.
11. Sadat is very likely to want to explore the possibility of reaching secret understandings with you and Begin on some elements of a settlement. This is apparently more important to him than a declaration of principles. There are clearly risks in relying on secret agreements, but Sadat's willingness to be forthcoming on some issues may well depend upon our ability, as well as Begin's, to assure him that he will not be embarrassed by leaks.
12. If Sadat shows more flexibility than Begin, we may be perceived by the Israelis and their supporters as colluding with the Egyptians. This could be politically awkward, and you may want to suggest discreetly to Sadat that he not rush to accept any suggestions we put forward publicly. It will help our credibility if we are seen to be pressing both sides for concessions. While we do want Sadat to accept our ideas, the timing and circumstances in which he does so should be very carefully coordinated.
13. (The number may be symbolic.) If the meetings end in disagreement, we should not attempt to paper over the differences. The reasons and consequences of a failure will be publicly explained by you, and Sadat and Begin should understand from the outset that this will be the case, including the specifics in #7 above.

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Finally, I summarize below what I consider to be the acceptable minimum that we must aim for on the central issues:

1. Withdrawal/Security on the West Bank/Gaza

Sadat should agree to an Israeli security presence during the five-year interim period and for an indefinite time beyond; he should agree to defer decisions on the precise location of borders and on sovereignty until the end of the transitional period. In return, he should be able to claim credit for ending the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and for establishing that the principle of withdrawal will be applied in the final peace settlement dealing with these areas.

Begin should agree that the principle of withdrawal does apply on all fronts, including the West Bank and Gaza, provided that its application takes into account Israel's long-term security needs in the area; sovereignty will remain in abeyance until a final peace agreement is reached at the end of the five-year period. This will allow Begin to take credit for protecting Israel's fundamental security interests, while not requiring that he explicitly abandon Israel's claim to sovereignty over these areas.

2. Settlements

There should be a moratorium on organized settlement activities, but both parties should agree that provisions should be made for individual Israelis and Palestinians to do business and to live in Israel and the West Bank/Gaza in the spirit of open borders, free movement of peoples, and normal peaceful relations.

3. Negotiations

Both parties should commit themselves to continuing negotiations on both the Sinai and the West Bank/Gaza issues.

4. Resolution 242

Both parties should reiterate their commitment to all of the principles of Resolution 242 as the basis for peace treaties on all fronts. In addition, they should agree on the Aswan language on Palestinian rights, and should commit themselves to the concept of full peace and normal relations. Sadat should repeat his commitment to "no more war" and agree to the renewal of UNEF in October.

Attached at Tab A is a memorandum of Ambassador Eilts' last conversation with President Sadat. It is well worth reading. Sadat seems to be preparing more surprises.

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## Camp David: The Consequences of Failure

What is failure?

The Camp David talks will have failed if:

1. The US is unable to persuade both Sadat and Begin to continue the present negotiating process after the Camp David sessions have ended; or
2. A breakdown at Camp David does not at least set in motion forces in Israel that could either cause Begin to moderate his position or lead to the collapse of his government and thus the prospect of different negotiations.

Concerning the first point, Begin has much more flexibility as to whether the talks will continue beyond the end of Camp David than has Sadat:

- In the absence of substantive agreement or compromise at the summit, Begin will quite happily agree to further negotiations because he will not want to appear intransigent and thus cause an erosion of support for Israel in the US.
- Sadat, on the other hand, believes he needs a tangible gain from Camp David -- either an explicit commitment from Israel on the principle of territorial withdrawal or a unilateral and public US statement endorsing Egypt's position on withdrawal and Palestinian self-determination. It will be very hard to persuade Sadat to continue negotiating if he gets neither of these things.

In regard to the second category of failure, the Camp David meetings could be considered a partial success even in the absence of an agreement to continue negotiating, if the summit sessions ended in such a way as to lead a majority of the Israeli public to view Begin as personally responsible for the collapse of the talks.

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- It would be necessary that the Israeli public see Begin's behavior as harmful rather than beneficial to the nation.
- But given Begin's present strong support in Israel, it is exceedingly difficult to foresee a situation in which this would happen.

The Consequences of Failure

In general, the failure of the ~~Camp David summit~~ will not have a dire impact immediately on Israel and the Arab world. Neither the Israelis nor the Arabs have high expectations for the summit and their lack of optimism suggests that if there is a collapse, there will not be a "shock effect" that would prompt either side to react precipitously and irrationally.

In short, we do not expect a failed summit to immediately trigger a new Arab-Israeli war, to prompt the Saudis to unleash the oil weapon, or to precipitate the resignation of President Sadat. These are some of the potentially dangerous consequences of an irrevocable breakdown. The more likely immediate outcomes of a failure at Camp David are a change in the Arab and Israeli perceptions of your role in the peace process and an examination by both sides of their remaining options, some of which could heighten tensions in the near term.

Changed Perceptions of the US:

-- [redacted]

They will surely mount a propaganda campaign aimed at preventing any erosion of their support in Congress and US opinion.

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- For the US, the most damaging outcome of Camp David would be for Sadat to become totally disillusioned with our willingness to help fashion a settlement in the Middle East. Public expression of that view by Sadat would undermine the US position in Egypt and much of the Arab world, erode the position of moderate leaders in the region, and provide an opening for greater Soviet influence.

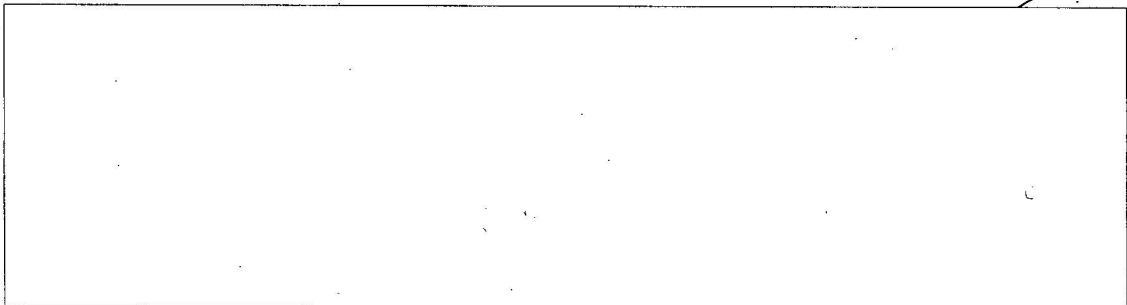
Options Available to Egypt and Israel:

Egypt: Regardless of the frustration Sadat might feel if the summit fails, he probably will not abandon his goal of a comprehensive settlement.

He has the immediate option of seeking reconciliation with the other moderate Arabs and will be heavily pressed by Saudi Arabia to do so. Reconciliation would protect him from his domestic and Arab critics and would be the prelude to developing other strategies ranging from preparing a coordinated Arab negotiating position to planning for war.

In addition, Sadat has [REDACTED] been arranging for other options that he could exercise with or without an Arab reconciliation:

- Egyptians in the Presidential office reportedly have been looking into the pros and cons of various other negotiating forums such as Geneva or taking up Secretary General Waldheim's December 1977 offer to hold a pre-Geneva preparatory conference.
- General Jamasi has been in touch with General Siilasvuo to ask about removing the UN Emergency Force in the Sinai. We must assume that non-renewal of the UN mandate in October is a live option for Sadat and that the modalities have already been worked out by the Egyptians.

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-- Finally, Sadat has some military options despite Egypt's military weakness. He could choose to order violations of the limited armaments zone on the east bank of the Suez canal, or move troops into "defensive" positions with the purpose of forcing the US to intervene and hopefully impose a settlement on Israel. The less provocative moves would be more attractive to Sadat since they might cause Israel to mobilize some of its forces -- with consequent economic and social disruption -- without substantial risk of Israeli preemption.

Sadat could also take various domestic moves to shore up his position. He might even offer to resign in order to elicit a popular demand that he stay on. He could also call for a new presidential election this fall. An election need not request approval on any specific policy, yet would be Sadat's mandate to continue to shape Egyptian policies.

Israel: Begin's reaction to a failure at Camp David would be governed by the response of the US and Egypt. Begin would probably be able to persuade most Israelis that Sadat was mainly to blame. If, however, Begin were perceived by the Israeli public to be responsible for a breakdown at the summit, he might be vulnerable to a challenge by Defense Minister Weizman that could lead to a split in his cabinet.

Were Sadat to carry through his threat not to renew the UNEF's mandate in October and demand its withdrawal, the Israelis would try to exploit such an opening to destroy Sadat's credibility as a peacemaker. Any Egyptian military move could similarly play into Begin's hands politically although in that case the Begin government would feel under pressure to order at least a partial mobilization that would put some strains on the Israeli economy. An escalation of tensions in the Sinai could also rapidly lead to a dangerous situation where miscalculations by either side might trigger preemptive military action by Israel.

Some Israeli hard-liners might advocate a preemptive attack even with no provocation by Egypt, to derail any future mediation efforts and knock out the Arabs' war-making capacity for several years.

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We doubt, however, that Begin and most of the cabinet would favor initiating large-scale hostilities without provocation. They know it would undercut their own professions of peaceful intent, weaken their supporters in the US and possibly endanger the flow of American aid.

Regional Consequences: The most immediate danger in the Middle East following a breakdown at the Camp David summit would be a major escalation of the fighting between Christians and Syrians in Lebanon that might draw Israel into a war with Syria. Israel has urged the Christian militants in Lebanon to exercise restraint at least until the summit ends. A new round of serious fighting began on 25 August, however. Israel is likely to attempt to avoid involvement in the fighting but if the summit ends in failure, the Israelis may abandon attempts to restrain the Christians and in fact may become more directly involved. The Christians, for their part, may interpret failure at the summit as the green light for provoking a crisis.

Another possible immediate danger following the summit is an increase in Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israeli and Egyptian targets. The more rejectionist Palestinian groups might also attempt some attacks against US installations or personnel.

Politically, the most important consequences will be for Saudi Arabia, Syria and Jordan. The Saudi reaction to a breakdown at Camp David will be particularly critical [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Saudis can be expected to pursue immediately a reconciliation among Egypt, Syria, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization with two aims in mind:

- To develop a joint strategy that would enable the Arabs to bargain with Israel from a position of strength.
- To protect Sadat from his opponents by reducing his isolation in the Arab world.

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The Saudis would still want initially to pursue a comprehensive settlement that would satisfy their demands for Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian self-determination. They believe failure to achieve a settlement would mean another war, an increase in Soviet influence, and a resurgence of leftist strength that would ultimately threaten their own security. Equally, they are eager to dissuade Sadat from taking any unilateral actions that might lead to his overthrow because they believe their security also depends on the preservation of a moderate leadership in Egypt.

The Saudi reaction to developments also is critical because of the oil weapon. The failure of Egypt to secure Israeli concessions at Camp David would again raise the spectre of Riyadh's wielding the oil/financial weapon in an effort to force the US to impose a settlement on Israel. The Arabs may well conclude that this course would be more effective and less costly to themselves than going to war with Israel to achieve their political objectives.

In any decision to use oil leverage the Saudis would take account of the following potential costs:

-- [redacted]

-- The economy of Western Europe, to which the Saudi economy is tied, could be severely damaged.

-- [redacted]

Still, the Saudis could well attempt to signal their disappointment with us through gradual measures such as reducing current oil production rates even further. Such moves need not bring immediate untoward consequences, but would convey their message.

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The Syrians probably expect that Sadat will attempt a reconciliation with them following Camp David. They would accept a rapprochement with Egypt if Sadat agreed to end all unilateral talks with Israel.

Jordan almost certainly would be willing to participate in any efforts to work toward achieving a unified Arab position on the course of future negotiations. When asked about the consequences of a failure at Camp David in a recent interview, King Hussein commented that the logical step for the Arabs would be to take their case to the UN Security Council and push for a reconvening of Geneva. We believe this is in fact Hussein's position and reflects his desire to see the negotiating process continue.

#### Conclusion

On balance, if Camp David fails, we believe the Arabs will continue to seek some means to revive the negotiating momentum, after making an effort to fashion a joint strategy. The Israeli policy will be more reactive than innovative and the Israelis can be expected to be particularly sensitive to any indications of renewed Arab militancy. Tensions in the area would be heightened considerably if Sadat allowed the UN mandate to lapse in October.

We cannot predict, however, how long the Arabs would seek some means to restore the negotiating process. Over the longer term, we have to assume that a high degree of disillusionment would propel them again toward the view that military action, or use of their oil leverage, is necessary to achieve their political and security aims.

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